

closely and continuously monitor the actors in the legislature instead of just being satisfied of their awareness of it. Although the findings can further escalate the pessimism that citizens already have against the government, it definitely provides empirical, substantial and verifiable proof to justify whatever action the people may take against the legislators as a response to their anomalous congressional enterprises. —

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Glenda M. Gloria, Ana Maria L. Tabunda, and Carmela S. Fonbuena. *Spin & sell: How political ads shaped the 2004 elections*. Makati City: Foundation for Communication Initiatives and Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2004. 124 pp.

Historical and peculiar are words that may come to mind if one were to describe the 2004 national and local elections.

For the first time in the country's history, a woman (i.e., Gloria Macapagal Arroyo) has been elected president (Corazon Cojuangco Aquino became president through a supposed revolution). There are also interesting—and, depending on one's political convictions, disconcerting—peculiarities under the Macapagal Arroyo regime. After all, she is the second woman after Corazon Cojuangco-Aquino to assume the presidency through another people's uprising in 2001 popularly known as EDSA Dos. Assuming she finishes her six-year term in 2010, she will also be the only president under the 1987 Constitution to serve for nine years.

Incidentally, the May 10, 2004 elections also mark the first time “after the Marcos era” (9) for presidential and vice-presidential candidates to run with the ban on political advertisement lifted. It is interesting to know how they, along with senatorial candidates, maximized this opportunity to get their messages across. *Spin & sell: How political ads shaped the 2004 elections* by Glenda M. Gloria, Ana Maria L. Tabunda, and Carmela S. Fonbuena explains how political advertisements

played a role in the winning and losing of selected presidential, vice-presidential and senatorial candidates. The book—an undertaking of *Newsbreak*, Pulse Asia, Foundation for Communication Initiatives, and Konrad Adenauer Foundation—focuses on the nature of such advertisements and how the electorate received them.

There are three studies included in the book. Tabunda's "For better or for worse: the impact of media on elections" focuses on voter preference with regard to presidential candidates, mainly using surveys conducted by Pulse Asia where the author serves as executive director. Gloria's "Selling a candidate" discusses how political advertisements were used—rightly and wrongly—in the 2004 presidential, vice-presidential and senatorial elections. Fonbuena's "The way to the Senate" analyzes the strategies of winning senatorial candidates and the mistakes committed by the losing ones not only in 2004 but also in previous elections. Gloria and Fonbuena are *Newsbreak*'s managing editor and staff writer, respectively.

Aside from these, there are five box articles after the studies by Gloria and Fonbuena. Gloria writes "No to makeovers" and "Negative advertising: Scream & attack" while Fonbuena is credited for "The fallen king," "Bad ad and political baggage" and "Like father, like daughter." Gloria's first article focuses on the media strategies of presidential candidates Macapagal-Arroyo and Panfilo Lacson. Her second article is an analysis of selected incidents of negative advertising or mudslinging in the 2001 and 2004 elections. The last three articles discuss the electoral performances of the late Fernando Poe, Jr., John Osmeña, and Pilar Juliana "Pia" Cayetano.

Two studies of Pulse Asia are printed as appendices. "Voter response to political ads in the May 2004 elections" analyzes the awareness of voters with regard to political advertisements of candidates and the role of mass media, particularly television, as vehicles of political advertisements. On the other hand, "'Ads are useful': a qualitative study on the effects of political ads" presents the results of three focus group discussions (FGDs) that elicited the participants' response to political advertisements, the latter's effects on them, and their stand on the ban on political advertisements. Excerpts of Pulse Asia's survey questionnaire on the 2004 elections are in the book's third appendix.

Those who are not aware of the lifting of the ban on political advertising could benefit from this book as it traces its history. According to *Spin & sell*, the ban "was signed into law in 1987 and...(its)

first implementation (was) in 1992, the first presidential elections held after Marcos” (26). It covered the 1995 congressional and local elections and the 1998 national and local elections. Aside from the congressional elections, the latter included the presidential and vice-presidential polls. In 2001, the ban was lifted “and the candidates in the 2001 senatorial race were the first to benefit from it” (20).

The book contains information on voter preference in the 2004 elections, the nature of political advertisements in the 2001 and 2004 elections and the use of mass media to educate (and miseducate) the electorate. The monthly surveys of Pulse Asia on voter behavior along various social classes give one an idea of how, say, the preferences of the rich and the poor changed prior to and during the election campaign. There are also data on the actual and declared expenses of selected candidates for their campaigns which include political advertising. In the process, the book identifies the candidates who violated the rules of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) regarding allotments in newspaper space and radio and television airtime.

Selected candidates, campaign staff, media strategists, government officials and media practitioners are interviewed to give substance to the documents cited, particularly election- and media-related statistics from Nielsen Media Research, Pulse Asia, Social Weather Stations (SWS), and COMELEC. The experiences of these key informants are useful in making sense of selected statistics, as well as in providing concrete examples to issues and concerns. A must-read, for example, is an admission of a supporter of Poe that the latter is not a political risk taker because he is a businessman. “He is compassionate for the poor but has very conservative politics. He has no radical tendencies in his body. This is why for a long time during the campaign he wouldn’t attack...President (Macapagal Arroyo)” (64).

Analyzing the statements of Yolanda Ong of Campaigns and Grey, one realizes how negative political advertising, even if aired for a short time, can seriously affect a candidate’s chances of winning. In 2001, Ong managed the advertising of the administration party’s senatorial slate and she “came out with a funny, nasty ad against four senatorial candidates of the opposition then: Lacson, Juan Ponce Enrile, Gregorio...Honasan, and Miriam Defensor Santiago...Those ads ran for only five days before election day” (60). The book says that the candidates threatened to sue Ong for libel and the political advertisements were pulled out. However, “the news media kept on

flashing them because of the controversy...In the end, Enrile and Santiago lost, while Honasan landed on the last slot" (60).

On the other hand, the effective use of advertising and media can work wonders for candidates who are relatively unknown. According to the book, senatorial candidate Manuel "Mar" Roxas III "started at 22nd place in the (SWS) survey of September 2003. But with conscientious planning of campaign strategies, a phenomenal Mr. *Palengke* (Mr. Market) ad and a publicized romance with ABS-CBN news anchor Korina Sanchez, he...came out next to no one in the Senate race...breaking even Noli de Castro's record in the 2001 elections" (76).

Specific details like these make *Spin & Sell* a handy reference for those interested in electoral politics and mass communication. Given that the book only has 124 pages, one can easily read it in just a few hours. That two of the three authors are journalists makes the task even easier as the chapters and box articles are written in a manner that is understandable to a broader audience.

It is fortunate that this is the case, since one *must* read everything. The book has no logical arrangement of data, making it hard for the reader to find particular details of interest to him or her. Not only do tables have no numbers and textual references in the chapters of Gloria and Fonbuena, there is also no list of tables which can guide the reader in locating pertinent data. Only Tabunda provides the necessary references to tables in her study. The Pulse Asia studies in the appendices section are also better organized in terms of data presentation, but these are not journalistically written and are replete with jargon. Researchers may also be disappointed with the lack of a bibliography and index.

As regards the title of the book, one may get the impression that *all* political advertisements are discussed in the 2004 national and local elections. However, the book only focuses on the presidential, vice-presidential and senatorial elections, leaving behind the local and party-list elections. And even if the book just focuses on the said elective positions, there are no data on the nature of political advertisements of *all* the candidates. The preface admits that the book is "not exhaustive" but its claim that it covers "a broad range of issues" (8) may be questioned by the selective manner of citing examples of candidates' political advertisements.

In addition, the authors fail to provide photographs or screen shots of the political advertisements mentioned in their studies. Only

the book's cover has selected television advertisements of presidential, vice-presidential and senatorial candidates. While there are descriptions of selected political advertisements—the book even provides a script of Osmeña's political advertisement on page 87—they can only do so much in jogging the reader's memory. This then makes one think how useful the book would be to future generations who may have no recollection at all with regard to, say, Roxas' Mr. Palengke, Maria Ana Consuelo "Jamby" Madrigal's *Ja-ja-ja-jamby*, Richard "Dick" Gordon's *Wow Dick*, and Juan Ponce Enrile's *Spaghetti Pababa* (The Spaghetti Song) (74-75).

It is also surprising why the book does not analyze news content especially during the election campaign since journalistic outputs could also serve as political advertisements, depending on their packaging. A study by Hofileña (2004) stresses that some broadcast media establishments provide airtime to candidates who are willing to pay. Lengthy interviews and the assignment of reporters to cover a candidate's campaign trail are said to be part of a package offered by some media organizations. Such arrangements must have been analyzed to make readers realize that political advertisements are not just election materials directly released by the candidates, their political parties, and supporters.

Just like the book's title which does not reflect the scope of the chapters, box articles and appendices, the title of Tabunda's study is also misleading as her study contains no in-depth discussion on the impact of media. It focuses mainly on Pulse Asia's voter profile. There are no comparative statistics on voter behavior through the years which could be useful to establish trends and patterns. The pervasiveness of mass media, particularly television, vis-à-vis the elections is not discussed. The analysis of mass media, in fact, is only found in the last two paragraphs of her study. That 37 percent of voters, according to Tabunda, cited media as a source of information that influenced them the most is not deeply analyzed. Worse, the source is not even cited though it may be safe to assume that it also comes from Pulse Asia.

On the other hand, Gloria's discussion of the situation of network giants ABS-CBN and GMA 7 cornering the "biggest chunk of profits from advertising" (20-21) fails to take into account the relative strength of television as a mass medium. Simply put, that television is said to be most powerful medium today does not necessarily mean that its power is shared by *all* television stations. A critique of this could

perhaps better explain why the main beneficiaries of the lifting of the ban on political advertising are the leading media establishments.

Reading her 32-page chapter, one also notices that sources of information are not properly cited from time to time. This gives researchers a hard time verifying some of the data presented by Gloria. The latter erroneously cites an undergraduate thesis done by a student enrolled at the “Department of Mass Communications” (23) of the Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU). There is no Department of Mass Communications in ADMU, only a Department of Communication.

The use of certain terms without proper definition or contextualization may end up making readers confused instead of enlightened. For instance, Gloria argues that television is an “emotional medium” (44) and this explains why political advertisements are generally “thin on substance and rich in (mass) appeal” (44). She does not define what is meant by emotional medium. While she effectively adopts what her source described as supermarket voting that afflicts many Filipinos, Gloria however fails to take into account the phenomenon of celebrity endorsers who are also instrumental in the imaging of candidates and the latter’s agenda for name recall.

Says Gloria, “Of the five presidential candidates, only President (Macapagal) Arroyo was a political-party animal. The rest ran on the wave of public image built over the years” (28). Gloria fails to define what political-party animal means. And regardless of one’s definition of public image, it cannot be denied that Macapagal-Arroyo herself has been projected as a harbinger of what her administration party claimed as new politics since she became president in 2001 and that she had used this public image when she ran in 2004.

While Gloria provides very useful data on celebrities who won in the elections from 1992 to 2001, she should also analyze the situation of celebrities who lost like broadcasters Rey Langit and the late Rod Navarro. Among the media personalities who ran but lost in 2004 were Eddie Ilarde, Pilar Pilapil, Jay Sonza, and Boots Anson-Roa (COMELEC 2004). An analysis of why they did not make it could make one better appreciate the phenomenon of celebrity candidates.

Fonbuena’s article, meanwhile, gives a comprehensive analysis of senatorial elections through the years. Though her presentation of data on ad spending is commendable, there is still a need to explain why Senators Alfredo Lim and Lito Lapid managed to win in 2004 despite little ad spending. At the same time, Sen. Loi Estrada’s victory needs to be explained in the context of other factors like high campaign costs

which are analyzed in a study by Teodoro (2004). Fonbuena only describes her as a “surprise winner” whose victory was “*partly* attributed to sympathy votes” (68, emphasis mine). Of course, the basic question is where her victory can be *mainly* attributed to.

The so-called Cory Magic must also be cited to analyze why “President Corazon Aquino endorsed her senatorial slate (in 1987) by simply raising their hands—no frills, no fancy” (70). It may be recalled that at that time, Aquino was still riding on the euphoria brought about by a people’s uprising in 1986 that resulted in the ouster of the late President Ferdinand Marcos.

As regards her discussion of Lim’s stand with regard to the advertisement of the Napoleon Quince brandy (i.e., *Nakatikim ka na ba ang kinse anyos?* [Have you tasted a 15-year old?]) which was deemed offensive to women and children by various cause-oriented groups, Fonbuena says that “he threatened to pull down the posters himself” (80). She should mention that Lim actually tore down the word “*kinse*” from a billboard on March 23, 2004. (Arao 2004)

The use of celebrities to increase the candidates’ chances of winning is nothing new, and Fonbuena would have better explained Madrigal’s decision to get the services of actress Judy Ann Santos by comparing the past campaign strategy of, say, former Sen. Tessie Aquino-Oreta who packaged herself as a look-alike of actress Tessie Tomas who then had a highly-rated regular television program. Ditto for Macapagal Arroyo who allowed her handlers to highlight her resemblance to actress Nora Aunor.

Overall, the perceived weaknesses of the book do not in any way negate its contribution to the discourse on the 2004 national and local elections. The choice of topic makes the book “a solid record of a facet of Philippine elections” as stated on the back cover.

Nevertheless, there are other studies that people must read on the nuances of the 2004 elections and how media covered them. Among these are *Subverting the people’s will: The May 10, 2004 elections* (Center for People Empowerment in Governance, 2004); *Citizens’ media monitor: A report on the campaign and elections coverage in the Philippines 2004* (Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility, 2004); *News for sale: The corruption and commercialization of the Philippine media* (Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2004); and *Cockfight, horserace, boxing match (why elections are covered as sport): Lessons learned from the 2004 campaign coverage* (Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2004).

It is important to relate the contents of this book to the findings of other election-related studies to get a bigger picture of the nature of elections and the kind of mass media the country has. The conduct of future elections, after all, will greatly depend on how policy reforms are made based on the information provided by those who have conducted thorough research. —**DANILO ARAÑA ARAO**, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM, COLLEGE OF MASS COMMUNICATION, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES DILIMAN.

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Luis V. Teodoro, ed. *Subverting the people's will: The May 10, 2004 elections*. Quezon City: Ken Inc., 2004. 137 pp.

In a country where electoral exercises often introduce contentious and dubious outcomes, post-election scenario will remain a portrait of violence, struggle and paranoia. *Subverting the people's will: The May 10, 2004 elections* sketches this observation as it exposes the veiled stories of the 2004 elections via the lenses of the Center for People Empowerment in Governance (CenPEG), a think-tank established during the height of the 2004 electoral campaign. CenPEG focuses on policy studies and research relating to political and electoral reforms with the aim of furthering the democratic interests of the people. It contends that the May 2004 election results were sabotaged by the following: system of election canvassing, the Washington's election observers' hidden agenda, the illegitimate use of force of the military and the police in subduing political dissenters, the abuse and manipulation of mass media by election candidates, the influence-peddling character of Philippine churches, the suppression of Moro People's struggle, the undermining of showbiz personalities participating in elections, the legal and structural weaknesses of the Philippine Party-List Act and the failure of the government and the public to maximize