## Chapter One:

# Philippine Political Culture and Governance

*by Cristina Jayme Montiel*

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## INTRODUCTION

Months after the violence of "EDSA Tres," debate continues as to what triggered this bloody event. How did a seemingly ragtag crowd turn into an angry mob? Some say the uprising was a class war that drew its power from the class divide in society, with the arrest of the masses' idol Joseph "Erap" Estrada as the spark that spread the wildfire (De Quiros, 2001). Others saw the siege of Malacañang as the handiwork of a small and currently disenfranchised elite, who after exploiting the poor, disowned responsibility for inflaming the mob (Doronila, 2001). This variety of interpretations could confuse the layperson, not only about EDSA Tres, but more so about the daily-life relations between Filipino politicians and their followers. This chapter probes the source of this confusion.

*Defining Filipino Political Culture*

Politics involves the production, allocation and use of decision-making powers among large groups of individuals. In stable and strong states, political activities usually refer to the powers of the state to govern. In unstable and weak states, politics encompasses social power issues within and outside the boundaries of the 'legitimate' state.

Culture refers to everything socially created (Fiske, 1996). One essential characteristic of culture is that it is shared by different groups of interacting humans. Culture includes both subjective and objective elements (Aretxaga, 1993; Barnard, 1969; Clark, 1991; Cole, 1996; Diamond, 1989; Gibbins and Reimer, 1999; Hobart, 1986; Kamrava, 1995; Myers and Martz, 1997; Nesbitt-Larking, 1992; Norbu, 1992; Wood, 1993; Warren, 1993). Subjective elements cover shared group mentalities -- thoughts and feelings. Objective cultural elements include material symbols, artifacts, and group-accepted practices. The subjective and objective elements of culture have a two-way relationship. For example, material symbols acquire meaning as particular thoughts and feelings become associated with these symbols (the Nazi swastika, for instance).

Likewise, cultural practices evoke specific feelings when carried out by society members.

Filipino political culture is a systematically related set of mental and concrete constructions. It includes but is not limited to beliefs, feelings, group-accepted practices, language and paraphernalia shared by large groups of Filipinos as they produce, allocate and use political powers within, outside, and in interaction with the state.

Table 1 lists some subjective components of Filipino political culture and gives examples to illustrate how group subjectivities are activated during political exercises. These subjective components are psychological, although they do not pertain to specific individuals but to interacting groups.

***Table 1. Subjective components of Filipino political culture***

| **Subjective components of Filipino political culture** | **Examples of how group subjectivities are activated during political exercises** |
|---|---|
| Ideology-inspired shared interpretations of political events | During the Visiting Forces Agreement debate, one ideological view saw the VFA as a new form of US colonial intervention |
| Shared mental scripts | "Volunteer" campaigners carry a widely accepted mental script that those who help in a candidate's campaign get rewarded with a job and/or government contracts if the candidate wins |
| Negative emotions toward outgroup members | Members of one faction in Malacañang Palace carry in their mind (sometimes exaggerated) narratives of what the rival camp is scheming and plotting against them |

| | |
|---|---|
| Collective memories | The anti-Marcos group still hold memories of how constitutional changes can be used to rationalize the declaration of martial law |
| Religious beliefs | Religious faith includes working for social justice and working in favor of issues such as land distribution |

Objective components of political culture include directly observable political practices, language, and artifacts. Some care is needed in studying objective political culture. What is observable could contain latent or symbolic meanings that are not outwardly obvious to a person who merely relies on external evidence to obtain cultural information. Objective political culture is usually context-dependent and meaning-sensitive (Cole, 1996). Table 2 presents a few objective aspects of Filipino political culture and examples of objective culture. It also shows how objective political culture can take on manifest and latent meanings.

***Table 2. Objective components of Filipino political culture.***

| Objective components of Filipino political culture | Examples of objective political culture | Manifest meaning: what is directly observed | Latent meaning: what is symbolized or implied |
|---|---|---|---|
| Political practice | House Representative is asked by a local leader to act as the godfather at the wedding of the leader's daughter | Invitation to be the daughter's wedding godfather | In the future, the local leader's family can expect to be given employment opportunities and other special politico-economic favors by this powerful politician. In turn, the Representative can expect the leader's family to help during the campaign period (Hollnsteiner, 1963) |
| | A top general of the Philippine National Police (PNP) is transferred out of Metro Manila to a far-away provincial post | This is part of the regular cycle of post-changing among military officials. | The general is not favored by the new PNP chief and is now politically impotent within the PNP influence hierarchy... |
| Political language | "Huwag n'yo akong subukan." ("Don't challenge me.") | "Don't challenge me." | I am powerful and you are not. Don't threaten me, or I will hit back at you. |
| | "Doon tayo mag-usap" – from a traffic policeman to a traffic violator | "Let's talk over there (far from the eyes of other people)." | Hand over some bribe money and I won't give you a violation ticket this time. |
| Political artifact | ERAP car plate, during Erap's presidency | I like President Erap enough to use his name as my car plate. | I have powerful connections with the President, so don't charge me with any traffic violation or you may get into trouble yourself. |
| | Red-colored streamers, banners during street rallies | Content of whatever is printed on the streamers, banners | Groups with red-colored streamers/ banners are associated with left-of-center political beliefs and political formations. |

**Political Culture in Context: Time-Sensitive, Peer-Bound and Structure-Embedded**

Political cultures and orientations thrive in specific contexts, particularly conditions of historical time, peer-group associations, and social structures. Inevitably, political practices and shared beliefs interact with historical con-ditions, including prevailing technologies of information. For example, with the onset of the digital age, the 2001 EDSA Dos mobilizations used email and cellphone texting as effective communication channels. The 1986 EDSA Uno uprising depended on telephone brigades, printed manifestos and video-tapes.

The peer group also plays a vital role in political orientations since the individual tends to be group-sensitive, especially in collectivist cultures like the Philippines. Studies show that collectivist cultures emphasize groups as the basic unit of social perception (Triandis, 1994). Individuals in these cultures tend to define themselves terms of in-group relations (Triandis, McCusker, and Hui, 1990). Usually, they will alter the self in favor of the situation rather than the situation in favor of the self (Diaz-Guerrero, 1979). Philippine collectivist culture provides fertile ground for traditional political influence based on patronage (Hollnsteiner, 1963; Kerkvliet, 1990; Lande, 1965; Lynch, 1979), kinship (Canieso-Doronila, 1997; Lande, 1958; Roces, 1998; Timberman, 1991; Zialcita, 1997), and personalistic leadership styles (Hollnsteiner, 1970; Kerkvliet,

1990; Roces, 1998).

In addition, Sidel (1999) points out that a new type of political influence called "bossism" is emerging in Philippine politics. This draws power from money, coercion and criminal networks. Case studies of boss-type politics can be found in the book Boss: 5 Case Studies of Local Politics in the Philippines, published by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism in 1995. The Senate investigation into narco-political scandals in 2001, suggest how drug syndicates may intertwine with kidnappings, military involvement in crime, and political campaigns.

Finally, political culture is structure-embedded (Aretxaga, 1993; Myers and Martz, 1997; Pye, 1985; Warren, 1993). The political mentalities, practices, and material symbols vary according to a group's position in the social structures of Philippine society. Social structures refer to the relatively permanent arrangements of power and wealth, where resources are concentrated in the hands of a small elite, while the majority remains marginalized. "Structure-embeddedness" implies that an individual or group's position in the arrangement of Philippine social power is associated with different political cultures. There exists a political culture among those who hold power and a political culture among the marginalized majority.

On the one hand, these two political cultures could complement each other; as each feeds on the other's set of political expectations and practices. On the other hand, these two political cultures could contain opposing interests. For example, Schaffer (in press) points out how electoral reforms on the agenda of modern social influentials in new democracies might keep a majority of voters away from electoral exercises through legal disenfranchisement, costly go-betweens, and absenteeism-for-sale.

**Suggestions for Future Research Questions on Filipino Political Culture and Governance**

This book describes political culture from the subjective lens of those in power -- politicians and their spouses, chiefs-of-staff, and other members of the politicians' personal and family circles. This is a unique presentation of four views from the inner corridors of Philippine State power. Of course, the study begs for further explorations into the vast reservoir of political culture. I suggest four general queries that a research agenda on Filipino political culture might address:

- How does political culture operate in the executive and judiciary branches?
- What is the political culture on various levels of Philippine social structure? Among anti-state movements? Among the "ordinary, non-politicized majority"?
- How do ongoing global transformations in technology, economies, crime networks and media coverage interface with Philippine political culture?
- Are there concrete examples of successful alternative political cultures operating within contemporary Philippine politics? What are the stories behind these alternatives?

Table 3 lists some of the research methods that can be used to study political culture. It contains a brief description of each method or subtypes of quantitative/qualitative research methods and examples of political-culture researches that used this particular approach. Although each procedure is presented separately, the reader is encouraged to think in terms of combining a variety of techniques in a single research, in order to increase the validity of the study, and enrich the knowledge that the research can generate.

***Table 3.*** **Suggested Research Methods on Political Culture**

| **Research Method** | **Brief description of method** | **Example of a political culture research** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Theoretical Research | A conceptual essay about fundamental ideas regarding political culture | Between facts and norms (Habermas, 1996) |
| | Survey of literature, to summarize the state of past researches on political culture | Political culture and democracy in developing countries (Diamond, 1993) |
| 2. Empirical Research | A study of political culture based on primary data | *Please see all the examples below* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2.a *Quantitative methods* | Nationwide public opinion surveys | Glimpses into Philippine political culture (Carroll, 1994) |
| | Smaller-sample surveys on political attitudes | Political socialization in the Philippines today: An empirical study (Sicat, 1976)<br>Political culture theory and the role of professionals: Data from Venezuela (Myers & Martz, 1997) |
| | Election returns and census data | Social cleavage and political parties in the post-Marcos Philippines (Lande & Cigler, 1990) |
| | Congressional voting patterns | Monitoring Congress: A cluster analysis of legislative voting patterns during the Aquino Administration (Montiel, 1990) |
| 2.b *Qualitative methods* | Content analysis (Silverman, 1993) | The bishops and the new politics (Concepcion, 1992)<br>Pastoral letters during the Marcos-Aquino transition period (Montiel, 1988) |
| | Ethnography and participant observation (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994) | The dynamics of power in a Philippine municipality (Hollnsteiner, 1963) |
| | In-depth interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994) of political elites and radicals | Leaders, factions, and parties: The structure of Philippine politics (Lande, 1965)<br>Asian power and politics (Pye, 1985) |
| | Biographical method (Smith, 1994) | Imelda Marcos (Pedrosa, 1987) |
| | Film and visual analysis (Harper 1994) | Bargaining for peaceful termination of unsuccessful coup attempts in the Philippines (Montiel, 1995) |
| | Conversation analysis (Silverman, 1993) | *(I did not find any research example on political culture that used conversation analysis.)* |
| | Literary works analysis | "Good omens" versus "worth": The poetic dialogue between Ton Tho Tuong and Phan Van Tri (Davidson, 1986)<br>The deliberate use of foreign vocabulary by the Khmer: Changing fashions, methods and sources (Jacob, 1986) |
| | Historical study of political culture (Tuchman, 1994) | President Marcos and the Philippine political culture (Gleeck, 1987) |
| | Case studies (Stake, 1994) | Boss: Five case studies of local politics in the Philippines (Lacaba & Coronel, 1995) |

The next section looks into everyday practices and perceptions from the standpoint of individuals who run for office and/or manage electoral campaigns.

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## 2. METHOD AND FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of a recently concluded study on Filipino political culture, based on the narratives of political influentials. It includes a description of the research method employed and then presents findings on how political culture operates.

### Method

*Data Source*. In order to understand political culture, the researcher ran four focus group discussions (FGDs). In these meetings, political leaders discussed the culture of elections and governance based on their own knowledge and experience. The first FGD included 11 individuals composed of mayors, congressional representatives, previously appointed government officials and government consultants. Nine wives of congressmen, fourteen chiefs-of-staff and staff members of nine senators took part in subsequent FGDs.

Members of a prominent Muslim political family participated in another FGD. The various group discussions lasted from one and a half up to two-and-a-half hours. Research data was likewise collected from individuals in public service through three in-depth interviews and one personal correspondence. Participants involved in the study hailed from ten of the twelve regions of the country. Their political involvement and experience ranged from two to thirty years. In addition to these sources, the author also relied on her own direct experiences in electoral politics.

*Instrument*. The research used a semi-standard question guide based on a tentative outline of the study. The first part contained five open-ended questions regarding the culture of electoral campaigns while the second part posed open-ended questions on the political culture of governance and some politico-cultural issues. Interviews and FGDs used this semi-standard question guide, except for the first FGD held at the Ateneo School of Government. The interviewers asked respondents to narrate

stories and concrete incidents from their actual experiences. The participants spoke in English or Filipino. All interviews and FGDs were recorded. Below is the list of open-ended questions covered during the interviews and FGDs:

A. *Overview: The Culture of Philippine Electoral Campaigns*

1. What are the stages of an electoral campaign? What practices are involved in each stage?
2. What election-related "things" (ex., sample ballots, leaflets, stickers, streamers, etc.) are prepared and used during campaigns?
3. How is the campaign machinery of the candidate set up?
4. What are some election-related beliefs and expectations?
5. What emotions arise during campaigns?

B. *Political Culture of Governance*

*1. After elections*

1.1 What happens to the campaign machinery and its personnel after electoral victory? Electoral defeat?
1.2 How do campaign-related beliefs, expectations and mental scripts (the way one thinks about something) affect the governance style of the electoral victor?

*2. During governance*

2.1 What political behaviors are commonly practiced by politicians?
2.2 What are beliefs and expectations of the politicians and their constituents?
2.3 What emotions arise during the process of governance?

*3. Special politico-cultural issues*

3.1 Utang na loob (debt of gratitude)
3.2 Informal influentials in governance (padrino, kamag-anak, kaibigan)
3.3 Machismo in governance style

*Data Analysis*. Researchers transcribed each interview and FGD verbatim. They then used computerized table formats to sort the data according to recurring themes and patterns based on the topical outline adapted from the interview guide. At a later stage of analysis, the data was again sorted using a

revised topic outline. This revised topic outline accommodated new themes that emerged from the preliminary sorting. It also elaborated on the original topics such as stages of electoral campaigns, beliefs and expectations, and other dimensions of Filipino politics.

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## 3. FINDINGS

Research respondents viewed the electoral process in the Philippines as characterized by a sequence of stages: (1) the pre-campaign or informal campaign period; (2) the launching or filing of candidacy; (3) the formal campaign period; (4) V-day or election/voting day; and, (5) the post-election period. In each stage, there are clusters of activities or practices perceived to be necessary components in winning an election in the Philippines. These practices and the problems encountered in each stage are discussed in this section.

### Pre-Campaign/Informal Campaign Period

People enter politics with different motivations, some on their own volition and some at the prodding of others. Some politicians see public service as their personal cause while others are pushed into it reluctantly. Others may already be deeply entrenched in politics, coming from families of traditional politicians, or are petitioned to run by their people or kababayan (people from their community). Still others are urged to join a political coalition or are nominated by political leaders to run for public office. Whatever the aspirant's reason for entering politics, the informal or pre-campaign period, which is preparatory to the formal campaign, begins with the decision to run for public office.

Once a candidate has decided to run, the informal campaign begins. This can start years before an election for a first-time politician. For a reelectionist, it covers the whole governance period starting from day one of elected office. The major practices during the pre-campaign period are being visible, accessible, and available to the people, and strengthening one's political base; planning, organizing, and raising money; and, forging alliances or joining political groups. These activities may occur simultaneously and are deemed necessary for an electoral victory.

Name recall is crucial in any election. If people do not know you, then they cannot vote for you. A well-known personality enjoys this built-in advantage over one's opponents, with some commenting that a known candidate has more than half the campaign job done. A candidate goes through the standard procedure of printing calendars, t-shirts, newsletters, reports, anything that will further name recall. Congratulatory banners during school graduations or streamers of greetings for a town fiesta or any occasion are trademarks of the informal campaign. Some candidates develop strongholds by immersing themselves in specific sectors like NGO work, academe, youth, or community service. Others ride on the prominence of their family in local politics, and/or make full use of the media, hosting or appearing in TV and radio shows.

The candidate also makes one's self visible in the community by being physically present in public functions like attending fiestas, weddings, funerals; cutting the ribbon during inaugurations; kissing babies; becoming a sponsor or ninong/ninang

in any event; etc. S/He has to live up to the role of a ninong/ninang (godfather/ godmother) or patron in accordance with Filipino cultural expectations. For example, one has to be ready to accommodate the personal and community requests of one's kababayan, which are mostly financial or monetary in nature. In addition, s/he has to be personally available at home to entertain prospective constituents, and should speak the local dialect fluently.

Another major activity during the pre-campaign is trying to find out whether the candidate has a chance to land in a major coalition. Further, candidates hook up with those who can help in the campaign. Leaders are selected and political ties established by personally talking to the barangay captains or going to one's friends. Influential people in one's area may be befriended and approached informally to create possible allies or supporters for the election campaign. The candidate creates a support network by strengthening connections with relatives, classmates, neighbors, practically everyone s/he knows. S/He renews all these acquaintances in an attempt to forge potential political alliances or financial supporters.

An internal group of people or the core group, often made up of family members and trusted political allies, is established during the pre-campaign. The candidate and his/her core group of supporters map out a plan for the whole campaign. Money and people are programmed, sometimes even including provisions for the so-called "three Gs" -- guns, goons, and gold -- if these are perceived as necessary to win an election. An efficient campaign may be planned by considering one's financial resources, popularity, and electoral level (local or national).

Electoral victors stress the importance of money in winning an election. Without money, a candidate cannot organize people and set up a campaign machinery that can effectively mobilize votes. Some politicians disburse personal funds while others rely on their political allies or coalitions. Fund-raising may involve soliciting from moneyed or influential people, asking for monetary contributions from different organizations and sectors, or tapping different financial resources.

Once a candidate has money and people, s/he and the core group begin organizing the campaign machinery. Coordinators in the electoral area, usually barangay-based, are organized into one huge network. Organizations like women's groups or sectoral groups can also be tapped to coordinate the campaign. Extensive organizing and networking are conducted to consolidate the candidate's base. Once a coordinating network has been established, the candidate begins moving from place to place, mobilizing people and thereby mobilizing votes. An efficient campaign machinery can sometimes spell the difference between winning and losing an election.

The preparatory stage of an electoral campaign can also begin with the setting up of a political organization -- national, regional, provincial, municipal and barangay. Some political organizations have a common fund shared for the candidates in each geographical area. For some, it is expected that prominent national figures in that province, the Congressperson and the Governor for instance, raise campaign funds for all electoral candidates in that province. It is sometimes culturally expected that the Congressperson will raise funds for one's entire district.After a candidate's political base is strengthened, alliances between other candidates may occur. A candidate may scout if s/he can land a position in a political organization.* If one cannot fit into any of the coalition tickets for some reason,

then s/he may choose to run as an independent candidate. More often, a lower-level candidate (e.g., councilor) is personally invited by a politician-candidate (e.g., mayoralty candidate) to join the latter's slate. Even a rival, with immense popularity, may be invited as a guest candidate of the opposing coalition. Some are invited to join a coalition only to be dropped later when the coalition tries to accommodate favors.

An informal survey may be conducted to see which candidate has a strong following and therefore is a perceived winner. Some communities, groups, or coalitions hold meetings among political leaders to select among them who will run for the different elective positions. These leaders may represent political clans. Whoever is selected will be the political family's candidate in the electoral race. In an organized coalition system, a more systematic way of selecting candidates occurs. The national, regional, provincial and municipal coalition chapters may hold a convention to select their candidates for the different elective positions.

Problems that some politicians encounter can be classified into: (1) neophyte/first-timer difficulties; (2) political and financial disadvantages of being in the minority; and, (3) cultural issues.

With no experience in politics, the neophyte might feel intimidated by old-time politicians. The campaign for a first-timer often becomes more difficult and expensive. Someone in the minority, on the other hand, is automatically disadvantaged in terms of monetary and organizational support. S/He loses out to an opponent who can buy media visibility, i.e., radio and TV time, and media people to criticize him/her.

Some cultural factors raised include expectations that a candidate must be fluent in the local dialect (a candidate who can communicate in the local language is embraced more by the people than one who cannot); a candidate must be familiar to the people (a candidate is at a disadvantage if s/he has been away from one's hometown/province, or has trained/worked elsewhere); and a candidate coming from a family of local politicians has the rightful claim to the elective position (a candidate who does not come from a political family has to fight this cultural perception).

## Launching: Filing of Candidacy

The actual or formal campaign period starts the day the candidate formally announces s/he is running for public office and files one's certificate of candidacy. As of this writing, the formal campaign period usually starts 60 days before elections for national posts, and 45 days for local positions. Candidates running for national posts register their candidacy at the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) National Office. The filing of candidacy at the COMELEC can be carried out as a grand event -- a political motorcade, campaign banners, media coverage, movie star supporters, and even hired Ati-Atihan performers dancing to adrenaline-pumping drumbeats.

## Formal Campaign Period

Candidates may use rallies to be seen and heard by voters, and to sense their political strength in various localities. The candidate has to learn to deliver a speech on stage that can rake in the votes. Not surprisingly, campaign speeches

are characterized by many promises. A candidate will most likely say "kung matutulungan namin kayo (if we can help you) in any way, please just come to the office." In some provinces, rallies are not complete without food. "You cannot gather people with just laway (saliva) listening to your speeches, your platform of government. So to make them get together, you have to serve them something also. In addition, of course, they will listen" Movie stars likewise aid in drawing rally crowds to the campaign gathering.

Aside from rallies, candidates employ barangay-to-barangay, house-to-house, person-to-person, and market-to-market campaigning. An electoral victor narrated going to 467 barangays in 45 days, leaving the house at 7 in the morning and returning late at night. A candidate's supporters can go from one barangay to another, playing the candidate's "jingle" or song advertisement and asking for people's votes. Other campaign paraphernalia include leaflets, posters, calendars, stickers, flyers, and t-shirts. In addition, media is extensively used through radio and TV appearances or commercials, as well as print advertisements.

The intensity of the actual campaign is determined by how much money the candidate has. At a minimum, a candidate has to spend for leaflets, advertisements, and poll watchers come election day. Research participants reported that campaigners expect to be provided for by the candidate. The candidate has to give money to campaign coordinators, political leaders, even mayors. Leaders and coordinators need campaign funds to mobilize people and to organize conferences where a candidate's vision and/or character can be put advertised. Candidates feel that everyone helping in the actual campaign must be provided at least with food and operations expenses. For instance, young people volunteer to paste a candidate's posters, and in return receive allowances for the gawgaw (paste) and snacks. Finally, to a very real extent, money is used to buy votes. Knowing that vote buying is unavoidable, some candidates explicitly tell their supporters to accept the money given them but to vote according to their conscience.

From the lens of the research participants, the traditional system of campaigning is most effective, especially with the poor. The traditional system employs patronage politics or living up to the cultural expectation that the politician should act as a patron. This means doling out money and personally attending to any community or personal needs of one's constituents. Traditional politics is money-based politics. Some politicians have attempted to use progressive or new politics, which focuses on the candidate's principles and platform of government.

Running on a minority ticket can pose problems, with the candidate often having little or no campaign funds, little organizational support, and few political allies. Funds and other resources are usually with the administration or ruling coalition. Skirmishes among politicians belonging to the same organization also occur and can hamper the unity of the group. Sometimes, there are fights among campaign leaders of the same candidate. Neophytes or first-time politicians are easy targets of intimidation and pressure from old-time politicians.

During the formal campaign period, various kinds of negative gossip and scandalous rumors will be hurled against a candidate. Whether it is true or not, rational or ridiculous, the point is to destroy the public's perception of the candidate. In some areas, the electoral campaign is really a game of siraan ng puri (contest in

destroying each other's integrity) or black propaganda. Politicians learn to respond immediately to false accusations and personal attacks.

A campaign can become very personal, especially at the local level. When the campaign stops being civil and insults are thrown against one's rival, campaign violence may result. Hoodlums dressed in fatigues are common. Some candidates have been known to make use of the military. At times, it is the candidate's own people who create fights or skirmishes. A "dirty-tricks department" might even try to burn a rival's house or even kill him/her.

In certain political areas, the three Gs operate during campaign periods. Electoral victors recount dukot or kidnap tactics where a candidate's campaign leaders are literally kidnapped. Thus, heavy security is enforced especially a week before the election, with painstaking checking if one's leaders are safe in their houses. Some politicians reportedly employ a variety of fear tactics to scare away the leaders of the rival candidate: dressing hoodlums in fatigues to disguise them as military people; flying military helicopters; showing off weapons; even making use of the military. When a candidate faces a politician who makes use of guns and goons, s/he is sometimes forced to resort to the same tactics.

Certain provinces are known as patayan areas (killing fields), talagang ubusan ng lahi (a war to the last kin). As such, townsfolk would say that to run as a candidate in these provinces is akin to "putting a cross on your shoulder" and preparing your own funeral. Some districts or provinces are known locally as "owned" by certain political families or dynasties. Thus, anyone who goes against a strong political family is considered "dead."

## Election Day

The fourth stage of the electoral campaign is V-day or election/voting day, the most important day in the whole electoral process. Tension runs high and everyone is busy persuading people to vote for his or her candidate. The streets are littered with leaflets and sample ballots. Vote buying is rampant in some areas and stories of election fraud and violence are common.

Election morning begins with candidate supporters transporting constituents to the polls usually by mini-buses, jeeps, and tricycles. Around the polling place, candidates have their own network of loyalists who distribute sample ballots, watch the voting process, and influence voters to choose their candidates. Persuasion strategies may be legitimate and illegitimate, including vote buying and physical intimidation.

More political drama unfolds after polls close at 3 p.m., when votes are counted manually at the precinct level. Poll watchers play a crucial role at this stage. A politician commented that if you do not have money for poll watchers, then you have lost the election. Ballot watchers are well taken care of with food and money because they are the people who ensure that a candidate's votes are counted. Meals and snacks are provided for watchers day in and day out. Otherwise, a candidate risks losing votes if watchers are not properly motivated and fall asleep when the ballot counting extends till the wee hours. To prevent election fraud, one candidate had all his lawyer friends from Manila come to the province. These lawyers were spread among the different precincts to watch over the ballot

counting. The local people saw that there was no way this candidate could be cheated.

Darkness falls at around 6 or 7 in the evening. By this time, vote counts remain unfinished. A losing candidate may decide to reverse the voting trend "magically" by devising a power outage in the precinct area. By the time lights come on again, somehow the losing candidate's score has been reversed in the race, and s/he stands ahead of his/her opponent. Seasoned poll watchers come prepared with candles and flashlights, to provide light during these critical power outages.

## Post-Election Period

The electoral process does not end with election day. The days and even weeks of ballot counting are factored in at the very beginning of planning for the whole electoral campaign. Most of the money spent for an electoral campaign goes to ballot watching. The post-election period covers the days of ballot counting until the electoral winner is declared. This period is marred by cases of election fraud and election violence.

Research participants had many stories of cheating employed by their rivals. For example, election officials may be bribed to carry out ballot switching. The real ballot boxes are exchanged with fake ballot boxes filled with counterfeit ballots. One case involved fake electoral returns at the office of the mayor; all the election returns came in the same handwriting, used a single pen, and had the same signature. Study respondents also reported instances when the cheating candidate complained against election fraud.

Some candidates reportedly hire gunmen, even policemen, to intervene with the ballot counting. A public official narrated a story of an old-time politician who remained in office by bribing a certain COMELEC official. When that official retired, the politician hired Manila policemen to search the municipal office in their province. This was when the three Gs came into full force. The eventual electoral victor had his men ready with their own weapons to face the hired policemen. Another politician recounted how his own children had to protect their ballots at gunpoint. Talagang nagbunutan sila because papalitan ang ballot box (They really drew out their guns because the ballot boxes were being switched). Because of past incidences of election violence, individual candidates own guns or ask the police to protect their ballots.

It is quite interesting to note that respondents who were deeply involved in electoral campaigns expressed a large amount of negative emotions. Feelings of satisfaction were rarely mentioned. The only positive emotion clearly expressed is the feeling of triumph and jubilation when a candidate wins the election. When the election ends in defeat, initial feelings of shock or disbelief are replaced by sadness and dejection.

For the candidate and the people involved in the campaign, the tension and anxiety of each day is tremendous: pressure from inside and out, political skirmishes, samaan ng loob (hurt feelings) within one's own camp, attacks from media, black propaganda, trouble with family and finances. The list can go on and on. The most difficult moment emotionally is said to be the day of the election itself: the suspense of not knowing whether you will make it or not.

Politicians narrate stories of hurt, jealousy, betrayal, and abandonment within their own organizations. Candidates experience varying degrees of envy and resentment when coalition-mates are perceived to be more popular in surveys and more favored by coalition leaders. Some express hurt when abandoned by coalition leaders. Others feel betrayed when they work so hard and yet other coalition-mates get better favors from organization leaders. Self-pity leads to resentment, which inspires the candidate not just to work harder but to try to beat and overtake one's own political allies.

Feelings of frustration and disappointment set in when a candidate does not have the all-out support of the entire clan or even one's own political coalition; when fatigue from working so hard in the campaign surfaces and yet one continues to lose in election surveys or be "cheated" by coalition-mates; when s/he has tried to remain clean and yet everywhere sees only the dirt that goes with Philippine politics. Some report feeling so disgusted and dirty inside that they choose to leave politics. Despite negative experiences, why do politicians stay in politics? Some respondents explained that their lives have been practically invested in politics; they have made enormous family sacrifices and financial investments, and they feel challenged to make a difference while in public office.

## Political Language

Members who share a culture possess a common language used to communicate among themselves (Triandis, 1994). Filipino political culture likewise contains its own set of words and phrases that transmit electoral and governance meanings. Below is a list of some terms in Philippine political language, and their corresponding meanings.

> *BIMPOS --Batang Itinulak ng Magulang sa POlitika* (children who were pushed by their parents into politics)
> *Neophyte* -- first-time politician
> *Command votes* -- votes captured through established political leaders; dependent on one political leader who promises to deliver votes from a specific geographical area
> *Retail command votes* -- captures a small amount or a limited number of votes, e.g. only hundreds of votes coming from an NGO or cooperative in a specific municipality
> *Wholesale command votes* -- captures a large amount of votes, e.g. tens of thousands of votes coming from a small town under a strong political leader
> *Free market votes* -- votes captured through media
> *Solid votes* -- votes captured through endorsements by key personalities, e.g. religious leaders (of the Catholic Church, Iglesia ni Kristo, El Shaddai)
> *Participative leadership* -- system of governance that consults and involves constituents as participants at all levels of development
> *Personalistic politics* -- system of governance based on personal relationships, i.e. family, kinship, friendship, personal loyalties; over and above political principles or ideologies
> *Patronage politics* -- money-based system of campaigning and governance; based on cultural expectations for the candidate to act as a patron or ninong/ninang (godfather/godmother) which means being a provider to one's constituents or kababayan, responding to personal requests, answering personal problems, giving money to supporters

> *Progressive politics* -- principle-based system of campaigning and governance based on the platform of government carried by the candidate and the political coalition; campaign machinery is run by the platform of government (based on what volunteers and supporters understand of the candidate's principles)
> *New politic*s -- same as progressive politics
> *V-day* -- election or voting day
> *Congressional Countrywide Development Fund (CDF)* -- Congressional insertions or Congressional Initiative Allocation (CIA)

## Organizational Infrastructure of Election Campaigns

Some elections are said to be won by having a well-oiled political machinery or organization. The size and complexity of the campaign machinery varies greatly from case to case. Factors include whether the candidate belongs to a political coalition; the strength and prominence of the political coalition; funding and other resources; the specific needs and requirements of the electoral campaign; and the political environment. For instance, the government or administration coalition usually has the strongest political machinery and is often able to use government facilities and resources, although this is prohibited.

At the end of the electoral process, the political machinery is normally dissolved but may be kept intact or operational in preparation for the next election, in keeping with shared ideologies, or in fulfillment of campaign promises (e.g., in the case of campaign staff placed in government positions).

Traditionally, the campaign machinery of a candidate is set up by the political organization at the national, regional, provincial, municipal and barangay levels. Political headquarters are established in all these chapters. The political machinery is headed by the chair of the political coalition. There is a corresponding chair for each of the different levels. In a family or clan of politicians, the campaign machinery is already set up for the next generation of candidates. The political base of the older generation serves as a foundation or start-up for building a new political base. For others, the campaign machinery is run solely by the candidate and a small group of supporters, oftentimes one's own family. A politician reported winning an election with just seven young people running his political campaign from his place of residence (and he maintained only four people for the next electoral campaign).

It is customary to distinguish between a core or internal group that runs or heads the political machinery and a supporting network of people and organizations that coordinates the campaign in the different geographical areas or sectors of society. In some instances the core group of the campaign is the political coalition itself. However, the candidate usually has his/her own parallel organization comprised mainly of family members who are available to help the campaign. In the case of the latter, the core group is often composed of the candidate, spouse, children, and sometimes, people considered "family."

It is this close-knit group that maps out the plan for the whole electoral campaign. Key people can then be invited to be part of this core. A campaign manager who may conduct all the strategic planning is then assigned. The spouse often handles the financial aspect of the campaign, budgeting and disbursing the money. The core group may be just one or have parallel organizations or satellites in other areas. For instance, in a national political coalition, a national organization acts as

the core group while satellite organizations are set up in important regions. Networks are organized, if possible, in each electoral area, be it barangays, municipalities, or provinces. Simultaneous consultations are conducted with candidates and campaign managers at different political levels. Campaign teams coordinate field activities like rallies.

A campaign machinery identifies coordinators by geographical areas. The coordinators can be the candidates themselves or avid supporters or volunteers of the candidate. They can be barangay officials or councilors whose support were solicited or volunteered. Sometimes, campaign managers come from the candidate's own family, relatives and friends. Campaign coordinators can also be in the form of organizations. Organizations may be set up solely as a support group for the candidate. Existing organizations (friends and supporters of the candidate) may be tapped to extend the campaign network. Some organizations are even established in order to penetrate different sectors, e.g., organizing youth organizations to gather the support of the youth sector.

Win or lose, the electoral machinery is normally dismantled or no longer made operational after an election. If the candidate wins, some (and not all) of the personnel in the campaign machinery are rewarded and placed in positions in government. If the candidate loses, then nobody can be taken care of politically, by the losing candidate. Some professionals are hired solely for campaign purposes. After the election, their services are automatically terminated. Prominent political coalitions may keep their organizations intact, continuing organization communications and activities.

In the case of electoral victory, people involved in the campaign are taken care of, also in preparation for the next election. The political leader chooses to enlist the help of the people who supported his/her campaign especially if they were joined together to fight for a particular cause or bound by the same ideology. People from the organization will be asked to serve with the elected official. At times, the political machinery continues to exist for a few more months after the election as people in the organization continue to expect to be granted positions (or whatever promises were made by the elected official). The building of false hopes eventually disunites the campaign machinery. Moreover, as dissatisfactions emerge, the machinery is ultimately dissolved.

In the case of electoral defeat, the losing candidate examines where the political machinery failed. The campaign machinery or the political coalition is normally dissolved. Sometimes, the campaign staff themselves leave on their own volition. Leaders may decide to re-establish or re-align the organization for the next election. Sometimes, the staff members remain intact especially if there is a guiding principle to the campaign, e.g., if they represent a particular sector in society or adhere to a particular political ideology. As such, members themselves will take the initiative to remain aligned with the organization.

## Beliefs, Expectations and Cognitions

What do politicians and their closest supporters believe and expect of the electoral contest? Are guns, goons, and gold truly necessary? What wins elections in the Philippines? The candidate and the core group have their own understanding of the electoral contest that determines how they conduct their campaign. Volunteers and

voters are perceived to have implicit expectations from candidates. For their part, politicians think that their constituents have very specific demands of an elected public official that go beyond one's mandated duties and obligations.

All these cultural expectations create external and internal pressures. The perceived demands of campaign volunteers, voters, colleagues in government, campaign benefactors, coalition leaders, and the self inadvertently shape the practice of governance.

## The Electoral Contest

What the Candidate and the Core Group Believes. Some individuals believe that they can provide better government once elected, by facilitating progress and development. They also believe in their own strength to win the election, as number one in the electoral race. Along the campaign trail, their followers bolster their belief in victory at the polls. Thus, if they lose, they end up blaming the other candidates for cheating (pandaraya). After winning one's first term, a candidate who runs for re-election believes s/he will win a second term because of good governance. The belief is that majority of the people will not vote for you if you fail to deliver good services to individuals in the community. The real battleground is supposed to be the second term. If you performed well while in office, then your reputation will carry you through your second term. If people are dissatisfied, names of possible opponents for the next election will float in the air early on. The third term is considered a "no contest" because the politician has been tried and tested.

Politicians are also said to believe that command votes are votes captured through established political leaders who promise to deliver victory in their areas of influence. Free market votes, on the other hand, are votes captured through media. With the media so strong these days, some politicians believe that command votes are no longer very important. The electoral contest is no longer won through command votes but through free market votes. Other politicians believe that a popular personality already has more than half the campaign job done. A well-known person is perceived as a sure winner winner. Popularity tools for national offices are usually mass media related, as for example, if one works as a movie actor or television newscaster. Research participants also claimed that it is easier to win an election if you are part of the more popular coalition, often the ruling or administration coalition (or at least a prominent political organization).

Some interviewed electoral victors claimed that guns, goons, and gold were necessary to win an election. *Kapag wala kang three Gs, huwag ka nang pumasok sa politics*. ("If you don't have the three Gs, don't even enter politics.") "Political planning is military planning. That is war." In addition, to wage war, you need guns, goons, and gold. Research discussions showed that the importance of the three Gs varies from one region to another, depending on the kind of political subculture existing in a particular area. For instance, some provinces are known as *patayan* areas (killing fields) where the election becomes a contest to the last kin *(ubusan ng lahi).* Instances of election violence, scare tactics by the rival opponent, kidnapping, and the like have forced some candidates to resort to guns and goons.

Most politicians interviewed agree that to win an election, s/he really has to spend money. At the least, a candidate needs to spend on campaign basics like leaflets, gasoline, food, and allowance for campaigners and ballot watchers. Even non-traditional/progressive politicians realize that money is necessary to win an

election. How much does one need to spend? Interview respondents said that a politician spends more campaign money --

- for a national election compared to a local election;
- for a congressional election compared to a provincial election;
- for a provincial election compared to a city/urban election;
- for a neophyte or first-time candidate compared to an old-time politician; and,
- for a relatively unknown candidate compared to a well-known candidate.

Some research participants likened running for Congress to a national election. The candidate purportedly has to take care of the whole district, which includes all the mayors, vice-mayors, barangay captains and councilors. Some have a general organizational fund that gathers collections from congressmen in that province to take care of coalition watchers. This fund spends for the weekly allowances of mayors down to the barangay captains. A senatorial race demands megabucks. Spending for local politics may be cheaper compared to vying for a seat in the Senate.

Reportedly, a provincial election tends to be more expensive than a city election because of transportation and accommodation expenses. (A city election, however, also becomes expensive because city-dwellers are said to be more materialistic.) Candidates described how a provincial campaign could cost from three to 100 million pesos. One congressional spouse reported spending 53 million pesos for one election: 23 million for a two and a half-year informal campaign and 30 million for the election and post-election expenses. She justifies the amount by citing that they were new in politics and people did not know them yet. Their opponent reportedly spent 80 million pesos. Money is also allocated to buy votes. Some respondents even acquiesce to winning elections "by all means," implying vote buying. Buying votes has become an ordinary occurrence that even candidates who do not intend to buy votes do so reasoning that it cannot be avoided. There are simply people who will ask for money in return for their votes. "Politics is getting dirtier."

Volunteers and Voters: Quid Pro Quo. According to research participants, volunteers say they are in the campaign to help and do not expect anything in return. However, politicians sense that those who give support, whether by assisting directly or by voting for the candidate, expect something in return (as a matter of utang na loob or debt of gratitude). This is most true for people who are really known to the candidate. Money, sweat, time, votes, anything that helped the candidate win has an expected return attached to it.

Study participants believed that campaign volunteers do not really give their services for free -- the campaigners expect monetary allowances almost akin to a temporary job. A person who puts up your posters expects some money for merienda (snacks). Ballot watchers and poll watchers are also paid. When a person comes to a candidate promising a certain number of votes, a politician will just say thank you. An offer cannot be refused, but usually goodwill does not come free. Thus, when the person starts asking for money, consideration is given on whether one can deliver votes or not. Some politicians will refuse either on principle or due to lack of money. Some will advance a certain amount to the political leader who promises votes on the pretext that the money will be used to run activities in the community. The practice of soliciting money in exchange for votes is generally not perceived as vote buying.

What do voters expect? According to study respondents, voters expect politicians to fulfill their campaign promises though many have become cynical to campaign rhetoric. It is common to hear people say "Ang mga politician, puro mga sinungaling. Promise ng promise, pagkatapos hindi naman ginagawa." (Politicians are all liars. They keep on making promises and yet they keep on breaking them.) However, candidates perceive that the most prevalent expectation during the campaign is for the politician to be a patron, a never-ending source of money, food, and any personal need. Thus, voters seem to have no qualms to go to the candidate asking for special favors.

The system that makes money run and win electoral contests cannot change, unless as some respondents comment, there is a corresponding change in people's helplessness. Without addressing the problem of poverty, volunteers and voters will listen not to platitudes on good governance but to money that can temporarily address their pressing material needs.

## During Governance

Expectations of Volunteers and Constituents: The Patron. The politicians, family members and staff in the study felt that the general expectation from an elected official during governance is not just to govern according to one's specific mandate (which is sometimes not even an expectation), but to be a patron. Regardless of the term of office, position, or status, one feels obliged to provide for one's constituents, to be a kind of superperson, problem-solver, or a ninong/ninang (godfather/godmother). The politician becomes the ninong/ninang of many constituents, answering to their personal problems and acceding to personal requests. The politician's home often becomes a public office where people will go for all sorts of constituency requests and will even feel free to partake of breakfast, lunch, dinner, and anything in the politician's house. The politician feels s/he is perceived as a personal friend to everyone. During governance, politicians feel pressed to supply their constituents with money, jobs and job contracts, infrastructure projects, recommendations, personal recognition, and personal friendship.

Research participants felt that their constituents, especially the poorer ones, expect politicians to be moneyed. In addition, as their elected official, one is expected to answer to any request for financial assistance. The most common request is for money to pay for medicine, hospitalization, tuition fees, scholarship, funerals, even pamasahe or transportation cost. Special favors also include donations for fiestas, special occasions or the church. Money to pay for the band or the orchestra or the invited movie or TV personality for the fiesta are all requested from the Congressperson. Favors are often personal especially concerning money. "Pag kulang ang pera nila, takbo sa iyo (When they have no money, they go to you)." Informal supporters during the campaign may even ask for help with the family's mortgage in amounts running to hundreds of thousands of pesos. Lower-level political leaders like barangay captains likewise expect to be given small amounts from time to time.

Professionals hired for the electoral campaign leave at the end of their employment. However, volunteers or informal supporters will sometimes expect to be given employment after the campaign. Next to money, jobs are the most common request made by poor constituents. A rich or relatively well off supporter will not ask for a job but an appointment to a higher office, a promotion to a higher position.

According to research participants, some businessmen or contractors expect to be awarded infrastructure contracts for national roads, highways and the like.

Sometimes the request is not for an actual position but a recommendation for employment, even as a crew for a Jollibee fast-food outlet, or an application for a U.S. visa. For the rich, recommendations may be for construction projects pending with the district engineer, appointments to higher office, or help with legal cases. Even endorsements are appreciated knowing that any case is processed faster in a public or private office if it comes with the seal of a person in power. The bulk of a Congressperson's daily communications, besides resolutions, are papers for financial assistance, referrals, and recommendation letters.

Some research participants felt that constituents expect legislators to build infrastructure projects in their home provinces. There are many requests for special projects like roads, buildings, school buildings, barangay halls, sports complexes, farm to market roads, and irrigation projects. Communities ask help for a wide range of needs -- from processing legal papers to solving their peace and order situation.

Elected officials feel that their supporters expect to be personally recognized after the campaign. When a politician is invited to a private function, particularly to be a ninong or ninang for a wedding or baptism, there is tremendous pressure for him/her to attend. Organizations or political leaders who were supportive during the campaign will personally invite the politician. As a return to a personal favor (for campaigning) one cannot decline. Personally attending to so many private functions is time consuming, tiring, and a pressure that cannot be transferred to the staff. Everybody wants the public official to meet him or her personally. Shaking hands, a "hello and how are you?" even if the politician does not remember them, seems to mean a lot to supporters. Others are happy with a greeting card, a calendar, a family picture during Christmas and New Year or even a warm "hello".

A politician feels the need to be visible and accessible to the community. Visibility means personally attending fiestas, weddings, baptisms, and any other occasion as well as being present in one's home. Accessibility means constituents can personally approach the politician to air their grievances and articulate their needs. The politician perceives that s/he is expected to attend to constituents' needs, from taking care of water and electricity to listening to a man's gripes about his marriage. Research participants likewise understand that, for the Filipino masses, an elected official's performance is measured not only in terms of one's professional duties, the number of projects one implements, or bills passed, but on how good one is in relating personally with one's constituents.

A view from within the halls of power is that politicians are most appreciated when they can sit down with their people and talk to them. Even a Congressperson with a sterling performance as a legislator thinks that s/he is politically handicapped if s/he does not return to home base, and personally talk with one's people. Respondents in the study reported that many Filipinos, especially in the provinces, do not understand that a legislator's work is to legislate. They reported feeling expectations "from below", of pressure to help people directly using such sources as the Congressional Development Fund.

The expectations on the politician are also felt by the spouse. Politicians' wives felt they were expected to be visible, accessible, and able to relate well with the

people. The spouse can make or break a politician. She not only leads the campaign but also needs to sing, dance and speak in public. She also needs to play an active role in community projects and events.

Professional Pressures. Legislators feel the need to take care of so many people -- their constituents, coalition-mates, and bosses in government. An implicit pressure on a Congressperson is to take care of all other elected officials under him/her. Essentially, this means giving money to one's mayors, barangay captains, and even one's governor. Elected political leaders in the research reported feeling that their campaign supporters and ordinary constituents think that an electoral post comes with plenty of money to give away. A barangay captain who comes all the way from the province to go the Manila asks to be provided with food, money -- even pamasahe or transportation allowance. In addition, it is very difficult for a politician to turn down requests, especially those coming from campaign supporters.

A legislator always has to be on guard because many others -- from the President, to media, to ordinary townsfolk -- seem to be watching every move. Decisions have to be made in consideration of political influence, the fate of bills one is sponsoring, release of funds from the executive branch, one's bid for re-election, and other expectations from various sectors and constituents. The executive can exert pressure by delaying the release of congressional funds until there is strong support for the administration. Coalition politics has many pitfalls and if one belongs to the opposition, one practically begs for the release of budgets already designated for projects in one's province.

A legislator also feels pressure to conform to the political position of his/her coalition, especially if s/he feels indebted to the coalition for electoral victory. A legislator cannot simply adhere to the dictates of his/her agenda or conscience. S/He must weigh his/her views against the stand of the coalition, always careful not be socially and politically out of step. Another pressure on public officials is utang na loob (debt of gratitude). A legislator feels personally indebted to the President for inviting him/her to join the President's coalition and understands that in return, s/he is expected to support the Presidential legislative agenda. There is strong pressure to go along with the President's legislations, no matter how obscure.

Internal Tensions. With the elected position come responsibilities and obligations to the people. A large portion of the daily life of a politician belongs to the public-at-large. So much is expected from the public official that sometimes s/he has no time to attend to personal concerns. A politician narrated that when he goes home to the province every week, he barely has time to change clothes because people are already waiting in line for an audience with him. The great expectations are not just external but deeply internalized ones. Some public servants set very high standards for public service. They want to live up to their vision of good government and inspire and motivate their people with this vision. For them, the burden on their shoulders is immense.

With the pressures and expectations that come with public service, there are bound to be many moments of frustration and disappointment. Politically disappointing experiences arise when coalition politics derail funding for important projects. Political leaders report that during these times, frustration arises and their commitment to serve and deliver wavers. There are moments when the public servant wonders, "Why am I in government?" although they say these thoughts are

fleeting. "You must have the head, the heart and stomach to go through the trials of public office." They feel embattled when by the press, faced with unfair accusations, or forced to give money to constituents even if they do not have enough money for their family.

There is pressure to compromise. "Things being asked of you are things that go against your deeply held values. And the tension within you is, on the one hand, you don't want to get into dirty politics, but on the other hand, how can you turn your back on something by which you can move forward things that you dearly hold." How does a public servant deal with the constraints of the political culture and still practice and deliver what s/he thinks is good governance? There are no easy answers. Idealism needs to be balanced with the practical demands of political patronage, power sharing, coalition politics, and supporters' expectations.

Public servants attest that politics can kill idealism. A politician must be prepared to deal with all the mud and dirt that come with the territory. S/He has to be ready to be a "John the Baptist a prophet crying in the wilderness." "Kung pagpasok mo pa lang wala ka nang rason kung bakit ka pumasok, wala kang ipinaglaban, talagang mawawala ka (If you entered politics without any strong conviction to begin with, you really get lost)." "That is my greatest fear, that the kind of politician's image, that the kind of politics that I disdain, will somehow be the kind of politician and the kind of politics I will become."

Then there is the temptation to take bribes. "A lot of big people in Manila and large groups approached me and said that they will finance if I did not have money. I looked at the compromise that I had to pay and sabi ko hindi ko kaya ito (I said I cannot do this)." The temptation is very real. In addition, when one is already in a position of power, the temptation is even greater. The pressure to give in to all the solicitations for money can tempt a politician to find other sources of funds, sources that will corrupt. Some say that the scariest thing is not to feel and not to know when your people do not want you anymore. Another politician's concern is to lose one's ability to judge whether one gives money to help or is actually buying votes.

A public official feels the pressure to maintain a good public image. S/He has to exercise caution in every decision s/he makes and every word one uses. Thus, it becomes difficult to refuse personal favors that may reflect negatively on him/her. Sometimes, even without doing anything, a reputation can be clouded by the stereotypical image of a corrupt politician. Finally, the life of a politician is also filled with real from rival politicians and even rebel forces like the New People's Army. Scare tactics of rival opponents and long-time traditional politicians are common. Military, police, and private armies participate in the political arena as guns and goons are paraded. Kidnapping, destruction of property, even the burning of houses threaten the lives of the politician and his/her family.

## Governance Practices Related to the Electoral Contest: How a Reelection Bid Affects Governance Style

A critical factor that affects the governance style of an electoral victor is whether one plans to run for re-election. For example, will saying this, or doing that, make the politician look good come election time? From inside the halls of power, good governance involves not only mandated performance indicators but also informal indicators that contribute to one's next electoral victory.

The fact that a politician plans to run for re-election affects the way one's staff runs the political office. Decisions on whether to support certain resolutions, issues, or projects become partly dependent on re-election plans. There is no explicit directive given. Instead, what reigns is the shared belief that re-election depends not solely on following one's mandate but on Filipino cultural indicators such as being visible in the community, being personally accessible to the people, and being able to serve as a patron or ninong/ninang. Thus, the governance style that emerges is either reelectionist or non-reelectionist.

In the re-electionist style, there is conscious effort to make the legislator always look good to constituents and main political supporters in accordance with cultural expectations. For instance, a Congressional Report may be disseminated on the pretext of informing people of the Congressperson's activities when it is actually a means to campaign for the next election . Congressional Initiative Allocations (CIA) are directed to projects like infrastructure that can make a politician highly visible in the community. Allocations may be divided in such a way that the legislator becomes visible in a number of regions instead of just one.

Aside from a re-election bid, there is a belief that good governance cannot be achieved in one term. The expectation that s/he will be in politics for the long term pushes a public official to do his/her best to make governance more efficient and effective. The sense that constituents are lagging in socioeconomic development also pushes a public official to work harder. Said one public official who entered politics reluctantly, "I better make the most out of the situation and do a good job as a public servant."

If the electoral victor believes in an ideological platform, then his/her governance style will be markedly different from one who merely wants to be re-elected. S/He judges his/her performance based on the platform initiated. The governance style is directed by a vision to further development for constituents. S/He tackles critical issues that will benefit not just constituents or her/himself (politically) but the Filipino people at large. S/He refuses to give in to temptations, such as bribe money from businesspersons, to support his/her re-election campaign. S/He can even attempt to initiate a new political culture that does not adhere to the personalistic and patronage system of governance.

In a non-reelectionist subculture, the legislator makes decisions unhesitatingly even if these do not conform to the stand of political allies or supporters. Critical issues that are important for the legislator are supported even if such measures will lose votes. There is less pressure on decision-making as the legislator decisively upholds principles regardless of the electoral consequences. Congressional Initiative Allocations can be allocated to services important to the legislator even if it means less visibility to the people at large. The legislator and his/her staff can even go against cultural expectations from constituents and supporters such as refusing to give any form of financial contribution, personal requests, or recommendation letters.

## Governance Practices to Prepare for the Next Election

Every Day is Campaign Day. It is often said that the electoral campaign in the Philippines begins on the very first day after elections. *"Hindi nga hinihintay pang maka-upo yung nanalo o hindi pa tapos mag-mukmok yung natalo, pero*

*pagkatapos ng eleksyon ay umpisa ulit ang pamumulitika."* (The winner is not yet seated in office or the loser is not yet done moaning about his/her loss, and yet campaigning begins immediately after election day.) The daily atmosphere in a public office is as if one is already on the campaign trail for the next election. Thus, every day in office is (informal) campaign day.

The staff, without explicit instructions from the politician, is more cautious. There is a greater tendency for the staff to be careful in every decision they make, in resolutions filed or written, given the possibility that these may displease certain people or groups and therefore affect votes in the next election. The elected official and the staff practice diplomacy, trying to keep a perpetual smiling face. A direct "No" to a request is rarely uttered. Instead, other avenues for solutions are explored. People asking for favors cannot be directly turned down unless the politician wants to appear that s/he is not helping people. *Hindi ka tumutulong, pagdating ng eleksyon, babalikan ka.* (You're not helping, come election time, they'll get back at you.)

A politician is constrained by the political culture to remain visible to one's constituents. As much as possible, legislators reach out to all barangays despite physical and logistical difficulties. A Congressperson who does legislation from Monday to Thursday is expected to come home and personally attend to the needs of one's constituents. This is a huge sacrifice especially for public servants of provinces far from the capital. It appears to be a common practice for people to come to the politician's house. Politicians feel that many people do not understand the work of a legislator. They wonder why the Congressperson is seldom around.

Internal Arrangements. Because of pressure on the public official to accede to every personal request, internal arrangements are made with staff and external arrangements made with other government offices. Such arrangements make the politician look good by seemingly being able to grant requests. For example, a public official says s/he uses a code every time s/he writes to the District Engineer. Ending with a *sincerely* means "please do everything you can about the favor this person is asking" and a *very truly yours* means "I leave it up to you if you can do something about it."

"I think for all Senators and their Chiefs of Staff, *may mga sari-sariling* (they each have their own) internal arrangements. Because as Chief of Staff, you take the flak, you take the negative, you take the cudgels if positive, the principal gets the credit." Through sign language, body language, or plain words, there is a system between the principal and the members of one's staff. If the public official forgets a commitment to a local official, all s/he has to do is call in one's Chief of Staff and s/he will assume responsibility for the disservice without the principal being embarrassed. The pressures on the principal are transferred to the staff.

The staff may serve as the fall guys. The Chief of Staff often takes the blame when the Senator or the Congressperson is unable to comply with a request. There is no explicit directive and yet the staff sees it as part of their duty to protect the politician from any possible negative criticism. A staff of a Senator said, "The key is if the request is going to be granted, you make the Senator sign. But if the request is going to be rejected, I will sign." The point is always to make it appear that the public official has personally tried to do something about the request of the constituent. Sometimes, a person acts as the spokesperson or Officer-in-Charge for any program or issue so that any negative criticism or attack is transferred from the

politician to the fall guy.

A Senator reports that around 25 percent of his time is allocated just for responding to personal and community problems an expectation that is not part of his role as legislator. There are times when he cannot do anything about a personal or community request. But instead of declining to offer help or saying "No," the best compromise is to make referrals with other agencies or offices that can respond more effectively to the request. Community requests are forwarded to respective government agencies, e.g., the Department of Social Welfare for livelihood needs, the Department of Health for medical needs, the Department of Public Works and Highways for roads and bridges. Referral letters are written to hospitals, pharmacies, even funeral homes to provide the needed services at the expense of the office of the public official. For instance, funds are set up with designated hospitals so that people with medical needs who come to the office are simply endorsed to these places. Instead of disbursing money, a piece of paper from the politician's office can be exchanged for medicine and a coffin.

A politician usually has a ready fund allocated for requests for financial assistance. Even requests by communities can be charged to this fund. Favors asked by campaign supporters are also budgeted. If not referrals or endorsements, there are revolving funds handled by the Chief of Staff, the personal secretary, and the wife of the politician (funds for district offices). The protocol in some offices is if a constituent comes asking for money, give it right away. Often, wives handle the finances so the politician directs the people to his wife who gives out the money.

People and Projects. To prepare for the next election, campaign supporters and coordinators are taken care. Special attention is given to go-between political leaders to maintain their loyalty to the politician. Various kinds of projects are implemented to increase the politician's visibility at the community level. After winning the election, the reelectionist begins the task of maintaining a hold on one's political leaders or what is called "taking care of your people." A Congressperson starts meeting one's mayors, barangay captains, and political coordinators. Even if s/he does not go to the barangays, s/he at least meets with the officials. These people are given a little something ("money") from time to time, to be alagaan (taken care of). In this way, support down to the barangay level is ensured for the next election. If not, the initial campaign process with the gargantuan spending for and wooing of political leaders is repeated.

Special favors like employment in government are prioritized for people who have invested their time in the campaign (by virtue of utang na loob) or who can be sure to help in the next election. Still part of utang na loob and hiya, the politician is obliged to accommodate barangay captains or mayors when they come to Manila. Campaign supporters are given even a small token during Christmas or a Christmas party is given for them. The staff are given occasional treats, even just polvoron or ice cream.

Community programs help increase political visibility in the community. Health, population, ecology, and all sorts of programs are set up. Sometimes the spouse organizes the community, and establishes day care centers, barangay health centers, livelihood centers, women's organizations, and medical missions. Some wives report spending their own money for these organizations. Politicians also maintain radio programs or arrange for TV/radio appearances to increase exposure. The congressperson's spouse is believed to play a crucial role in helping

the politician stay in power. S/he organizes livelihood and community programs. Wives sponsor women's programs. The spouse does his/her share of attending fiestas, graduations, weddings, as well as substituting for the political partner when s/he cannot make it. Lastly, politicians try to do what they think is best for their constituents by lobbying for special projects. Even legislators initiate infrastructure projects perceived to increase their popularity among the electorate.

## Emotions and Attitudes that Concern the Next Electoral Contest

Some staff adopt the attitude that they will run a re-election campaign even if there is no clear decision from their principal. They want to prepare for the possibility of their principal deciding to run only near the end of his/her term. If this happens, they do not want to be blamed for not preparing for this, meaning they did nothing to ensure votes (e.g., putting up visible infrastructure projects; responding to special favors or personal requests; taking care of campaign supporters; etc.) Moreover, they are also submitting to the prevailing political culture. Some express exasperation at the deluge of people lining up for food or money at their office. Others are aware that they have to be defensive or neutral to play it safe for the next election.

Many research participants expressed frustration and disappointment about being in politics. They fear losing their position, the respect of the people, and the fringe benefits that go with a position of power. This apprehension leads to many compromises. There is also the fear of defeat after many years of serving the public and one's family. At the thought that Philippine politics is getting dirtier, politicians also fear hostility and violence come election time.

## Internal Attitudes in Coping with an Elected Position

How does one cope with the myriad disappointments and frustrations recounted by many in public service? Some responses by public officials include having:

- a mindset that government service is the most exciting thing anyone can get into;
- a messianic complex, an advocacy, a reason for being in government;
- a conscious awareness that politics is not how it should be; and,
- an inspiring vision to serve.

People already in government say that politics may eradicate a person's idealism. Thus, one way to cope with an elected position is for a public servant to enter government with a clear vision of why he or she is in government. There is an internal attitude of constantly preparing one's self and anticipating more difficult days ahead. Examples of this attitude of preparedness includes the following:

- letting painful experiences strengthen you through the more difficult days of public service;
- preparing yourself for the additional pain that goes with a higher position and learning how to use your power a little more creatively each time;
- being ready to feel like John the Baptist, a prophet crying in the wilderness; and,
- taking government service as a challenge.

There is also an attitude of resignation that one cannot do everything that one envisioned before he or she entered public office. A politician accepts that there

are many restrictions and limitations in politics and in the bureaucracy; and that not everything s/he has promised to the people can be delivered.

Other ways of coping include doing one's work quietly and not joining the fray of personalistic politics, and of not taking things personally and not creating personal enemies. In addition, a politician can exert effort to --

- understand how the bureaucracy works and how to operate within that bureaucracy;
- prepare further by reading, listening, and undergoing training;
- let other people handle the everyday pressures of people constantly asking for money or favors; and,
- work with institutions that can help people help themselves.

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***by Cristina Jayme Montiel***

## 4. MUSLIM POLITICS

Although Mindanao is generally perceived to be Muslim territory, the Christian population of this southern island is actually larger. Many Muslims, however, clamor for an autonomous form of government for Muslim Mindanao. In Mindanao's Muslim areas, three forms of authority exist: (1) sultanate or datuism (traditional), (2) Islamic, and (3) Western or democratic (formal authority of the Philippine government). Interviewed Muslim respondents commented that success in governance in this region requires reconciling these three different forms of political influence.

In Muslim politics, the political leader of a clan can sometimes be more influential than the mayor. They are, in sociology, informal leaders because they do not possess the state authority derived from government and yet are sometimes more influential and respected than the elected mayor. The Sultan and his family may end up running for political positions in formal government. Sometimes the Sultan becomes the mayor. In the traditional sultanate, a set of officials is created in every town. There is the Sultan, the kabugatan or the deputy of the Sultan, and his council. In addition, a set of officials called the bayalabi looks after the concerns of women. Thirdly, the younger generation finds a voice through a representative from the youth sector.

A sultan is so respected that he can simply send a symbol of his authority to represent him. This traditional sultanate is a highly centralized form of leadership based on power by inheritance. By virtue of inheritance, the people have to accept him as their leader. Sultanate rule rarely involves widespread consultation with the people. Datus are elderly Muslims who derive their authority by virtue of having plenty of relatives or a huge clan. A person needs to have a big following or the support of his clan to be titled a datu. The datu is highly revered because Muslim culture demands that due respect be given to the elderly in the community. Thus, loyalty to the family or clan is expected by Muslim culture by vesting authority on the datu.

A second form of political authority comes in the form of the Islamic system. Islamic governance involves constituent consultation. Family decisions, even for a simple thing like marketing, need to be consulted with members of the family. Most decisions are made through a maswara. Many Muslims seek autonomy in order to implement the Shariah or the Islamic form of government with its own Shariah court, Shariah law, and Shariah judge. Though there are Muslims who have taken arms to revolt against the formal forms of government, e.g., the MILF, there are also Muslims who prefer non-violent means toward autonomy. Their vision is to create a true Islamic form of government that is neither traditional nor Western. Respondents claim that contrary to popular belief, the Islamic form of government desired by many Muslims is non-violent and attempts to revive the works of the prophets of the faith.

In addition to the Sultanate and Islamic systems of political authority, the so-called Western or democratic form of government operates among Muslim communities. The elected political leaders may exert more influence in some areas because they possess the legal authority to govern, and the support and resources of the formal government. Because traditional and Islamic leaders are still revered in Muslim areas, however, there may arise tension and conflict between the elected leaders and the informal leaders.

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## 5. CULTURAL ASPECTS OF PHILIPPINE GOVERNANCE

### Personalistic Politics

Research participants point out that a striking characteristic of Philippine political culture is that it is highly personal. Filipino society is collectivist, family-oriented, and person-oriented. Filipinos value their personal relationships above all else. As such, Filipino politicians also handle politics in a very personalistic way. This personalistic orientation in government is manifested by how personal relationships often take precedence over political principles or issues of governance. Thus, family, relatives, friends, kumpadres, kababayans, padrinos, and other personal connections influence Filipino political practices. Understanding political configurations requires factoring in sentiments, attachments, ties and relations.

Filipino personalistic culture also creates an electorate and a government that perceive political relationships as personal relationships. What is expected of a politician or a public official is what is expected of a personal friend or acquaintance. What makes a candidate or a politician popular to the people is a highly personal approach of campaigning and governance. Performance is measured not just by fulfilling mandated obligations but by living up to the cultural expectation to be personal. "A politician is family." It is the sense that they know you and that you know them that Filipinos value.

### The Ties That Bind

It is customary to vote for one's kamag-anak (family members and relatives), kaibigan (friend), kumpadre (male friend), kababayan (person from the same place of origin), or even a mere kakilala (acquaintance). No matter how obscure the association, people usually vote for someone who is somehow connected to them. Analogously, a family member, relative, friend, or kababayan is first to be invited to run. People often ask their prominent kababayan to run for public office, or even distant relatives of known political families. Thus, a person who can speak the local dialect has an advantage because it symbolizes one's culturally accepted connection with the people. Candidates often renew their ties with relatives, classmates, and old acquaintances to enhance their familiarity to the electorate.

Family plays a large role in Philippine politics. First, it is important in terms of show of support. A candidate expects support from the entire clan. If a candidate receives less than the full support from his/her own kin, people will be less likely to support him/her as well. The core group of the campaign machinery is often composed of family members, the candidate's spouse and children. The female spouse, or another woman in the family, often handles the finances. The spouse has a great impact on the campaign, not just on her direct supportive role but on the kind of image she projects of her family on people.

Second, political clans are prominent in Philippine politics. Political families or clans are known to rule particular geographic areas. They consistently play a lead role in national and local politics and perpetuate their power in succeeding generations. With the lack of an anti-dynasty law, the third term of an elected official marks the entry of the spouse or the children to run for the same position. If not, they sit on various positions in government. The campaign machinery of a political family is often operational. A candidate from a well-known political family has a great advantage. Political families can also lose the favor of the electorate if the family name becomes tarnished by graft and corruption or if the incumbent is perceived to be full of empty promises. Traditional politicians favor their own kin to run for public office to maintain their family's politico-economic stronghold and keep the family name in local politics. Nepotism also reigns when politicians favor their family members and relatives over equally or more qualified individuals for government positions.

These personal loyalties, often to family and friends, result in a political system that cannot effectively discipline its employees. A personnel is not reprimanded or fired for blatant inefficiencies because s/he is a friend. This creates an "ok lang" (tolerance of mediocrity or inefficiency) mentality. Long-time employees are perceived as family and are rarely taken out of the bureaucracy, even if there is legitimate reason to replace or terminate their services.

Personal loyalties to family, friends and other perceived connections often overrule loyalties based on organizational principles or political beliefs. Being personally close to certain people or groups becomes the determining factor instead of remaining loyal to the group one is supposed to belong to ideologically. "People would want to be perceived as close to the persons the party leaders rather than to the things that the party stands for."

This lack of professionalism and a clear ideological partisan base is reflected in the easy ability of politicians to switch political parties and the mushrooming of parties come election time. Parties break up or merge with others without any formalities. A party can split because of personal rivalries among prominent party leaders. A party can be created by a politician with the support of friends. Politicians simply flock to the administration coalition because of its perceived power and resources. Thus, a solid opposition party is never created. Instead, coalitions revolving around strong political leaders become the basis of political consolidation during elections and governance.

## The Personal Approach to Politics

Research participants believe that a good politician possesses the qualities of a good friend, that is, approachable, easy to find and talk to, and someone to turn to for problems. People will talk to a politician not only for a community concern but to discuss family or marital problems. It is common for people to invite themselves to the politician's house, partake of food, and feel at home. There is a cultural belief that pag hindi ka na nila pinupuntahan ibig sabihin hindi ka na nila mahal. (If people do not come to you, that means they don't love you anymore.) The perception is that the more people ask for you, the more they love you. To be personally entertained means a lot to people, even if they do not get exactly what they ask for from a politician.

Some public officials feel that Filipinos are sensitive to shows of attention. What is important is for people to receive a response to their requests, whether the politician

can give money or not. Even a recommendation (and not necessarily a solution) from the office of a public official is enough. A local political leader in Batangas said, *Wala naman akong nakukuha sa mga pulitikong 'yan e. Pero natutuwa na ako na kung dadaan sa tapat ng bahay namin o kakaway siya sa akin.* (I don't get anything from those politicians. But I am pleased if s/he passes in front of my house or waves at me.)

To shake the hand *(kamayan)* of a public official, to receive a pat on the shoulder *(tapik)*, to be stroked (*haplos*), to have the official's arm on one's shoulder *(akbayan)* -- these physical gestures add to the perceived personal closeness between a politician and his/her constituents. Politicians think these gestures make people feel honored and good about them, and give a perception that the politician is a good person, a friend. For instance, shaking the hand of the President brings about a different kind of positive emotion. A simple touch that says hoy, kumusta? (hello, how are you?) makes people, especially those in the provinces, seemingly happy. Such gestures make a politician more popular and more endearing to the people.

Many politicians believe that visibility is the most important factor of all. This is why a legislator often comes home every weekend. S/He tries to attend the fiestas, weddings, baptisms, and funerals. When a constituent comes to the office, he/she expects the official to meet him/her in person. When a supporter gives a personal invitation to attend a function, the politician is greatly pressured to come. His/Her presence is considered a great honor by the people. "So if you fail to come the first time, you will be forgiven. But for the second time, third time that you fail, sasabihin na nila (they will say) 'we really committed a blunder of helping him/her in the elections."

Some politicians also feel that Filipinos love a politician who can joke and make them laugh. Engaging in informal conversations or chit-chat (chika-chika), small talk (kumustahan), and providing snacks (merienda) for the people is another way of making a politician popular to the people. Some politicians even make it a point to remove formal addresses like "Sir" or "Madam" to remove the perceived gap and increase the closeness between them and their constituents.

## Lack of Professionalism: Personalan and Tampuhan

Political relationships in the Philippines are perceived to be too personal. When a particular favor is not granted or a particular point of view is not supported, the person feels offended or slighted. There is little room for disagreements or differences in beliefs. A "No" seems like an offense against a person, not just an opposition to the idea or opinion expressed. Hinindian ako (I was turned down.) Research participants noted that the Filipino tendency to take everything on the personal level can lead to important bills not being passed or essential positions lost when a dissenter is not "forgiven" or is perceived as a life-long enemy.

Members of the same political coalition can experience tampuhan or hurt feelings when other coalition-mates are perceived to be getting preferential treatment in terms of campaign funds or resources (like the use of a helicopter). This can motivate politicians to go against their own coalition-mates in the belief that they are being cheated by their political group. Some politicians who feel personally hurt (tampo) by the actions of their political leader can bolt from the coalition and transfer to another. If a politician fails to respond to a request or is unable to be physically present, a constituent or campaign supporter can feel hurt. Thus, dissatisfaction (and loss of

votes) may arise even if the official performs extremely well in government simply because of a failure to live up to the cultural expectation to take care of constituents.

## Perceived Political Utility of Shame: Hiya and Delicadeza

Research respondents claim that people in government can use the cultural character of hiya or shame. Hiya works best when a clean, efficient, and righteous person is placed in a leadership position. The tendency is that all of one's subordinates will feel hiya or mahihiya (feel shame) and will try to do an efficient job. *"Ang sipag-sipag niyo tuloy nahihiya ho sila na hindi rin magsipag* (you are so hard-working they feel ashamed not to do the same)." Hiya can also work in making people compromise or do special favors for certain groups. For instance, a Congressperson can pull strings in the executive because people do not want to be put to shame or mapahiya in a congressional session. Hiya also obliges politicians to take care of their leaders' expenses. Delicadeza or word of honor operates where people commit their votes to a candidate early on. Even if they change their minds later, they stay true to their word. "Naipangako na yung boto (The vote has been promised/committed)."

## How Pakikisama Operates within the Halls of Power

*Pakikisama* (fitting in with a group) implies that a politician tries to avoid being different so as not to risk social ostracism. It also pressures some public officials to give in to the demands of people who are politically-connected. Even the President can be asked to comply with personal requests of friends over and above government rules and regulations. *Pakikisama* could push the politician to remain neutral in an argument or conflict. Some politicians feel that *pakikisama* prevents individuals from expressing their beliefs. *Pakikisama* is seen as blocking substantial disagreements on issues, and discouraging a plurality of opinions. For instance, a good politician may be forced to ally with the authorities or *makisama* to further his/her political cause. Examples of *pakikisama* among politicians include the following:

- Avoiding any confrontational stance or a direct refusal or rebuttal so as not to hurt the other person's feelings; knowing that this person holds power or authority to influence decisions that pertain to the politician's office.
- Conforming to the stand of the coalition or the majority and compromising individual principles and beliefs.
- Choosing to be silent instead of expressing the minority or unpopular opinion, which will go against the agenda of a person in power or the coalition.
- Befriending colleagues whom one disagrees with on critical issues to avoid future impediments on issues or projects that one advocates.

## Utang na Loob in the Climb to Power

*Utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) is a cultural expectation that a person who receives any kind of favor is personally indebted to that other person and is obligated to return the favor. Strictly speaking, utang na loob takes place when a person does something beyond the call of duty. Powerful people capitalize on utang na loob to ensure that their political and economic interests are served. For instance, a politician may personally invite a candidate to run for Congressperson under his/her coalition. The candidate, in return, will feel indebted to a benefactor and feel pressured to support the political needs of this benefactor.

*Utang na loob* may not always involve a grand political or economic agenda. Research participants believe that poor people give their support to a candidate as

an investment. Some politicians think that when hard times come, the poor hope to depend on the politician for help, e.g., for food, schooling, and medicine. Some public officials feel that campaign supporters view their volunteerism as a matter of *utang na loob*. Thus, the official should accept personal invitations from their organizations, comply with personal requests for donations, or perhaps award them with a government position upon electoral victory. Many politicians feel the pressure of *utang na loob* as a cultural expectation. Even if there is no explicit demand to return the favor, a public official may have a sense of being personally indebted to his/her financiers, political benefactors, political group, political leaders, campaign supporters, and constituents. Thus, *utang na loob* is not only an external pressure but also an internal pressure that influences decision-making.

When does a politician incur *utang na loob*? According to the politicians, their staff, and family members, sometimes it is incurred when a politician is personally invited to join a political group or when a candidate receives financial and/or political support for the electoral campaign. How does a politician pay back *utang na loob* to one's supporters? Research participants gave examples of political repayment:

- Money.
- Special favors (endorsements for government contracts; support for certain bills or resolutions; adherence to the benefactor's political and economic agenda; etc.)
- Position in government (or promotion to a higher office).
- Facilitating papers, recommendations, payments, contracts, appointments, promotions, projects, etc., outside the call of duty.

Some public servants perceive *utang na loob* as not necessarily wrong when what is given is "good" and what is asked is "good" as well. The negative part arises when *utang na loob* is abused. The best way to escape this culture of *utang na loob* is to stay away from situations that will make one indebted enough to be forced to make compromises. For instance, there are public servants who have declined financial support coming from powerful moneyed individuals because the compromise expected was too great. Others make it clear to their supporters that any help extended to them should not be taken as *utang na loob*.

## The Power of Informal Personal Connections

Some research participants pointed out that power is channeled through personal relationships, connections, attachments, or bonds with persons of influence. By virtue of personal connections, a person with little or no authority feels entitled to be awarded special favors or "special treatment." For example, traffic violators flash the calling card of a government, military, or police official as a symbol of personal connection with this authority figure.

The "power of connections," though having no legitimate merit, is socially accepted. The most commonly identified groups of individuals who use and abuse their connections with a person of power are: (1) kamag-anak or family members and relatives (what is jokingly referred to as Kamag-anak Incorporated or Family Incorporated), including mistresses and illegitimate children; (2) padrinos or campaign coordinators or supporters; (3) kumpadres or personal friends; (4) alalays or staff and bodyguards; and, (5) kababayans or people who come from the same town or province. Thus, virtually anyone with perceived connections to a person in power can abuse these connections.

How is the "power of connection" used? Research respondents explained that the kamag-anak or family (or families) of the President, or a Legislator feel entitled to VIP treatment. They expect to receive special attention and be treated with greater importance compared to other guests and constituents. They expect to be provided immediate service or audience (even if they are late) and granted special favors by the office of the person in power. Padrinos or campaign coordinators often expect government positions or employment. Sometimes they act as influence peddlers for their own connections of family, relatives, and friends who wish to ask for assistance from the person in power. Kumpadres or friends request for government contracts or use of government facilities and resources. Alalays or the staff and bodyguards can sometimes act as if they have legitimate power and even abuse this "power".

The "power of connection" with an important figure is activated when an influential politician tells his/her subordinates to implement requests. A person in power has the power to either place or replace a subordinate from a post. Thus, subordinates can do nothing but acquiesce to the special requests and favors of the powerful person's web of connections. Otherwise, the risks include losing one's job, constant intimidation and pressure, grilling in a congressional session, and the like.

Not only high-ranking government officials were viewed as abusing their power by virtue of personal connections. Department heads and managers were reported to use their positions for under-the-table deals with government contractors. For instance, managers with the power to approve contracts or release funds may pressure contractors to buy materials or supplies from him/her or his/her relatives. Ordinary government employees may abuse the little power they have by peddling for money in exchange for quick service, a Mayor's permit, a pending application, etc.

## Machismo

Government is still run largely by males and many political practices are male-centered. Women politicians are frequently derided with such comments as alam mo naman ang babae, hindi kakayanin (you know a woman, she cannot do it). There are beliefs that male candidates are superior to female candidates, or that if a female is running, the opponent should also be a female. Machismo is also illustrated when male public officials openly have mistresses but are not censured . Lastly, machismo is displayed in the widespread use of guns and goons in politics, a reflection of how governance requires (male) strength and force.

## A Culture of Dependence

An observation made by politicians was that Filipinos tend to display a sense of dependency and helplessness, especially those in extreme poverty. As such, poor people are perceived to depend on a patron politician who can provide temporary relief to their everyday struggle for subsistence. Politicians can stay in politics for a long time by making people continuously dependent on them. This culture of dependence is also evident within government where people merely wait to follow orders rather than take the initiative. Essentially, people try to avoid responsibility by depending on their superiors.

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## 6. ADVOCATING FOR A PROGRESSIVE NEW POLITICS

Not all public servants have become engulfed in the traditional culture of patronage and personalistic politics. There are people in government who try to do their job and are sincere in their duty as public servants. Some have remained conscious, while being immersed in the raditional system, and have begun working with institutions that can help people help themselves. The priority of this new politics is to stop the culture of dependence that allows patronage politics to thrive. Instead, the key is to attack poverty, the root of the problem. It focuses on a system of governance that will not merely dole out money to a few but provide projects with massive impact or can benefit the majority of the people.

Said one respondent: "I believe that we have to get out of this personalistic culture so that politicians will campaign, on the basis not so much of their personal ties and bonds with other people but on the basis of what is good to their own constituencies, and for the nation at large. Not only during the campaign, but the entire life of the politician must be devoted to an attempt to get out of that culture whether in or out of office. Nobody, as I said, singly can do it. It has to be done by a group, people believing in the same things. If the people 'na nautangan ng loob' will be made to understand that they have contributed to the election of the person, for purposes of good governance, not to advance their own personal interests and to continue giving support to government efforts in many fields."

Progressive new politics is based on a platform of government where people support candidates because of their principles and the issues they carry. Money and personal relations are not the primary consideration but the politician's ability to address social issues that concern all constituents. Research respondents described some dimensions of this progressive new politics:

- people empowerment or sharing leadership with the people;
- participative leadership or letting people participate in development from planning to implementation and letting them charter their own development;
- consultation with ordinary constituents, e.g., farmers and workers;
- social organizing or organizing different sectors of society to participate in development; and,
- massive participation of the different sectors of society in development.

### Examples of Progressive New Politics

Research respondents narrated some examples of new politics. Seven brief cases are listed below. A more detailed and expanded description of new

politics is presented in Chapter Three by Nereus Acosta.

*Case 1:* Go to the Office. People were trained not to go the politician's house and instead to the office. Every time people came to the politician's house, they were patiently told to proceed to the office with more complete facilities. Eventually, people learned not to go to the private house of the official.

*Case 2:* No Solicitation. In one municipality, the Mayor started a system of not allowing any form of solicitation. They explained to the people that there will be no solicitations because projects are being implemented that will impact more people. People then began to understand the importance of projects that benefited the majority.

*Case 3:* Absent Congressperso**n**. In one area, people kept on complaining why the Congressperson was never around. Therefore, the Congressperson started explaining to the people, using radio and speaking in the local dialect, that a congressperson's work requires him/her to be in Congress so the people can have projects like roads.

*Case 4:* For the Greater Good. In another case, the politician tried to explain to the people that projects that affect the majority are more important. Eventually, constituents demanded fewer dole-outs, because they understood the work being done by the politician.

*Case 5:* Chances for Change. In one election, a non-traditional political leader had no money and won. This revolutionized the political system and encouraged young and committed political leaders. The political monopoly of a handful of political families was broken.

*Case 6:* Development through Unity. In one province, the leaders tried to promote development through unity. This was done by creating a vision of government and introducing globally competitive and quality education.

*Case 7:* Ask the People. In one province, the political leader began by asking people about their vision for the province. "How do you see the province? How do you fit in as an employee? How do you see the role of the agency or the office, in attaining your vision for the province?" They then made a vision for the province and mission statements for the different offices and the provincial government. They started defining their goals, targets, and functions. The organization of the local government was overhauled.

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## 7..SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the results of a study on how men and women within the corridors of Philippine political power viewed their world. The research used in-depth interviews and focus group discussion (FGDs) of individuals and groups in politics. The value of this study lies in its presentation of "views from inside". Direct quotes allowed public officials an opportunity to speak in their own words. Among the findings were that an electoral campaign went through distinct stages: (1) the pre-campaign or informal campaign period; (2) the launching or filing of candidacy; (3) the formal campaign period; (4) V-day or election/voting day; and, (5) the post-election period. Aside from the activities and practices operative in the campaign, the research findings described attitudes, emotions, pressures, beliefs, expectations and cognitions of the different actors involved in the political culture of elections and governance.

These actors include the politician, the politician's spouse, and the politician's staff. Also discussed in this chapter are leadership layers in Muslim politics from the view of interviewed Muslim politicians. The chapter then illustrates how public officials perceive and use local political and cultural norms to obtain and maintain public influence. The closing section shows seven cases of how public officials experimented with alternative political methods. The following two chapters are narrated as first-person accounts of politicians reflecting on their political experiences. Lutgardo Barbo writes about his observations of corruption in governmental money-related transactions. Nereus Acosta ends the book with his story as one who seeks to travel the alternative road of politics.

*END NOTES*

* Electoral tickets rarely revolve around singular parties. If they do, such "parties" are merely newborn coalitions created right before the electoral season. A more common practice in national elections is to set up a temporary political coalition of individuals and organizations, revolving around the various presidential candidates. For local elections "parties" refer to groups sponsored by candidates for governors or mayors.