

Press Release

Philippines: New book out on solving the GRP-NDFP peace process, from the time of Duterte to the time of Marcos

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A new book titled *How do you solve a problem like the GRP-NDFP peace process?* Part 2 has just come off the press in time for the inauguration of President-elect Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. and the official start of his new administration. The backdrop of this, and the subject of the second of two major parts (20 articles from 2016 to 2021) of the book, is the outgoing Duterte administration’s starting off on a high note of resumed on-and-off peace talks with the communist rebels that however soon enough went downhill and ended with a still particularly intensified and acrimonious war on the military, political, propaganda, legal and other fronts of conflict. The book concludes with a call for rethinking and renewing the peace talks, but reiterates the need for a change or shift in the “rabid” paradigms predominant on both sides.

The book’s call for rethought and renewed peace talks, at first glance, may not jibe with the reported sense of the incoming National Security Adviser (NSA) long-time political science Prof. Clarita Carlos that “we’re done with peace talks,” indicating no more peace negotiations with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)-New People’s Army (NPA)-National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP). But even without such peace talks and a normally accompanying ceasefire, the book prescribes ways for waging peace even while war mainly is being waged.

Aside from prescribing respect for human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL) as an indispensable minimum in a situation of continuing armed hostilities, the book in its first major part (14 articles from 2004 to 2015) also goes back to earlier years pre-Duterte for a peace-oriented reform agenda so that this may be revisited for what it may be worth for waging peace even without peace talks. In fact, the peace-oriented reform agenda would relate to Prof. Carlos’ related remark that “We have agreement [with the NDFP] on certain things. Let’s proceed with that. We already know what to do.” But it certainly would do no harm to also learn from others or from other perspectives of peace, human security and human development in the Philippines.

Other “paths to peace,” including those more community-based approaches but not counter-insurgency-oriented, and which enable a bigger role for independent civil society peace advocacy, are presented. Some of these components could also fork into a reinvented or restructured peace talks when the still uncertain time for this comes when both sides are already properly ready for honest-to-goodness negotiations for an actual political settlement, “with neither blame nor surrender, but with dignity for all concerned.”

The new book is authored by long-time peace advocate, researcher and writer, human rights and IHL lawyer, legal scholar and currently Judge Soliman M. Santos, Jr of Naga City. It is actually a sequel to his 2016 book *How do you solve a problem like the GPH-NDFP peace process? Paradigm Shifts for 2016 and Beyond* published by the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) in Siem Reap, Cambodia in time for the start of the Duterte administration.

The new book's Foreword by international civil society peace advocate Kristian Herbolzheimer, Director of the International Catalan Institute of Peace (ICIP) in Barcelona, Spain says "Building peace requires stepping out of one's comfort zone. For anyone willing and able to take such steps, this publication provides insights and guidance for ways to bring lasting peace to the Philippines.

The new book is published this time by the independent local civil society peace advocacy organization Sulong Peace, Inc. (formerly Sulong CARHRIHL) with the assistance of printer LJ Graphics and Literary Exponent. Copies of both books are available from Sulong Peace at its office in 6-A Malamig St., Teachers Village West, Diliman, Quezon City, Tel. (02) 8296 9099, look for Julie Ann Doroja, Cel. No. (0961) 534 3387. Sulong Peace may also be contacted for this purpose thru email at contact@sulongpeace.com.

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