



# THE TASK AND MINISTRY OF PEACEMAKING IN MINDANAO: UNDERSTANDING A PEACEMAKER'S RECIPE FOR PEACE

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*This study seeks to gain an understanding of Orlando Cardinal Quevedo's written communications about the task and ministry of peacemaking in the conflict-ridden Northern Mindanao region. Given the recent signing of the Bangsa Moro Organic Law as the highly expected solid basis for a peaceful and prosperous Mindanao, it is timely to look back and pay a closer attention to the key role that he played as a peace advocate. To achieve this end, it organized and conducted a content analysis of his extensive writings about peace and its demands. Findings show that his words, firmly rooted in the conflict's historical past and yet open to the realities of the present, encompassed and helped disclose his practical wisdom, consensus-driven approach, and Catholic perspectives of its underlying challenges and imperatives. The lessons and insights that were uncovered may serve as a grounded recipe for those who would follow in his footsteps to learn and re-appropriate in a hopefully not an unending task and ministry of peacemaking in today's world.*

**Keywords:** Consensus-building; Consultations; Content Analysis; A Fusion of Horizons; Ministry; Peace; Peacemakers; Practical Wisdom; Strategies of Peacemaking

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The celebrated book *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution* narrates and shares the experience of 16 remarkable religious peacemakers hailed as “unsung heroes who have put their lives on the line in conflicts around the world, to help resolve some of the world’s horrifying conflicts.”<sup>1</sup> They are, in the words of former U.S. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, “stellar examples of religiously motivated peacemakers around the world; each of them is unique, but are all similarly motivated by a shared moral conviction and a religious calling to work until peace and justice are a reality.”<sup>2</sup> Holbrooke asserted that their impacts and what they teach about resolving today’s conflicts cannot be ignored. In this view, it is a bit a surprise that the book failed to include any of our own local peacemakers. In another book, *Mindanao: The Long to Peace and Prosperity*, only one of them was entered in the index even if as a mere footnote!<sup>3</sup>

To address the apparent lack or absence of attention to our own native peacemakers, this study decided to review the written words about peace and peacemaking of Orlando B. Quevedo, Mindanao’s lone Cardinal and the archbishop of Cotabato and who is, among the Catholic bishops of the Philippines, widely considered as the most knowledgeable and actively engaged in the quest for peace in the country’s second biggest island.<sup>4</sup> As a longtime Mindanawan, he witnessed the destructive effects of the conflict on the people’s quality of life, on the one hand, as well as envisioned the promise of a long and

lasting peace, on the other. Seeing both the lights and shadows of the armed-conflict, he embraced the task of a peacemaker and wrote extensively about it during the long process of the search for a principled and negotiated peace.

At a time when the role of religion in reducing global conflicts and the authority of its leaders are being questioned, this study seeks to answer one question skeptics like me asked about the practical side of this subfield of Peace Studies and Interreligious Dialogue.<sup>5</sup> Given the deep-seated mistrust, prejudice, bias, resentment, and anger by both parties in the armed-conflict, what can and must a peace advocate like Cardinal Quevedo possibly say and/or do? It will be guided by the following more specific concerns: “who is he, what did he say and do, how did he say or do it, and how did he keep going?”

To obtain an empirical answer to these questions, it organized (arranged in a logical manner) and analyzed (separated the whole into constituent parts in order to discover more about it) the contents of his written communications about peace and peacemaking.<sup>6</sup> It is assumed that they encompassed his manifest and latent perspectives of the protracted quest for peace in a region that, because of its rich biodiversity and natural resources, has been called as the *Land of Promise*.<sup>7</sup> To bring it into focus and frame the wealth of data and information gathered, it employed David Myers’ four strategies for peacemaking.<sup>8</sup> While Myers labeled them as the four C’s of peacemaking: contact, cooperation,

<sup>1</sup> Richard Holbrooke (2007) *Preface Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution* Edited by David Little. (Cambridge University Press: 2007), xi

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Stephens (2016). *Mindanao: The Long Journey to Peace and Prosperity*. Edited by Paul D. Hutchcroft. Anvil Publishing Inc., 2016), 91.

<sup>4</sup> Susan Allen Nan, et al. (2001). *Peacemaking: From Practice to Theory* 2001. Praeger.

<sup>5</sup> Abu-Nimer, M. (2008). *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution*. Edited by David Little. Tenenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding. Cambridge University Press 2007. Pp. 524. \$24.95. ISBN: 0-521-61894-0. *Journal of Law and Religion*, 24(1), 177-181. Doi: 10.1017/S0748081400001971)

<sup>6</sup> The data and information gathered for purposes of this study were mostly sourced from the subject’s communications such as letters, interviews as well as newspaper and journal articles from 2005-2015 accessed from his blog archive <http://abpquevedo.blogspot.com>. When copied and pasted on word document it has at least some 15, 682 words.

<sup>7</sup> Jack R. Fraenkel & Norman E. Wallen, *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education* (McGraw-Hill Inc., 2013), 472.

<sup>8</sup> David Myers, *Exploring Social Psychology*, (McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994), 281-293.





communication, and conciliation, Quevedo called them the essential elements of the road to peace.<sup>9</sup>

This study expects to uncover his own perspectives of the challenges and opportunities that have underpinned the said conflict and, perhaps more importantly, of what can and must be done towards the widely shared desire for a just and sustainable peace in the island. Furthermore, it can bring into light the general goals and specific objectives, processes, and contents of the peace negotiations for all stakeholders to consider and appreciate towards what the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer called as the “fusion of horizons.”<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, suggesting his own awareness of the inherent limitations of words, Quevedo admitted that: “It is by our lifestyle and our own behavior that we can speak louder, more than words.”<sup>11</sup> But as Ludwig Wittgenstein once wrote: “Words are deed, used not only to convey thoughts but to perform an activity.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, in the process of organizing and analyzing the contents of his words, the study can also weave a tapestry of his lived-experience of joys, hopes, and anguish in his ministry as a peace advocate.<sup>13</sup> The lessons and insights it hoped to gain may serve as a grounded recipe for peacemaking which future peacemakers may learn from and re-appropriated in the seemingly unending task and ministry of peacemaking in today’s world. Most importantly, it can provide

a pattern of meanings into the theoretical and practical implications of peacemaking as, in the words of one author, “the art of the possible.”

## II. FINDINGS

### WHO IS HE?

Cardinal Orlando B. Quevedo, OMI has performed his peacemaking task or ministry in the context of the long-standing conflict in the Mindanao region.

I have been a missionary among Muslims for the most part of my priestly life. I have been a parish priest in Jolo. I taught Muslims and Christians in a Catholic University which now has a predominantly Muslim student population.

As a Catholic leader, a Christian disciple, he is clearly convinced of his task and ministry in the conflict-ridden region:

I am for peace, the peace that God grants to people of good will. I am for the peace that God gives through the collaborative work of men and women who work conscientiously for the good of the whole country

**Figure 1:** *His Excellency Orlando Cardinal Queved seen in a peacemaking and peace-building mission. (Source: <http://abpquevedo.blogspot.com>)*



<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Gadamer explains that ‘understanding’ is the fusion of our past and present horizon. Indeed, the present cannot be formed without the past. Past and present cannot exist without each other and ‘understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves.’ Gadamer H-G. Truth and method. 2nd revised ed. London: Continuum International Publishing Group; 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Interview by Fr. Shanil Jayawardena, OMI 16th February 2014 General House, Rome. Available at <https://www.omiworld.org/interview/cardinal-orlando-b-quevedo-omi/>

<sup>12</sup> As quoted in Randy David, Duterte’s Language-Games Philippine Daily Inquirer, Public Lives August 19, 2018, Available @inquirerdotnet

<sup>13</sup> Ministry literally, a “service,” any service rendered in the Church to assist in the fulfillment of its mission. They are the services which church members undertake with certain stability and exercise on a sufficiently broad basis, thus sharing formally in the Church’s responsibility to signify the presence of Christ’s redeeming actions. (Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church, 1977).





## WHAT DID HE SAY AND DO?

Framing his words in consideration both of the conflicts' historical roots and present-day realities,<sup>14</sup> Quevedo has spoken and written broadly about the peace process which he described as “a long and tedious, arduous and difficult journey towards peace, with many stops and detours?”<sup>15</sup> Pablo Fernandez, O.P., described it as “the most dramatic chapter in the history of the Philippines, a chapter written in blood and tears and nourished in pain and suffering.”<sup>16</sup> Fernandez also observed that, even during those conflict-ridden times, there were already intermediaries, diplomats and peace negotiators between the conflicting parties of Muslims and Christians.<sup>17</sup> This only shows that “the island of Mindanao has long been a contested territory in the Philippines, beginning with Spanish colonization 400 years ago and continuing through the recent decades of conflict between the government of the Republic of the Philippines (GPH) and various rebel groups.”<sup>18</sup> What has happened in Mindanao across time is too well researched and documented to necessitate

further retelling in this study.<sup>19</sup> Suffice it to say that the internal conflict has weighed so heavily on the region's peace and progress that a comprehensive roadmap to a just and lasting peace is so much desired and longed for by its people. As one author put it, “Decades of armed conflict between the Philippine government and Muslim organizations made Sulu, one of the poorest provinces in the country.”<sup>20</sup>

Quevedo expressed this succinctly when he wrote, “Peace is the only solution to living together, developing a territory together. Peace is the only option.” In a paper delivered at the 27th General Assembly of the Bishops-Business Conference in Taguig, Metro Manila on July 8, 2003, shortly after the Buliok war, he identified the historic injustice perpetrated against Muslim Filipinos as the root cause of the conflict: “Injustice to the Moro Identity; Injustice to Moro Political Sovereignty; and Injustice to Moro integral development.” He concludes by saying that:

There is no peace without justice. Peacemaking is about doing the truth and justice, walking in kindness and love, mercy and compassion. This is the way of the heart, the way to a just and lasting peace.

Specifically, he has argued and explained the “substantive questions and lingering doubts” about “the enduring aspirations of the Bangsamoro for self-determination.” He maintained that for

<sup>14</sup> Understanding<sup>7</sup> is the fusion of our past and present horizon. Indeed, the present cannot be formed without the past. Past and present cannot exist without each other and ‘understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves. Gadamer. As quoted in Jeff Clark, Philosophy, Understanding and the consultation: a fusion of horizons. *British Journal of General Practice* 2008 January 1; 58 (546): 58-60. doi: [10.3399/bjgp08X263929] Available online at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2148246/>

<sup>15</sup> Two major wars occurred while Quevedo was President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines for two-year terms (1999 to 2003: the Estrada administration's “all-out war” in 2000 which displaced nearly a million residents and the Arroyo administration's 2003 Buliok war which displaced nearly half a million residents. Both wars occurred in the midst of peace talks. (MindaNews/05 February). More recently, the Mamasapano tragedy happened when the MOA-AD was about to be signed into law by the government.

<sup>16</sup> Pablo Fernandez, O.P. *History of the Church in the Philippines (1521-1898)* (Metro Manila: National Book Store, 1979), 203. See also Brady, C., Agoncillo, O., Butardo-Toribio, M. Z., Dolom, B., & Olvida, C. V. (2013). Improving natural resource governance and building peace and stability in Mindanao, Philippines. *Livelihoods, natural resources, and post-conflict peacebuilding*.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Brady, C., Agoncillo, O., Butardo-Toribio, M. Z., Dolom, B., & Olvida, C. V. (2013). Improving natural resource governance and building peace and stability in Mindanao, Philippines. *Livelihoods, natural resources, and post-conflict peacebuilding*. For a brief but highly informative account of the history of the Mindanao conflict see Dida, G. R. (2012). *The Search for Peace in Mindanao: Resolving a Wicked Problem*. Army War College Carlisle Barracks PA.

<sup>19</sup> See the following studies on this conflict: Aquino, R. M. (2009). *Land ownership and migration impact on the Muslim secessionist conflict in the Southern Philippines* (Doctoral dissertation, Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School); Gowing, P. G., & Robert, D. M. (1974). *The Muslim Introduction: Irresistible Forces, Immovable Objects. The Muslim Filipinos*; Estranero, D. E., Santos, A. C., & Neri, A. B. (2007). *The Road to Resolving the Conflict in the South*. Rotary Club of Pasay Central; Luga, A. R. (2002). *Muslim Insurgency in Mindanao, Philippines*. Army Command and General Staff College Fort Leavenworth KS; Ong, J. T., Mendoza, M. B., Jovita, F. G., Orpilla, B. C., Fernandez, D. F. D., Lorenzo, G. R. H., ... & Fajutagana, S. C. (2009, March). Water for Peace. In *Symposium on the Application of Geophysics to Engineering and Environmental Problems 2009* (pp. 965-976). Society of Exploration Geophysicists; David, R. A. (2003). *The causes and prospect of the southern Philippines secessionist movement* (Doctoral dissertation, Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School).

<sup>20</sup> Ong, J. T., Mendoza, M. B., Jovita, F. G., Orpilla, B. C., Fernandez, D. F. D., Lorenzo, G. R. H., ... & Fajutagana, S. C. (2009, March). Water for Peace. In *Symposium on the Application of Geophysics to Engineering and Environmental Problems 2009* (pp. 965-976). Society of Exploration Geophysicists.







of peacemaking. They are contact, cooperation, communication, and conciliation.

#### CONTACT

This strategy can exert an influence on the adversaries by putting them into close contact in order to enhance familiarity, mutual acceptance, and reduce mutual mistrust, bias, and prejudices against each other.<sup>22</sup> It presupposes an “equal-status contact” or contact made on an equal basis on a level playing field. It can be safely said that, at the grass root or micro level, the Muslims and Christian have managed to live together in mutual tolerance and respect for each other. Both sides are firmly rooted in their own religious traditions and yet are respectful and open to their similarities and differences. In this regard that Quevedo once wrote:

I have witnessed a harmonious dialogue of life among the students. Many of our soldiers and high ranking officers studied in our Catholic schools. So, too, did members and leaders of the MILF.

He himself has been in contact with the Muslims for many years. He remembered that he came from the context of a boy who “grew up in Marbel, Koronadal, Cotabato in the late 40s and early 50s,” and whose parents “migrated from the crowded North to the vast and spacious South,” and who worked in Mindanao for more than three decades.<sup>23</sup> The up-close and personal contact with them made a significant impact on his viewpoint and understanding of the conflict.

<sup>22</sup> “Prejudice is a judgment that is rendered before all elements that determine a situation have been finally examined.” Gadamer H-G. (2004) *Truth and Method*. 2nd revised ed. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

<sup>23</sup> Eliseo Mercado, OMI, Cardinal Quevedo: A Prophet in Mindanao Published February 22, 2014. Available at <https://www.rappler.com/.../47815-philippines-orlando-quevedo-cardinal- Mindanao> See also Maritess Vitug, A Peacemaker on Mindanao Newsweek. Available online at [www.newsweek.com/peacemaker-mindanao-168784](http://www.newsweek.com/peacemaker-mindanao-168784)

Through the years I have gained some understanding of the Moro viewpoint. That has significantly influenced, even altered, my Christian viewpoint.”

Based on these contacts, he expressed the firm belief that, in spite of the political and military conflict in his own Archdiocese of Cotabato, peaceful and friendly coexistence between Muslims and Christians is realizable.

We managed to remain friendly towards the Muslims at the grassroots level. Many of the rebel leaders are graduates of our Catholic schools in the archdiocese and some were students of the Notre Dame University where I was the president. So the situation is sometimes over-publicized because the conflict is only in some parts of the Archdiocese of Cotabato and not everywhere. Nonetheless, I am concerned because there is still so much of bias and prejudice among Muslims and Christians alike.

The relatively, albeit fragile, peaceful coexistence between the Muslims and Christians ended when, as Quevedo observed, the former started to lose their ancestral lands to the settlers from Northern Philippines.<sup>24</sup>

The loss of land was compounded by government neglect of the Moro right to integral development during the Commonwealth and post-independence governments. In all dimensions of human development, political, economic, educational, and cultural, the Moro population continues to lag far behind its Christian Filipino counterparts. The latest national census bears this out in terms of educational improvement, political participation, and economic development. This is truly a tragic plight.

Asked about his future plans and hopes as a newly installed cardinal for his archdiocese and the Church as a whole, he replied:

My first concern and hope would be peace; peace in our territory in Central Mindanao; peace in the Archdiocese of Cotabato. Second, my hope is to see better harmonious relationships among Christians, Muslims, and indigenous people through

<sup>24</sup> For a comprehensive and an in-depth perspective on this issue, please see Abreu, L. M. (2008). Ancestral domain—the core issue. *Moro Reader*, 56.





interreligious dialogue. My third hope for the people of Cotabato is to see the economic development of all people irrespective of their faiths. But my most primary concern is to inject the dimension of faith, whether in Christians or in Islam or in indigenous people — to have a common ground for peace and interreligious dialogue on the basis of one's faith. And I would like to press for that.

#### COOPERATION

This strategy can exert a positive influence on the conflicting individuals or groups by allowing them to work together to face a common predicament or pursue a shared goal.<sup>25</sup> Thus, an important challenge facing conflicting individuals and groups is to identify and agree on superordinate goals defined by Myers as “goals compelling for all in a group and requiring cooperative effort, and structure cooperative efforts to achieve them.” The shared superordinate goal is presumed to outweigh the differences between the parties leading to integrative win-win agreements that reconcile both parties' interests to their mutual benefit.

Now and then, the search for the elusive peace in Mindanao would obviously require a joint and cooperative effort from all stakeholders and constituencies. That said, the numerous negotiations between the two parties in conflict are clearly a cooperative effort to reconcile the two fundamental postulates identified by Quevedo as crucial to the attainment of a just and lasting peace in the region. Likewise, he proposed to build constituencies in order to support the peace process believing that to make the peace process work all stakeholders must participate and enjoy their rights to speak and be heard. In the aftermath of the Mamasapano tragedy, he again made this point when he said:

Truly we must seek the truth and justice. This search for truth and the pursuit of justice must be done with objectivity and without prejudice. We need

to gather all the facts from all sides, from civilian witnesses, from combatants on both sides.

Given a long history of bias and mistrust from both parties, cooperation must be built on mutual trust and done in good faith in pursuit of the common good. Thus, efforts for cooperation can and must come from all the stakeholders.

For me, peace is a goal for everybody -- Christians and Muslims, Lumads, peoples of other faiths, government and MILF. Peace is the only solution to living together, developing a territory together. Peace is not acquired overnight. There are ups and downs and this Mamasapano tragedy may be the worst of the downs. But if any heart can lift itself out of the pieces of a broken peace, it would be the heart of a sincere peace advocate, with no hidden agenda but peace. The spirit of peace is the Holy Spirit of God. It can soar over ashes and shattered houses and give hope where seemingly there is none.

#### COMMUNICATION<sup>26</sup>

This strategy contributes to the achievement of peace through communication and dialogue.<sup>27</sup>

It is wise to consult, ask questions, and secure assistance regarding directions and goals from stakeholders, left, right and center. For the government – consult with the different branches of government and with the people directly affected by conflict. For the MILF – consult with the Bangsamoro people, with the MNLF, and with the ARMM. I am not sure that any of these consultations were done -- and in a satisfactory manner.

<sup>26</sup> This aspect of peacemaking seems to be the most vital factor. See Florangel Rosario-Braid, *The Lessons of the Philippine Peace Process*. Among others, she proposed the following on how to effectively use communication in peacemaking: use of constructive rather than adversarial encounters; emphasis in messages of commonalities rather than disagreements, exploration of the multifaceted angles of a simple idea; good administrative communication. Available online at [www.muslimmindanao.ph/peace\\_process/the%20lessons%20of%20the%20phil%20pe...](http://www.muslimmindanao.ph/peace_process/the%20lessons%20of%20the%20phil%20pe...)

<sup>27</sup> In relation to this, those engaged in interreligious or interfaith dialogue identify four levels of dialogue: a dialogue of life, the dialogue of action, the dialogue of theological exchange, and the dialogue of religious experience. See M. Thomas Thangaraj, *The Common Task: A Theology of Christian Mission*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1999, pp. 95, 96.) Along the same vein, they also classified five types of interreligious dialogue: informational, confessional, experiential, relational, and practical.

<sup>25</sup> Myers, 283



The so-called “fusion of horizons” is the expected outcome of this strategy. It can be done in three ways: direct bargaining with one another, mediation, and arbitration. For the past 16 years at the macro-level, the Malaysian government has played a prominent role as the third party or mediator in the peace talks between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).<sup>28</sup> However, Quevedo, in his capacity as a long time religious leader in the region, has also served as a highly respected “mediator” between the two parties.<sup>29</sup> Through his own initiatives, he helped facilitate dialogues between and among the stakeholders especially when the peace process had been derailed or reached an impasse. The dialogue and negotiations for peace cannot be closed prematurely.

Experience has shown that the negative outcomes due to the absence or lack of a line of communication between the two parties may never be underestimated. The peace process has been derailed and almost died because one or both of the parties failed to communicate.

I think we can survive this because it is like the (2011) Al Barka tragedy where there was also lack of communications. There are incidents that have taken place that resulted in great government losses of personnel and we survived. Many massacres of Muslim civilians have also taken place. We can hurdle the challenges to peace. I think we need some time to recover rationality.

There were a number of times when his words were said in direct reply to perceived

<sup>28</sup> For two directly contrasting views on the role of Malaysia in the peace process, see Mohagher Iqbal, *Peace Talk: Malaysia and Its Role in the GPH-MILF Peace Process*. Available online at [www.mindanews.com](http://www.mindanews.com) and Yen Makabenta, *Malaysia's Role Should be Explained*. Available online at <https://www.manilatimes.net/malaysias-role-should-be-explained/177169/>

<sup>29</sup> In early 2004, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) experts along with Muslim and Christian leaders approached Cardinal Quevedo and asked him to lead a group of eminent persons to serve as high-level intermediaries and advocates and facilitate the relevant conversations with regard to legislation, as well as the wider cause of a lasting peace in Mindanao. This led to the formation of a group called “Friends of Peace” which Quevedo eventually led. See Chetan Kuma, *Track-Two Initiatives of Nationally-Led Peace Processes: The Case of the Philippines*. Available online at

misinformation and disinformation as well as to address deep-seated biases and prejudices and thus “restore rationality to the peace process.” In the face of outrage and calls for all-out war, he asked the parties to go back at the negotiating table to rehabilitate the peace process. He called for consultation and dialogue, information and education as the key to the acceptability of the ill-fated MOA-AD:

MOA-AD has a lot of ambiguity as well as questionable presentation. Muslims, Christians, Lumad would want such issues to be clarified, before saying yes or no to the consensus points. Perhaps, concepts need to be clearer. They can be made so in future steps of the peace process as both parties move towards a Comprehensive Pact. But the MOA-AD need not be the document that should contain all the details that would resolve all questions and doubts. The peace process will continue even after it is signed. With good will, patience and wisdom --- and consultation ---such further steps will surely resolve substantive questions.

Therefore, as a way out of the present impasse let organized and focused public discussions on the MOA-AD be conducted for a specific and reasonable period of time so that the two parties may be guided accordingly. In the face of possible provocations, be persevering, patient and resolute until a fair and just final peace agreement is done.

Because of misunderstanding and mistrust from both side of the divide, Quevedo strongly and many times suggested as an imperative: a serious and sustained effort to inform and educate all of the constituencies and stakeholders about “matter that is of utmost importance to them and their future” and about the mutual rights and mutual sacrifices needed by both parties.”

There is certainly the imperative of educating all the various constituencies and stakeholders as to the contents (concepts and principles, territory, resources, and governance) of the MOA-AD, their bases in history and in law, the steps still to be taken, the recognition of mutual rights, as well as the mutual sacrifices needed by both peoples, Bangsamoro and non-Bangsamoro.



It would be to the interest of the common good for them (the peace panels) to explain the meaning and the rationale of provisions that are questioned and objected to.

Two immediate reasons for the negative reception of the MOA-AD are lack of information regarding the contents of the document and the lack of the previous consultation with various stakeholders as to what the document should contain. No serious effort was apparently made to establish a supportive public constituency. Having consultations, asking for directions, providing progress reports – these are proven ways to have people participate in any matter that is of utmost importance to them and their future.

The words synonymous to communication are plenty: information, dialogue consultations, consensus-building, and reception. This study found that “consult” and “consensus” were Quevedo’s most utilized words. Strongly believing that a genuine consensus is possible, he argued that all stakeholders must be given the opportunity to voice their views and demanded the mutual respect and attention of all. Stressing the need for and importance of consensus-building through wide consultations, he said that:

But there is a certain irreplaceable and indispensable benefit to people’s participation through consultation and information dissemination at various points in the peace journey. I am quite certain that both the MILF and the GRP have set a certain time for extensive consultations, perhaps when referendum and changes to constitution/law are to be made. But present reactions cannot wait for that time.

In the wake of the many incidents that tend to derail the peace process, Quevedo remained strongly committed to fostering a culture of dialogue, forging a unity of opinion – consensus – on the basis of all the above points through widespread consultations by both sides. In spite of the prevailing culture and history of mutual prejudices, he maintained this mindset all throughout the search for peace.

Aggravated by lack of consultation and reinforced by anger, misinformation, misconceptions, biases, prejudices, and resistance to change, led to the present grave uncertainties regarding the peace process. Due to lack of information resulting in the negative reception of the MOA Consultation, public discussions and dialogue with all the stakeholders are a must in order to arrive at a consensus on issues that divide. Reception of the peace process intended outcome is the end result of this consultation

One would think then that along the arduous and difficult journey, certain stops should be made to ask for directions, consult people, set goals and then obtain consensus points at the roadside negotiation table.

## CONCILIATION

This strategy is designed to de-escalate tensions that may arise during the peacemaking between the two parties in conflict. This element of conciliation is based on what is nicknamed as GRIT or “graduated and reciprocated initiatives in tension reduction.”<sup>30</sup> Based upon the belief that the participants are equal, it is not so much retaliatory as it is conciliatory in mode. It requires no preconditions to the conciliation or the surrender of one’s original position.

Three intervening events happened that threatened to derail the peace process, led to grave uncertainties, and compelled the urgent need to de-escalate the tensions triggered by them. They were the declaration by the Supreme Court Supreme that the MOA-AD as unconstitutional (August 2008),<sup>31</sup> the Buliok war (February 2003),<sup>32</sup> the Mamasapano tragedy (March 2015).<sup>33</sup> All three events re-escalated the conflict and triggered the deep historic biases and prejudices that lie in the dark corners of the two parties, Quevedo wrote. To help reduce

<sup>30</sup> Myers, 291

<sup>31</sup> Please see “What Went Before: The Proposed MOA-AD: Philippine Daily Inquirer October 09, 2012. Source: Inquirer Archives. It’s Final: MOA-AD Unconstitutional GMA News Online, November 21, 2008. See also, ES Hayudini Learning from the MOA-AD [http://m.ateneo.edu/sites/default/files/attached-files/5LearningFromMOAAD\\_0.pdf](http://m.ateneo.edu/sites/default/files/attached-files/5LearningFromMOAAD_0.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Kieth Bacongco (12 February 2010). “*Buliok 7 years after the war: Painful imprints still linger*”. MindaNews. Retrieved 3 October 2016.

<sup>33</sup>





the tension, he immediately proposed small de-escalatory actions such as the need to conduct participatory fact-finding investigations and to return to the negotiating table. After the Mamasapano tragedy that seriously cast doubts on the peace process and increased the tensions, he said:

The demand for wisdom is for us to hold back the natural response of revenge and desire to break off the peace process. The bloodbath in Mamasapano should not end in the peace process in Mindanao.

To ease the tensions, he proposed to establish verifiable conciliatory acts and challenged both parties to reciprocate without risking either of the two side's security and self-interests. He earnestly proposed two steps to ease the tension: for the peace panels: to return to the negotiating table and resolve the problematic issues and conduct organize focused public discussions on the MOA-AD for a specific and reasonable period of time.

It remains true that many things cannot be negotiated in public; otherwise, the plethora of opinions and suggestions, each one passionately presented and defended, would create disorder out of order. But there is a certain irreplaceable and indispensable benefit to people's participation through consultation and information dissemination at various points in the peace journey. I am quite certain that both the MILF and the GRP have set a certain time for extensive consultations, perhaps when referendum and changes to constitution/law are to be made. But present reactions cannot wait for that time.

#### HOW DID HE SAY OR DO IT?

Quevedo's words were attempts to answer a fundamental question: What is the wise thing to do in a conflict situation like Mindanao? Three words may be used to explain this domain of his peacemaking task, namely, practical wisdom, consensus-driven, and Catholic.

#### PRACTICAL WISDOM

The French philosopher Paul Ricoeur's concept of phronetic or practical wisdom would help make sense of Quevedo's integrative and holistic approach to the peace process.<sup>34</sup> For Ricoeur, practical wisdom is the ethical skill that helps one to determine the "good life with and for others in just institutions," test it against the "right norm," and strike a balance between the good and right in concrete situations."<sup>35</sup> Applied to the concrete situation of the Mindanao conflict, the image of the "good life" would be the collective desire to achieve a long overdue peace in general, and the right to self-determination of the Muslims, in particular. To pass the critical test for the objectively good, however, the ethical aim needs to "pass through the sieve of the norm" as provided by the Constitutional requirement that seeks to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. In order to succeed in his ministry as a peacemaker, it was imperative for Quevedo to carefully navigate between the Scylla of perpetuating a historical injustice and the Charybdis of dismembering his country. Happily, he managed to stay on course and to strike a balanced and accurate account of the good life and the right norm in the concrete and complex situation of the Mindanao conflict.

#### CONSENSUS-DRIVEN

Following Jürgen Habermas' theory of communication, Quevedo's language and words about peace and its imperatives may be described as "that which seeks mutual understanding and possesses no strategic goal other than the achievement of a consensus or common understanding" of the "good life" and the norms of peacemaking.<sup>36</sup> It was a consensus-driven

<sup>34</sup> Paul Vermeer and Johannes A. van der Ven, Students' Moral Consciousness, *Journal of Empirical Theology* 15 (2002), 54-75.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Gallardetz, *The Reception of Doctrine: New Perspectives, from Authority in the Roman Catholic Church*, Edited by Bernard Hoose





dialogue for peace based on the maintenance and promotion of dynamic relationship between and among the stakeholders and constituents. When faithfully engaged in, the model can yield “shared truth” of a fusion of horizons between the conflicting parties.

Quevedo employed this communication model as a reciprocal act of sharing in which the intended recipients from both sides will actively and selectively appropriate that which is communicated. As a type of dialogue or conversation, his approach was communicative and not strategic approach to peacemaking, not a top-down strategic kind of communication geared only towards a successful resolution of the conflict. On the contrary, it was deeply rooted in the ground and oriented towards a holistic understanding of the collective search for peace and justice. Quevedo’s single-minded purpose was to guide stakeholders to a shared understanding of the conflict through constant dialogues, consultations, and negotiations.

#### CATHOLIC

Finally, Quevedo’s words manifest an approach that is distinctly “Catholic.”<sup>37</sup> It adopts the principle of complementarity, a this-as-well-as-that approach to reality and thus not dialectic, either-or approach.

First, it adopts an integrative perspective of all the issues and challenges that have bedeviled the peace process across time. Second, both rooted in his own religious tradition (reason informed by faith) and yet open to the perspectives of the other, he saw to it that all the various constituencies and stakeholders were given a voice and a hearing whether they are left, right and center, whether they be Muslims, Christians or Lumads, the

(Ashgate, 2002), 95-114.

<sup>37</sup> Richard McBrien (1994), *Principle of Catholicism*. Harper Collins Publisher

government, and the Bangsa Moro, MILF, MNLF. Third, he consistently and respectfully paid attention to their common and self-interests, fears and prejudices, misconceptions and misinformation. With his sight singly-focused on the common good, he painstakingly tried to be “Catholic” open, holistic, and inclusive in the firm hope of achieving the fusion of horizons between the Bangsamoro aspirations for self-determination and GRP conviction in its own national sovereignty. For a deeper and wider understanding and appreciation of the issues and challenges that have beset it, his words put into light the historical, cultural, legal, political, territorial, economic, and social dimensions of the conflict. This has helped diminished the ambiguities, doubts, and prejudices surrounding the peace process, using his moral suasion to further the peace and justice that arises from their beliefs, to build bridges of coexistence and community.

#### HOW DID HE KEEP GOING? WHAT KEPT HIM GOING?

It is a commonly known fact that peacemaking is a challenging and complex task. It is surely not for the faint-hearted. In the midst of the clear and present risks to their lives and limbs, peacemakers will need a lot of daring, courage, patience and optimism that at the end of the long and tedious path peace will be realizable. Holbrooke said that it takes a number of qualities to be a peacemaker in a world torn apart by intractable conflicts: diligence and persistence, unique insight, credibility, passion, and a commitment to the idea that peace is possible.<sup>38</sup> We may add courage to face the possibility of death. In fact not a few of our own local peacemakers have lost their lives without seeing the peace and justice that they dreamed about

<sup>38</sup> Hobrooke, *ibid.*, xiii





for the people of Mindanao.<sup>39</sup> This sad reality makes us wonder: “What has kept peacemakers like Cardinal Quevedo going against the many odds of peacemaking?” What is his secret? In the absence of answers from his written words, I can therefore only make an educated guess: the secret lays both in human and divine domains of peacemaking.

Following Holbrooke’s own assessment of what enables individuals to be peacemaker, I think it is in Quevedo’s “moral conviction and religious calling to work until peace and justice are a reality” in his beloved Mindanao where the answer lies.<sup>40</sup> Moral conviction is defined as “a subjective assessment that one’s attitude about a specific issue or situation is associated with one’s core moral beliefs and fundamental sense of right or wrong.”<sup>41</sup> It is the subjective belief that something is fundamentally right or wrong which in the perspective of Quevedo consists in the historical and social injustice that the Muslims endured and suffered for centuries. He expressed many times that unless this historical injustice and the basic rights of the Muslims for self-determination are resolved through a principled negotiation between the two parties the long and sustainable peace will not come to Mindanao.

As a religious leader and a Christian disciple, there is no doubt as to the second possible reason why Quevedo kept going in spite of the so many odds to peacemaking. He has said many

times that he is into this because of his religious calling both as a parish priest and later on as an archbishop of a diocese that is 47% Muslim and 48% Catholic. Although he believes that peace is God’s grace and gift, he is also convinced that for peace to become a reality he must perform his task as a Christian and as a leader of his flock.

Because peace is both gift and task. Ultimately it is a gift of God. But it is also our task. It is our task to be peacemakers rather than to be destroyers of peace. That we do not have peace is due to us. We have not done our task.

I beg you as fellow disciples of Christ, the Prince of Peace, to pray and work together for peace so that Mamasapano will not repeat itself.

It is the Spirit of God that gives hope and infuses love and harmony among peoples of different faiths and cultures. With God’s Spirit we can soar over tragedies, we can restore trust for one another; we can strive together for harmony and peace. Ultimately it is in the enlightened heart where love and peace begin. May the God of Justice, Peace and Love bless us all.

He has always prayed for peace knowing that regardless of his own human efforts peace would ultimately remain a gift of God’s grace and mercy. In short, he is a peacemaker because he is a man of prayer, a man of faith, and ultimately a man of God.

I am for peace, the peace that God grants to people of good will. I am for the peace that God gives through the collaborative work of men and women who work conscientiously for the good of the whole country.

### III. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study focused on Orlando Cardinal Quevedo’s body of communications about the search for peace and its imperatives. His words reveal an eyewitness understanding of the historical roots of the armed-conflict and a comprehensive plan of action to uproot it towards peace and prosperity in the region. Moreover, it also speaks volumes about his practical wisdom

<sup>39</sup> Cardinal Quevedo named the following in the noble line of modern-day martyrs for justice and peace: Fr. Fausto Tentorio, Fr. Alingal, S.J., and Fr. Satur (diocesan priest) in the Diocese of Malaybalay, Fr. Tullio Favali, PIME, in the Diocese of Kidapawan, Fr. Carzedda PIME in the Archdiocese of Zamboanga, Bp. Ben de Jesus, OMI, Fr. Benjie Inocencio, OMI, and Fr. Rey Roday, OMI, all three from the Apostolic Vicariate of Jolo. Let me remember and add Fr. Rhoel Gallardo a Claretian missionary with hardly six years of priesthood was martyred in Basilan in May 3, 2000.

<sup>40</sup> Holbrooke, xxiii

<sup>41</sup> Christopher W. Bauman and Linda Skitka In the mind of the perceiver: Psychological Implications of Moral Conviction. Available on line at [leeds-faculty.colorado.edu/mcgrawp/PDF/Bauman.Skitka.PLM.pdf](http://leeds-faculty.colorado.edu/mcgrawp/PDF/Bauman.Skitka.PLM.pdf)





to reconcile seemingly irreconcilable positions as well as his courage to “fight the good fight” even in the face of humanly insurmountable obstacles and risks that have caused the loss of life of many peacemakers like him. Though bereft of political power, but only using his religious and moral suasion as a peacemaker, he has been a credible and an authoritative voice in the public square where the choice between the war and peace, life and death were being decided.

As an advocate of peaceful strategies to make and build peace in Mindanao, the extent of his influence and impact on the peace process may not be exactly measured. But by organizing and analyzing his words about peace and its demands, the conflict-situation is better understood and the road towards a just and lasting peace more clear and paved. The words also helped reveal his mindset as a religious leader as one who is firmly rooted in his own moral and religious convictions and yet sincerely open to the beliefs of the others. His deep and personal understanding of the conflict enabled him to know exactly what to say and wisely what to do about the many issues and challenges standing in the path of a just and sustainable peace in the island.

Cardinal Quevedo’ case is merely illustrative though; there is a need to examine more closely the narratives of the other few good men and women who, like him, have courageously and selflessly performed the task and ministry of peacemaking and peace-building in the region. It will help would-be-peacemakers to better understand not only “who they are, what they do, how they do it, and what keeps them going” but also the fundamental challenges and opportunities facing the thousand-mile journey toward a just and lasting peace in Mindanao.

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