

Mitigating Corruption In The Philippines Through Holistic Governance?

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Abstract. This article is a discourse on holistic governance and its prospect of mitigating corruption in the Philippines. It presents the key concept and framework of holistic governance and the key issues it addresses. The critical issues confronting the Philippine bureaucracy are likewise examined in line with the parameters of good and effective governance defined by international development agencies. The study focuses on the vital question of corruption that has historically plagued Philippine governance. Through holistic governance, the paper champions institutional, administrative, and cultural change on how the public sector needs to work differently. Although the Philippines has been used as a case, holistic governance may be adopted by other countries in building up effective governance and reducing the threats of corruption.

Keywords: holistic governance, corruption mitigation, Philippine bureaucracy

The quest for better governance in the Philippines remains enduring and challenging. Seventy-four (74) years after the Philippines gained its independence from US colonial rule and 35 years since the people regained their power from Ferdinand Marcos's authoritarian rule, the country has been politically hobbled and has yet to achieve an ordered sense of national development and effective governance.

The most common current usage of the term, "governance," or fittingly, "good governance," is the core of public administration. The good governance community has grown in the past decades, producing a host of good governance indicators which are of several types (Arndt & Oman, 2006; Bovaird & Löffler, 2003; Hood et al., 2007; Knack et al., 2003; van de Walle, 2006). The World Governance Indicators (WGI) are the community's most prominent which combine standalone measures into aggregate indicators of six governance concepts that are widely used in academic literature namely: voice and accountability; political stability and absence of violence/terrorism; government effectiveness; regulatory quality; rule of law; and control of corruption.

Good governance protects political, civil, and cultural rights and ensures a competent non-corrupt, and accountable public administration. The government's ability to govern is gauged not simply on its capacity to pursue and realize development goals but more importantly on its capability to create the necessary social, political, economic, and cultural conditions where continuous processes of interaction between social actors, groups, and forces on the one hand, and public or semi-public organizations, formal institutions of government and authorities on

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the other hand, is allowed and guaranteed in co-managing and co-steering national development objectives. The World Bank (2003) states that good governance can emerge through the cooperation of state and civil society.

With the rising demands of the populace from the government for better education and high-quality general welfare like health, housing, safety, infrastructures, and social order, the government has been bereft of available resources and effective and efficient mechanisms to deliver pressing public goods and services to the people. Although economic and political reforms have made some successes albeit slowly and intermittently between the early 1990s and the last decade, the government's performance and growth have been restricted and arrested in terms of proficiency, productivity, and innovation. Above and beyond, the government has inherited a bureaucracy that is structured along the lines of functions and services rather than solving structural problems that breed inter alia poverty, powerlessness, and social injustice.

In solving complex problems that cut across social, political, and economic boundaries, new approaches are needed. Government needs to become more holistic, working towards greater integration across the public sector. Holistic governance incorporates internal structures of government, rules, standards, and norms of behavior of civil servants. Achieving this requires that the government not only provides public services and enforces laws but also changes cultures. Moreover, it requires that the government moves steadily towards a sharper focus on real outcomes such as better health, lower unemployment, or less crime, rather than the measures of activity that have dominated the most recent phase of reform. Hence, the nature and goal of holistic governance is the creation of a new paradigm that directly appeals to the needs of the public.

This paper is a brief exposition of holistic governance – its concept as a possible alternative in restructuring the country's bureaucracy to address issues of good governance and engender effective exercise of the state's power and authority towards the mitigation of peoples' socioeconomic and political problems. This is not to advise on the creation of a new organization within the existing bureaucracy but to champion an institutional, administrative, and cultural change on how the public sector needs to work differently. Although the Philippines has been used as a case in this instance, it does not preclude any country from adopting holistic governance as a principle in building up effective governance and reducing the threats of corruption.

Framework and Concept of Holistic Governance

The concept of holistic governance is not new. The British scholar Perri 6¹ was the first to advocate the concept of "holistic government" in 1997 in his book *Holistic Government*. Departmental fragmentation is the key problem that holistic governance wants to address, and coordination and integration of the related departments seem to be the answer. Holistic governance thus incorporates internal structures, rules, standards, and norms of government.

To avoid governance fragmentation, he declares that government should be integrated across the public sector (holistic), avoiding problems from occurring rather than curing them (preventive), focused on persuasion and information sharing rather than coercion and command (culture-changing), and directed on outcomes and not

on measures of activity (results-oriented). Holistic governance thus incorporates internal structures, rules, standards, and norms of government.

In 1999, 6 together with his colleagues (6 et al., 1999) contended that citizens must be more involved and drawn into governance. This concept was further expounded in 2002 with 6 and associates' *Towards Holistic Governance* book. The book is a paradigmatic switch in approach from "public affairs" to "the public" referring to citizens, taxpayers, and clients. The former refers to the traditional bureaucratic paradigm of German sociologist Max Weber. It is a mechanistic view of organization that prevailed before the 1980s, embodying the principles of Weberian bureaucracy, namely: hierarchy of authority, salaried careers, specialization and technical qualification, and written rules (Ferreira & Serpa, 2019).

While on one hand, Dwight Waldo's New Public Management (NPM) (Roberts, 2020), emphasizes professional management, performance, benchmarking, competition, market orientation, and decentralization, holistic governance centers on the enhancement of partnership, collaboration, and integration with enterprises, especially the rising Internet enterprises in the digital government context (Emerson et al., 2011). Meanwhile, Janowski et al. (2018) delve into the modes of administration in empowering citizens to create value for themselves through socio-technical systems that bring data, services, technologies, and people together to respond to changing societal needs.

Comparatively, Table 1 displays the similarities and differences between the three (3) paradigms of public administration.

Table 1
Frequencies of the Nominal Variables

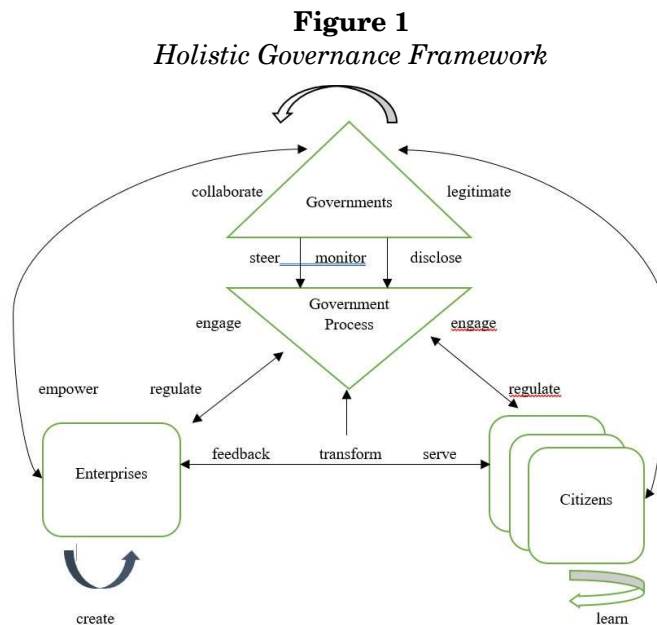
Public Administration Paradigms	Traditional Bureaucracy	New Public Management	Holistic Governance
Time	Before 1980	1980-2000	After 2000
Management Concept	Public Management	Private Sector Management	Public/Private Partnership Central/Local Partnership Join-up Departments
Operational Principle	Functional Division	Partially Functional Integration	Integrated Operation
Organizational Type	Hierarchy	Market/Specialization	Network
Performance Criteria	Input	Output	Solving People's Problems
Operation of Power	Centralization	Decentralization	Sharing of Power
Financial Base	Annual Budget	Market/Competition	Integrated Budget
Civil Service	Rule Bound	Discipline/Efficient	Ethics and Values
Main Resources	Manpower	Information Technology	Online Governance
Public Service	Offer Public Service	Ensure Public Service	Meet the Needs of Public Service

Note. Adapted from Peng, T.C. P. (n.d.). Strategies to build up holistic governance. Institute of European and American Studies, Academia Sinica (p. 6). <https://www.ea.sinica.edu.tw/file/Image/Strategies%20to%20Build%20Up%20Holistic%20Governance.pdf>

In essence, holistic governance covers vertical and horizontal modes of public affairs that involve increased participation of the private sector/actor in co-producing and co-distributing public services (Gao et al., 2013). Moreover, it entails democratic attributes in governance such as cooperative, collective, openness, participative, and deliberative processes (Hu & Tang, 2010; Wang et al., 2018). Nakrošis et al. (2018), however, claim that any measure in governance reform obliges consistent “policy reforms and strong reform leadership” (p. 12) to mobilize a coalition of support to fulfill reform commitments. Hence, it is crucial that a strong political will and leadership is to be displayed on the part of key political leaders to transform disjointed governance into holistic governance.

With the phenomenon of globalization and the internet revolution, the meaning of governance encompasses levels of sub-national, national, and cross-national governments as well as a variety of public bodies and public-private partnerships (Flinders & Smith, 1999; Light, 2000). The advancement of information technology makes e-government an inevitable governing option. It is undeniable that improving e-government services through more effective use of data is a major focus of countries globally. Public e-services and projects are carried out within the framework of holistic governance (Felix, et al., 2017). Among its key features is emphasizing the unique role of governments which provide information, data, aggregation processes, and other policy tools to empower enterprises to deliver public services (Hardi & Buti, 2012).

Figure 1 below shows the holistic governance framework. It depicts the major actors, the roles they play, and the interactive relationship in the cycle of public services in a digital government context.



Note. Adapted from “Holistic Governance for Sustainable Public Services: Reshaping Government–Enterprise Relationships in China’s Digital Government Context” *International Journal on Environmental Research and Public Health* 2020, 17(5), 1778; <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17051778>

The framework has four main entities, namely: governments, which refer to all levels (local, regional, and national) of government endowed with authority and mandate to direct implementation of policies and programs, regulate functions of public agencies and instrumentalities, and disclose government processes; enterprises, which stand for the private sector and enterprise associated with public e-services delivery that often predominates in social, electronic payment, e-commerce, etc., and have the ability to replace the government's independent provider of public services; citizens, represent the needs, demands, and outcomes of sustainable public services and goods of non-state actors that interlock with holistic governance arrangement; and government process, which denotes the management of public service delivery and interactions between and among governments, enterprises (private sector), and citizens. The governance process takes more pluralistic patterns of rules than policy tools, putting more emphasis on the process, procedures, and practices.

Given such a framework, holistic governance employs the principles of coordination, integration, and responsibility as a government mechanism; utilizes information technology as a tool to integrate different levels of governance, functions of governance, and public-private cooperation; and facilitates the process from decentralized to centralized, from parts to the whole, and from fragmentation to integration. Tang and Zhao (2012) express that it constructs a three-dimensional integration model through the integration of governance hierarchy, the integration of governance functions, and the integration between public and private departments.

The integration of government functions needs not only an amalgamating mechanism but also a changing of values structure in government operation. These values include integrity, accountability, service, equity, innovation, teamwork, excellence, honesty, commitment, quality, openness, communication, recognition, trust, effectiveness, and leadership (Kernaghan et al., 2000, p. 269). These organizational values are dynamic, interactive, forward-looking, and active. Cultivating these values and making them the backbone of governmental operation demands a different breed of civil servants.

When the governing environment becomes even more complex and delicate, the knowledge and expertise required of these civil servants will be enormous. Only when the idea of holistic governance enters civil servants' bloodstream and integrated operations become natural can the success of holistic governance be achieved (Richards & Kavanagh, 2000, p. 9). Gawthrop (1998) further asserts that administrators should have strong democratic and ethical convictions, a deep belief in the superior values of democracy, and a moral vision of democracy (p. 24). And so, it is evident that political leadership will play the most important role in achieving the momentum that the holistic governance ideal demands.

Yet, attaining the goal of holistic governance compels political leadership to ensure that governance is free from corrupt behavior and practices. World Bank defines corruption as the "abuse of public office for private gain—covers a wide range of behavior, from bribery to theft of public funds." (World Bank, 2020, para. 1) In as much as corruption is bad governance, tackling it is imperative. The foregoing examines the prospect of holistic governance in mitigating, if not resolving, systemic corruption (committed collectively rather than individually) in the Philippine government.

Briefer: The Current State of Philippine Bureaucracy and Holistic Governance Challenge

Philippine bureaucracy is classified into three broad categories. One, by constitutional origin, comprises the constitutional commissions – Commission on Civil Service (CSC), Commission on Election (COMELEC), and Commission on Audit (COA). Two, by branches – Executive, Legislative, and Judiciary. Lastly, by levels of government – national, regional (including autonomous and administrative regions), and local governments. The distinction is also made between bureaucracies in the regular departments of government and those in corporate or semi-government entities otherwise known as government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs). As of May 2022, there are approximately 1.7 million civil servants employed. Most of the total non-career positions hold casual and contractual positions (CSC).

Principally, the administrative structure of government is composed of cabinet departments under the executive branch, which are divided into administrative units called bureaus, commissions, offices, or other units of equivalent level. In turn, bureaus are subdivided into divisions and finally into sections. Presently, there are 24 departments² under the executive branch. Philippine bureaucracy is organized along sectoral lines, having an extreme influence on the organization of field offices in local government units (LGUs).

Historically, the structure of the Philippine government has been notoriously fragmented and disparate. Reorganization or administrative reform has been a continuing agenda of the national government to address this problem. It is the traditional response to perceived inefficiency, ineffectiveness, and irresponsiveness of the bureaucracy. Practically, all elected presidents of the country have reorganized the government in one way or another.

Despite the promise of a better delivery system of public goods and services to the people through changes in the functions, structures, and management of agencies within the executive branch of government, the reorganization has created more administrative dysfunctions. These have been manifested through duplication and overlapping of functions, red tape, and administrative inefficiency. The bureaucratic pathologies do not only debilitate the capacity of government to respond to the people's growing needs and demands. It also erodes, eventually, the credibility and legitimacy of government as a political institution tasked to safeguard and serve the interests of the people.

Reyes (1993, p. 251) affirms that the insignificant impact of reorganization is due to its narrow focus on the “internal dynamics of structure and on functions mainly addressed to central office operations” as well as non-recognition of the participation of the client system thus exposing reorganization to “political interference reminiscent of the patronage system.” He further says that the bureaucracy should veer away from inward-looking organizational measures and adopt outward-looking strategies that involve other sectors of society in the delivery of services.

Moreover, Uphoff (1995) contends that the ratio of input to output or the use of the “mechanistic model” cannot simply measure the bureaucracy's productivity (efficiency) and performance (effectiveness). While not completely discarding the traditional approach in gauging productivity, he opines that the determinants of administrative productivity have their limitations as causal factors. Consequently, there is a need to turn to other factors, usually less material and less measurable

than inputs considered in input-output models of administration. Uphoff (1995) believes that the design systems of production—economic, political, social, and administrative—contribute heavily to productivity.

Besides, the control policies are often developed into stringent procedural safeguards, which, when interpreted from the standpoint of enforcing agencies become ends in themselves regardless of the terminal values for which these safeguards have been formulated. In other words, the over-emphasis on compliance with rules and procedures consequently sacrifices the goals and objectives of the agency concerned. Bureaucrats are enamored with their respective unit's individualized program of control without an appreciation of the overall objectives of control. Thus, leading to the failure of the social service delivery system.

When control measures are instituted without considering the entire spectrum of government work, administrative dysfunctions are bound to occur directly or otherwise. Manifestly, control devices are carved not because of a diligent and perspicacious appraisal of their need, but as spontaneous exaggerated reactions to remedy a certain transient public problem. They are iatrogenic in the sense that they do not completely solve problems but recreate additional ones. It is in this light that bureaucracy faces the challenge of recasting its orientation from rigid and strict rules and regulations to values of responsiveness toward client needs and demands.

Apart from administrative inefficiency, the prevalence of political patronage impedes the positive development and institutionalization of the culture of merit in Philippine bureaucracy.³ Despite the technological inputs to management processes, often resulting in more controls imposed on and by the bureaucratic system, patronage continues to flourish. Patronage de-motivates when it is utilized in the recruitment of public personnel. It becomes worse when it becomes the deciding factor in cases of promotion since civil service personnel look at promotion as an important aspect of career advancement in government. Often, political interference is the major and critical single factor identified as interfering with promotion and, hence, career progression.

Civil service employees, especially the rank and file, have accepted the reality that the lack of required educational qualifications and paucity of training and educational opportunities are not impediments to entering government service. A combination of poor or low educational preparation and unclear career paths has constrained the professionalization of public organizations. On the other hand, for the professional and technical categories, a definite route towards getting a career in government is through performance with patronage. The common practice of political intervention is abetted by the regularity of changes in the political leadership. This means that after each election, political debts have to be paid. Given the principles of political neutrality and security of tenure, the bureaucracy in due time will be dominated by misfits and undesirables.

In pursuit of merit, competence, and performance, the CSC raised the passing grade in examinations for entry to the government service. However, shortly after implementing the policy, Republic Act 6850 was passed in February 1990. This law provides government employees under temporary appointment status with at least seven years of efficient service given not only civil service eligibility but permanency as well. This does not enhance merit recruitment but a reinforcement of patronage. It is unfair to the civil service eligibles who had to prove themselves qualified by examination and not by length of service.

The bureaucracy remains beset with a long list of complex administrative dysfunctions. The dysfunctionality of the Philippine system of government is much related to politics as the condition of the permanent bureaucracy. Furthermore, the absence of a comprehensive and detailed framework by which administrative problems are to be prioritized and analyzed, whereby reforms can be put in place more systematically and consistently contributes to the continuing malaise in the bureaucracy (Reyes, 1994).

Insofar as holistic governance boosts institutional integration, collaboration, and partnership between and among government departments apart from bringing citizens and private enterprises together in co-producing public goods and carrying out general services, good governance is projected to be invigorated, while corruption is likely to be reduced to the minimum. The diversity of departments yet working as one apparatus to accomplish an overarching societal goal entails an all-inclusive, holistic approach that encompasses a multidisciplinary, multipronged, multidimensional, and coordinated response in curbing corruption, i.e., acting against corrupt ways and systems that go beyond individual efforts and traditional public-private sector divide. Conceivably, there is an inverse relation between good and effective governance, as driven by holistic governance on the one hand, and corruption on the other hand.

Battling Corruption Through Holistic Governance

In today's globalized economy, corrupt habits and customs are undertaken by multiple actors and perpetrators rather than in isolation. They are carried out in multiple borders and business sectors rather than in a single country and solitary sector. Countries with higher levels of corruption have lower levels of economic growth (Mauro, 1997), less investment, lower levels of inward foreign investment (Wei, 2000), and increased costs of doing business (Svensson, 2005).

Corrupt behaviors include the commission of a range of offenses, from tax crime and money laundering to breaking anti-trust law and fraud as well as bribery and embezzlement. These offenses play a key role in deterring the exercise of effective and good governance. In governments, political corruption is prevalent, manifested in any of the following: abuse of public power, office, or resources by elected government officials or their network of contacts for illegitimate personal gain, by extortion, soliciting, offering bribes, lobbying, cronyism, nepotism, patronage, influence peddling, graft, and purchasing votes by enacting laws which use taxpayers' money. In terms of victims, corruption does not discriminate, but the world's poorest and most vulnerable across sectors suffer the worst rather than the rich.

In the Philippines for instance, corruption continues to be one of the major issues. Despite the repeated promises of every Philippine president since the post-war until the advent of democratic regimes after the fall of Ferdinand Marcos's authoritarian rule to extirpate graft and corruption in government, this aspiration has not been realized. Over two decades (1996-2019), under the presidencies of Ramos, Estrada, Arroyo, Aquino, and Duterte, World Bank Indicators (WBI) show that corruption in the Philippine government has not been abated.

Table 2 displays the estimated governance scores ascribed to the Philippines in line with the aforesaid dimensions. The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) assesses the country's governance performance ranging from -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong). On corruption control, the country has consistently obtained negative scores.

Table 2
Corruption Control Indicator by Political Regime (1996-2019)

Philippine President (Year)	1996	2000	2005	2010	2015	2019
Fidel Ramos	-0.36					
Joseph Estrada		-0.51				
Gloria Arroyo			-0.62			
Arroyo/Benigno Aquino III				-0.76		
Benigno Aquino III					-0.45	
Rodrigo Duterte						-0.57

Note. The source of basic data is the World Governance Indicators dataset (World Bank, 2020).

In the 2019 Corruption Perception Index (CPI⁴), one of the most trusted measures of corruption around the world published by Transparency International (TI), the Philippines ranked 113 least corrupt out of 180 countries with a score of 34 (TI, 2020); in 2020 and 2021, the country scored 34 and 33 respectively (TI, 2021). According to TI, two-thirds of countries scored below 50, indicating serious corruption problems. Unfortunately, the Philippines belongs to the group that scored below 50 signifying serious corruption problems (TI, n.d.).

For the past 76 years, political leaders, civil servants, and general citizens have been aware that corruption is rampant and efforts to curb it remain a failure. It has grown over seven decades spreading to the vital centers of government. In 2000, it was widely perceived that corruption had undermined investor confidence and reduced the public's faith in the government's sincerity and capability to combat corruption (World Bank, 2001).

Twenty-two (22) years later, the picture has not changed. Surprisingly, newly elected President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s State of the Nation Address (SONA) delivered on 25 July 2022 did not mention anything about resolving the issue of graft and corruption in government. A survey conducted by Pulse Asia in September 2022 reveals that 36 percent of Filipinos believe that corruption has yet to be controlled. This was echoed by 67% of business leaders in a joint survey done by the Management Association of the Philippines (MAP) and Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) in the same month. They affirm that any economic recovery plans of the Marcos, Jr. administration will be uncertain with unbridled corruption.

Deeds of corruption are by far carried out as the supply and demand sides of corruption unceasingly operate. The "supply" side represents persons (common and ordinary), businesspersons, or organizations who/which offer bribes or inducements in the form of money, gifts, loans, fees, rewards, or other advantages (taxes, services, donations, favors, etc. in exchange for "special treatment" either to contravene what is legal and official procedures, rules, and regulations or influence decisions, process, and actions of government officials, politicians, bureaucrats, or any person in charge of public duty. These officials whether in national, regional, or local governments who have the power to issue licenses, or to allocate some scarce resource denote the "demand" side of corruption. Included in the demand sides are the countries' oversight institutions (including the legislatures and the bureaucracy), which do not

adequately ensure that national and local anti-corruption laws are enforced for the general reason that members of these institutions are the principal beneficiaries of non-implementation of anti-corruption rulings and directives.

As in economics, the point of equilibrium where the “demand” and “supply” curves of corruption meet is the price of corruption that society bears. In 2019, Philippine Deputy Ombudsman Ramos estimated that the country has been losing P700 billion (equivalent to around USD12 billion, based on the November 2022 exchange rate) every year to corruption, making the Philippines the sixth most corrupt nation in the Asia Pacific. The amount costs the country some 20 percent of the annual government budget and could have purchased 1.4 million housing units for the poor, helped around seven million Filipinos, and a buffer stock of rice goods for a year (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2022). Also, the cost of corruption could be translated to an estimated additional 7,000 kilometers of road or at least 700,000 classrooms more (Guinigundo, 2021).

Combating corruption commands a strong political will among some key influential politicians and bureaucrats. It involves heightened awareness and consciousness of the linkages and relationships between the various serious economic crimes that are often engaged in corruption cases, including ensuring that governments have the tools and capacity necessary to warrant effective inter-departmental and inter-agency information sharing, with appropriate safeguards. Finding these synergies is a question of meaningfully and sustainably coordinating between different areas of expertise and specialization.

In view that holistic governance employs the use of advanced information technology, builds statistical capacity, develops ICT infrastructure, and enables civic technology activities to generate knowledge, data, aggregate processes, and other policy tools engendered by public resources and services, government processes and public-private transactions and innovations must be transparent and accountable. This makes available services to be trustworthy and improves citizens’ confidence not only in public goods but also in government institutions.

Transparency and Accountability

Holistic governance has structurally embedded the notion and practice of transparency and accountability (T&A) into the processes and procedures of public administration. The concepts of T&A are closely linked. Transparency and accountability are the fundamental elements of abolishing corruption in either local or national government. In as much as corruption is bad governance, tackling it, among others, include adequate and credible flow of information, strong civil society, effective and transparent financial management systems, and procurement regulations whose process are fair and open.

The United Nations identified T&A as part of a set of principles of good governance, the core of upright public management. Aside from an array of literature on governance and development studies, international development agencies like the World Bank (WB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) considered T&A as the main dimensions of good governance (Kaufmann et al., 2006) and pillars of sound development management (ADB, 1995, 1999). The 2004 World Development Report placed T&A relationships among policymakers, service providers, and clients at the center of development effectiveness (World Bank, 2003).

In over two decades, Gaventa and McGee (2013) reflect that T&A arose as a significant governance tool for resolving developmental failures and democratic deficits. It is argued that corruption, inefficiency, and government wastage are substantially addressed when there is a high sense of T&A in government. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which was launched by a UN Summit in New York on 25-27 September 2015, affirms the explicit connection between corruption, peace and justice, governance, and inclusive societies in its definition of Goal 16, which states: “[p]romote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.” Its corruption-focused targets, specifically from items 16.5 to 16.8 of the aforesaid goal, recognize that constrained institutional capacity to tackle corruption undermines efforts for sustainable development and security.

In simplest terms, transparency means having nothing to hide, openness, and honesty. Transparency implies that all actions of an organization should be scrupulous enough to bear public scrutiny. It allows government processes and transactions to be observable and verifiable to outsiders, and it ensures that actions can be checked at any given time by a non-government actor or observer. It permits any question that may arise along the way to be answered clearly by the government and its instrumentalities.

Transparency in holistic governance does not only render the necessary disclosures on government records, contracts, transactions, and other information requested by the public (except on national security) but includes the unfolding of the methods on how such information and data are derived and extracted. Unlike the usually known notion of “transparency,” whereby the government provides access to facts and figures as enquired by the interested public (as stipulated by the Freedom of Information (FOI) Program or Executive Order No. 2 of 2016⁹), the holistic approach divulges the tools used to generate the information, how data are analyzed and interpreted, and by what means that conclusions are drawn. The availability of right and accurate information could be used by citizens, civil society organizations, private organizations, and other interested parties and stakeholders to build cases against corrupt officials of government for prosecution and deter possible “thieves” in government from committing acts inimical to the interest of the government and people.

Moreover, Lindstedt and Naurin (2010) contend that merely making information available will not prevent corruption if education, freedom of the press, and fair elections are fragile, ineffective, and feeble. The study finds that reforms focusing on increasing transparency should be accompanied by measures for strengthening citizens’ capacity to act upon the available information if positive effects on corruption are to be realized and brought to fruition.

In Kosack and Fung’s (2014) assessment of the evolution of transparency from an end to a tool for dealing with real-world and specific concerns of government performance, the researchers found that T&A interventions improve the quality of public services in developing countries. As a concept, transparency scaffolds accountability. It measures authorities’ performance and guards against any possible misuse of powers. In that sense, transparency serves to achieve accountability that holds authorities responsible for their actions. In practice, transparency is an act

that allows internal and external forces of governance to probe into, gain entry to, and influence to a certain extent government operations. While transparency exists on government websites largely at the munificence of officials, accountability exists when citizens can challenge the state to justify its actions and penalize authorities if they fail to meet certain standards set forth and values expected to rise.

However, some analysts acknowledge that transparency is necessary but far from sufficient to produce accountability (Fox, 2007). Transparency according to Peixoto (2013) is only a quarter of the “minimal chain of events” (p. 203) that leads to accountability. Fox (2007) believes that there are fundamentally three (3) major reasons why transparency does not lead to accountability. One is due to *opaque or fuzzy transparency*, defined as the release of information that is not useful, usable, or reliable, and the dissemination of information does not make known how institutions behave or turn out to be inaccurate. This neither leads to answerability nor generates insights that demand a response. Moreover, there is missing data, or the quality of data is inferior or sub-standard (an issue that the Independent Expert Advisory Group aims to address; see IEAG [2014]). Without resolving the data gap, providing accurate information at the right time further complicates efforts toward accountability. In addition, achieving *hard accountability* requires a functioning governing regime and active civil society with the capacity to inspire and encourage public accountability institutions to do their job. Concomitantly, an enlarged capacity and activity of civil society enhances the accountability of public officials, cultivates transparency on the provision of relevant and reliable information affecting public welfare, and strengthens predictability on the application of laws, regulations, and policies.

Inversely, an empirical study of Kosack and Fung (2014, as cited in Carolan, 2016, p. 6) enumerated the following conditions where transparency leads to accountability:

- a. the right information is published in the right way at the right time;
- b. societal actors can find, access, use data to share and generate ideas or use them to engage with services;
- c. there is space to spawn and share insights, and demand a response; and
- d. presence of a functioning response systems to impose sanctions or introduce other changes; or citizens have sufficient choice or support from public officials.

Perceptibly, aforesaid conditions are in effect and existent in a society where democratic values and institutions are generally and relatively respected and recognized.

Democratic Values And Institutions

In holistic governance, online transactions among others, are set to achieve efficiency, quality, security, and more importantly uphold democratic rule and values through a digital technology that can foster governmental operations that enhance the delivery of integrated public services in a fair, just, consumer-focused, and socially oriented manner. In parallel with T&A, they have their democratic functions as well

in view that a high degree of clarity and openness would increase the capacity of the majority of the population, especially the poor and/or marginalized people, to play a greater role, at least at the local level, in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation that affect their lives and future on the one hand, and increases the scale of answerability and culpability of government authorities on their duties and responsibilities on the other hand. The participative and collaborative fashion in the operation of the policy cycle (formulation-adoption-implementation-evaluation-maintenance) in conjunction with the contribution of the key sectors of society sustains the democratic principle embedded in holistic governance.

In several studies concerning the nexus between democracy and corruption, it has been documented that well-established democracies have lower levels of corruption compared to authoritarian regimes or young democracies (Fjelde & Hegre, 2014; Kalenborn & Lessmann, 2013; Mohtadi & Roe, 2003; Treisman, 2000). The National Endowment for Democracy's (NED) (2019) Democracy Digest additionally claims that "countries which recently transitioned to democratic governance often did not develop effective anti-corruption and integrity mechanisms, and now find themselves stuck in a cycle of high corruption and low-performing democratic institutions" (para. 3, no. 2). Certainly, as corruption diverts scarce resources of the country from public to private gain, it undercuts democracy. Similarly, it is avowed to weaken the rule of law, social justice, and popular will, and undermine trust and confidence of the citizens in political institutions and processes (Holmes, 2006; Jong-sung & Khagram, 2005).

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, n.d.) notes that democratic regimes experience corruption when they "lack transparency in political and campaign financing, have outdated laws on freedom of information, provide insufficient protection to whistle-blowers, or have unreliable media" (p. 10). Nevertheless, other studies show that democratic regimes that are transparent and accountable are not necessarily free from corruption (Ferrin, 2016; McMann et.al, 2017; Seldadyo & De Haan, 2011; Shen, 2005; Uslaner & Rothstein, 2016). Corruption scandals recorded in the United States, United Kingdom, Iceland, Spain, and other Western countries exhibit the degree of corruption among the foremost democratic countries of the world (Gamir, 2015).

The cases illustrate that there is no "one size fits all" solution for preventing corruption, yet there are certain mechanisms and elements in democratic and democratizing countries that support anti-corruption compared to authoritarian establishments which tend to exercise excessive executive power, limited political pluralism, media control, human rights violations, and military reinforcement of the regime. These common institutional characteristics make corruption risks higher in authoritarian systems or autocracies.

The probability that democratic systems across the world, from liberal democracy to democratic socialism as well as direct and indirect democracy, adopting a whole-of-society approach that enables the state to address corruption in a holistic manner through a transparent, accountable, and inclusive national institutions is higher than non-democratic states. Having holistic governance draws in the wider community to support state's national anti-corruption efforts. In the same vein, democratic obstructions can prevent poorer, marginalized, or less powerful communities from securing accountability. Consequently, a less accountable state increases the prospect of corruption and other abuses of who wields the power.

In the inaugural conference of the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA⁶) in 2010 in Vienna, Austria, then Vice-Chancellor Spindelegger and Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria, underscored the importance of promoting “holistic approaches to the fight against corruption, combining research, education and training and taking into consideration the links between development cooperation and anti-corruption action” (IACA, 2010, no. 8). The IACA conference report adds that holistic and comprehensive system by which government entities are directed and controlled does not only cover the wide aspects of good governance and institutional reforms but also consider “inter-disciplinary, interregional, inter-cultural and inter-sectoral approach” in overcoming “shortcomings in knowledge and practice in the field of anti-corruption” (IACA, 2010, no. 33).

Capacity Building, Education, and Training of Civil Servants

Corruption in government is committed both individually and collectively (systemic corruption). Individualized corruption is a function of a few factors: (a) difficulty of the bureaucrats in coping with the present economic realities because of low salary level of government employees; (b) weak moral fiber or low moral standard and values; and (c) deficiency in the bureaucratic apparatus that enables the bureaucrat to engage in graft behavior. On the other hand, systemic corruption exists when a corrupt act recurs unswervingly and is coupled to other corrupt acts through an underlying system that enables and encourages the corruption. Besides, it is attributed to the existing negative ethic-social culture. The emphasis given to the kinship network system or one’s family ties breed graft and corruption. Another negative behavior that has been otherwise made a social norm is the ostentatious display of material wealth. The fact remains that dishonest officials are accepted instead of rebuked by the public. Furthermore, the complex system of justice may also hinder the prosecution of criminal and administrative cases. This is aggravated by the court’s snail pace in deciding and disposing of graft cases.

To come to grips with systemic corruption involves designing all types of interventions (i.e., political, legal, administrative, technological, cultural, among others) and requires approaches that need to go beyond the sorts of standard interventions that target more isolated forms of malfeasance. IACA (2010, no. 32) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2011) have recognized the dire need for training, education, and capacity-building programmes for a new generation of anti-corruption experts including anti-corruption agencies (ACA) tasked with investigative and prosecutorial functions.

Under holistic governance, the private sector, trade unions, and civil society organizations (CSO) must act as watchdogs and be sensitized on their role in fighting corruption. The participation of CSOs in governance allows that authority and power are shared in enacting policies and decisions affecting society’s public life, aspirations, and interests. It espouses the principles of inclusiveness and democratization in governance, and hence the empowerment of people organized outside of state’s apparatus.

Civil servants in holistic governance are to be subjected to intense and heightened training and human resource development to improve their services to the public in a more transparent and accountable manner. As articulated by

Denhardt and Denhardt (2003, p. 189), the public sector must possess the following qualities: (a) commitment toward organizational values; (b) dedication to serve the public; (c) staunchness to empowerment and leadership sharing; and (d) allegiance to pragmatic incrementalism. An active civil service therefore needs a new system of human resources management that recruits and selects civil servant possessing qualities like moral sense, firm commitment, and initiative taking.

Civil servants are to be trained not only in identifying which target to meet but also how to go about meeting them through detailed prescription of professional practice, i.e., how public services are delivered using allocated resources, and a mindset that commits oneself to public service. Note that the failure of the bureaucracy to carry out its tasks and respond to urgent challenges wear away the political acceptability of government.

In this regard, several donor and multilateral agencies have been carrying out anti-corruption and bribery training programs to build the capacity of governments and institutions to fight corruption. These focus on anti-fraud platforms and packages on identifying of corruption risks and potential conflicts of interest. The Transparency International has acknowledged that, among the donor and development agencies, the World Bank, Australian Aid (AusAid), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and UN agencies, stand out in anti-corruption training curricula because of their comprehensive application of anti-corruption capacity building programs in their operations.

Complementing training and capacity-building programs on corruption mitigation entails adopting alternative strategies that challenge the incentives and norms of a corrupt system. This is to empower executive politicians and members of the legislatures, apart from bureaucrats and civil servants, to fight corruption to build up the equity and efficiency of public service delivery institutions, use their leadership positions within social networks to bolster normative constraints against the most pernicious forms of corruption, and assemble a coalition of public servants to oppose effectively systemic types of corruption. Involving the totality of public servants and political leaders in curbing and resolving corruption is one of the key characteristics of holistic governance.

Conclusion

The issue of good governance persists to be a vital question in the Philippines. The state's inability to pursue the policy and practice of inclusiveness in governance through deep and expansive engagement with civil society and accomplish public functions in a transparent and accountable manner, will continue to obstruct its political development, unless serious and consistent structural changes are established in government institutions. As mentioned earlier in this article, it has been regrettable that the newly elected President, Ferdinand Marcos Jr. overlooked corruption as one of the key issues in national development and nation building in his July 2022 State of the Nation Address.

In as much as corruption is bad governance, challenging it among others, include adequate and credible flow of information, strong civil society, effective and transparent financial management systems, and procurement regulations whose processes are fair and open. The state's inability to pursue the policy and practice of inclusiveness in governance through deep and expansive engagement with civil

society and accomplish public functions in a transparent and accountable manner will endure to obstruct good public management.

Corruption is an extraordinarily complex phenomenon and tends to persist over time. An anti-corruption strategy will only be effective when it manages to convince key players that the rules of the game have indeed changed. Among other things, this requires changing incentives, including through a credible threat of prosecution. In addition to enhancing the rule of law, experience demonstrates that increased transparency and economic reforms that eliminate excessive regulation play a major role in this area. While, in some cases, the relevant initiatives will be of a general nature, in other cases, they may need to be specifically targeted at corrupt activity.

Fighting corruption requires a long-term and holistic approach and strategy. As the article suggests, the adoption of holistic governance in the country has the high probability of mitigating individual and systemic corruption. The inherent features of holistic governance, as conceptualized by Perri 6 in 1997—transparent and accountable transactions, democratic institutions, entrenched values of good governance among civil servants—are essentially key elements in confronting corruption.

Introduced by 6, holistic governance applies the principles of coordination, integration, and responsibility as a government mechanism; utilizes information technology as a tool to integrate different levels of governance, functions of governance, and public-private cooperation; and facilitates the process, from decentralized to centralized, from parts to the whole, and from fragmentation to integration. Holistic governance tended not simply to provide more opportunities for citizen engagement but also to put a heavier weight on the role of enterprises, especially the rising internet enterprises, in the digital government context (Emerson et.al., 2011). Although not originally conceived as an anti-corruption type of governance, the qualities and facets of holistic governance possesses the curative and corrective components against corruption.

Apart from the integrative function of holistic governance, its concern in transforming civil servants to embody the following qualities and values of a bureaucrat: integrity, accountability, service, equity, innovation, teamwork, excellence, honesty, commitment, quality, openness, communication, recognition, trust, effectiveness, and leadership, are antidotes of corruption. Under holistic governance, an improved breed of civil servants is developed. They are subjected to rigid performance audit, inspection, and scrutiny. A new civil service development plan is designed to shape a better mindset of civil servants who have a firm commitment to public service, uprightness, and reliability.

In as much as, for every bribe taken by a public official, there is a bribe given, holistic governance has entrenched its anti-corruption approach to includes measures directed at the private sector. This gives the opportunity for the government to enact laws that criminalize not only bribing domestic public officials but also foreign public officials. The United States had adopted such laws as early as 1977, in its Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA). The law prohibits all US citizens and entities from bribing foreign government officials to benefit their business interests (FCPA, 1977). The FCPA has been applicable worldwide and extended to include officers, directors, employees, shareholders, and agents of publicly traded companies following its amendment in 1988. Furthermore, the inclusiveness of holistic governance allows the

private sector to take an impactful role in shaping the architecture of anti-corruption institutions and cases through public interest litigation.

Finally, despite the non-acknowledgement of the current administration that corruption is the huge stumbling block to national development and nation-state building, several scholarly studies and international development agencies have concluded that corruption is a developmental and governance issue that should be addressed. For the Philippines, it remains a critical issue that has yet to be resolved. As argued in this paper, it is suggested that holistic, all-inclusive, and whole-of-society governance and approach is an option that the government may take to mitigate acts and behaviors of corruption.

Perceptively, if holistic governance is to be realized, politicians, policymakers, and bureaucrats have to learn to participate actively in the process of integration, give up their political and organizational interests, provide and mobilize more resources to appropriate departments, agencies, and offices, and fulfill the national mandate to build a transparent, democratic, efficient and effective bureaucracy, run by civil servants imbued with a deep sense of nationalism and public service, comparable to governments in some Scandinavian countries like Denmark, Finland, and Sweden, and the Asian city-state, Singapore. Only when this quest is achieved can reformers, campaigners, and champions of good and effective governance talk seriously of a government that works and a nation that is built on solid rock.

Endnotes

¹ Perri 6 is a British social scientist. He changed his name from David Ashworth to Perri 6 in 1983.

² These departments are headed by either Cabinet Secretaries or Cabinet-level Secretaries. These are the Department of: (1) Agrarian Reform; (2) Agriculture; (3) Budget and Management; (4) Education, Culture and Sports; (5) Energy; (6) Environment and Natural Resources; (7) Finance; (8) Foreign Affairs; (9) Health; (10) Human Settlements and Urban Development; (11) Information and Communication Technology; (12) Interior and Local Government; (13) Justice; (14) Labor and Employment; (15) Migrant Workers; (16) National Defense; (17) Public Works and Highways; (18) Science and Technology; (19) Social Welfare and Development; (20) Tourism; (21) Trade and Industry; (22) Transportation; (23) Information and Communications Technology; (24) Presidential Communications and Operations Office; and (25) National Economic and Development Authority.

³ For a historical background on the roots of political patronage and the spoils system in the civil service, see Endriga (1985).

⁴ The CPI ranks on a scale from 100 (very clean) to 0 (highly corrupt). Countries scoring 0 to 49 are perceived as more corrupt and those from 50 to 99 as less corrupt.

⁵ The Freedom of Information (FOI) Program or Executive Order No. 2 was signed by former President Rodrigo Duterte on 23 July 2016. It requires all executive departments, agencies, bureaus, and offices to disclose public records, contracts, transactions, and any information requested by a member of the public, except for matters affecting national security and other information that falls under the inventory of exceptions issued by then Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea.

⁶ The International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA) was launched in 2010 by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), International Police (Interpol), European Anti-Fraud Office (commonly known as OLAF, from the French: *Office européen de lutte antifraude*), and the Republic of Austria and other stake-holders to help implement the UN Convention against Corruption. The IACA functions as an independent center of excellence in the field of anti-corruption education, training, networking and cooperation, as well as academic research, and will seek broad partnerships with public and private sector entities.

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