Megacities in Asia

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It is safe to say that most megacities are in Asia. Bangkok, Beijing, Calcutta, Jakarta, Manila, Seoul, and Tokyo are just a few of the 20 or so megacities in the Asian side of the globe. Increasingly, megacities are defining the way people live in Asia. Over the last two decades, public administration everywhere has gone through dramatic changes in line with ever-broader political, social and economic reformation.

Given these premises, therefore, I suggest that the discussion on megacities should include the following considerations:

I. INTERCITY POLITICS

The issues that are related to the governance dimension of mega cities are as follows:

1. Reluctance of small cities to merge and thereby form megacities or megalopolis

2. Territorial behavior of the city local officials which do not allow them to see extra jurisdictional considerations of governance beyond their own respective political city boundaries can negate formation of megacities

3. Managing an increasing urban population. This is a phenomenon that seems to be irreversible. Much more difficult is to reverse the trend of population movement from urban to rural.

II. FUNCTIONS OF ECONOMICS

Megacities perform vital functions in national life. This is because megacities are engines of economic growth while at the same time performing an economic function as financial centers of several nations. Being engines of economic growth, megacities do perform a commanding influence over satellites of smaller cities.

III. COMPETITION

Competitions among cities in the long run will force the evolution of megacities. The merger and alliances between and among cities; do provide advantages to cities involved. The ultimate gain in this regard is being able to compete internationally in the global arena of economic productivity.

IV. TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

Urban governance is increasingly getting complex. To be able to cope with the urban challenges, megacities must use technology as a management tool. There is therefore the need to implement in urban governance the following:

1. Digitizing administration of megacities

2. Increasing application of E-governance

3. Balancing the dehumanizing effects of technology and the imperatives of highly personalized intercity politics

V. GLOBALIZATION

Megacities are both beneficiaries as well as victims of globalization. Megacities, which are strategically located and which have a

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commanding geographic influence usually assume a high level of geopolitical importance. However, megacities that do not have geographic advantage have difficulties competing in a globalizing economy and in the universal production and marketing of economic goods. The rules of economic engagement and international business and trade greatly influence the degree of participation and role of Megacities in global economics.

VI. CHANGING WORKFORCE

The continuing changes in governing megacities require guideposts for success. In this regard, those that govern megacities may have to consider non-negotiable five work values, which are:

1. Respect for individuals;

2. Sincere dedication to help city's constituencies;

3. The need for high standards of integrity among those who assume leadership in governance;

4. The role of innovation and its functions in attaining success; and

5. Teamwork in workforce.

In addition, attributes traditionally associated with good leaders are intelligence, strategic vision, good interpersonal skills and physical and psychological stamina.

There are, of course, other urgent problems related to governance of megacities. First, there is the problem of inadequate or obsolete public infrastructures. Public transport is a terrible mess like in Metro Manila.

Traumatic experiences are being generated by congested urban traffic, lack of water supply and uncollected garbage are enough for anyone to curse the inability of public authorities to resolve them.

Then, there is the problem of urban pollution generally triggered by the use of cheap gasoline or diesel as well as uncontrolled

smoke belching by cars and other vehicles causing respiratory diseases among young urban dwellers who go to school everyday.

Urban crime is becoming a nightmare for the police to solve and which must be given priority solution because of the increasing phenomenon of domestic terrorism.

Let us not forget urban noise pollution that ultimately causes mental retardation among urban dwellers constantly exposed to sound beyond the normal decibel.

The lack of adequate urban services has not stopped the poor in moving from rural areas to urban centers.

This in turn produces urban blight that adds up to ugliness of megacities, most of which suffer infirmities and therefore cannot be rationally replanned.

Increasing number of slums makes crime prevention much more difficult because poverty and crime are natural bedfellows.

There are many interrelated issues in the management of megacities.

1. Are megacities doomed to suffer urban decay unless a change in the concept of livable cities is revisited.

2, Are megacities entering into an era of a golden age that somehow society will witness the reborn of the spirits of Atlantis, Athens or Shangrila

It is clear that history, culture, social tradition and values help shape the future of cities.

Given this ramification of problems in urban governance, the search for the ideal community continues.