

Personalized Politics in Japanese and Filipino Elections

RENATO S. VELASCO

Japan: "My friends, politics is not a matter for the head. Let us put aside difficult things like policy debate. Let us be friendly! Let us sing and dance! Let us enjoy ourselves," said a politician before his followers.

Philippines: "Because I am a *bagets* (young) some people mistook me for Gabby Concepcion. But because I am also fat, others think I am Edgar Moritz,"¹² was the usual campaign ad lib of one leading candidate in the 1987 Philippine Congressional elections.

Japan: "The general public is less interested in policy issues. What is most appealing is the question of Nakasone's political style,"¹³ declared an opposition candidate in the 1986 Japanese 'Double' Diet elections.

Philippines: "*Pare magbiro ka na lang. O di kaya kumanta ka na lang.*" (Why don't you just joke around? Or better still, sing?)¹⁴ was the advice to a candidate who had poor rating in pre-election surveys.

ELECTION PRONOUNCEMENTS OF Japanese and Filipino politicians cited above reveal the striking similarity of personalistic campaigning in Japan and the Philippines. Discussion of issues is often discarded as emphasis is on the candidates' personal traits and circumstances. This traditional candidate-centered electioneering had proven its resiliency notably under different local cultures and condi-

tions as shown by its prevalence in several political exercises including the most recent national elections in Japan and the Philippines.

Why are campaigning styles in both countries so similar despite noticeable differences in their historical and political experiences? What accounts for such similarities and differences? And lastly, what are the functions and prospects of personalized campaigning and electoral politics in Japan and the Philippines? This paper seeks to answer and explain these questions.

To do this, popularity factors and campaign tactics in the two countries' most recent national elections, namely, the 1986 Japanese 'Double' Diet and the 1987 Philippine Congressional elections are described and analyzed. Opinions of winning candidates were solicited through survey questionnaires and evaluated in the light of previous studies as well as the researcher's own experience as a campaigner in one of the two elections under study. The survey has a random sampling of 56 members of two Houses of Representatives (HR) as respondents, of whom 37 or 66 percent responded; 61 percent (22 out of 36) Japanese respondents and 75 percent (15 out of 20) Filipinos coming from different electoral districts. The respondents were likewise composed of both veteran and new politicians. The questionnaire instrument was substantiated by personal interviews which the researcher conducted in Manila and Tokyo.

Few comparative studies have been made on the politics and elections of developed and developing countries. The present undertaking is the first on Japan and the Philippines. Incorporating some empirical data, Section 1 discusses the brief historical and electoral frameworks as bases and parameters of similarities and differences between the Japanese and the Philippine electoral politics. Popularity and other electoral factors and the candidates' campaign tactics are comparatively analyzed in the second and third sections. The final section sums up the research findings and attempts to explain the actors and functions of personalistic campaigning in Japan and the Philippines.

A. Electoral Records and Systems

Japan and the Philippines are among the few Asian countries with long experience in electoral politics. As early as 1890, Japan had established the Diet, which is regarded as Asia's oldest parliament with elected members.⁵ By 1898, the Philippines had already set up the region's first republican legislature, also with elected representatives, known as the Malolos Congress.⁶

This common record of early electoral history is complemented by the similar fate of occupation by the United States — the Philippines before, and Japan immediately after, World War II.

This occupation affected certain political precepts and practices. It hastened the democratization process and brought the two countries to the fold of liberal democracy, as can be gleaned from various popular elections that were held at that time. In Japan, no less than 15 general elections for its Lower House or House of Representatives (HR) were held during a period of 40 years (1946-1986). Excluding local elections for the heads and assembly members of public entities, this means an average of one national election every 18 months.⁷

In the Philippines, over a shorter period of 26 years (1946-1972), there was a total of 20 general national elections, seven presidential and 13 for Congress, or an average of one national election every 16 months.⁸

The popularity of elections can be gauged not so much by its regularity but by the participation of most Japanese and Filipino voters. With an average voter turnout of 70 percent which is higher than

the American standard, it would seem that the Japanese and Filipinos are particularly interested in, if not attuned to, elections in the same manner that they are to their *omatsuri* and *fiestas* (festivals). During elections, they generally welcome candidates' intrusion and lofty pledges, and flock to polling booths to express their preferences.

Electoral Laws in Japan and the Philippines

The Constitution of Japan and two major laws, namely the Public Offices Election Law (POEL) and the Political Funds Control Law (PFCL), define the principles and guidelines of Japanese elections. Likewise, the electoral process in the Philippines is governed by pertinent provisions in its 1986 Constitution and the 1985 Omnibus Election Code (OEC).

Provisions in the two constitutions reveal similar adherence to basic democratic precepts of universal and equal suffrage and direct and secret balloting. The right to vote is guaranteed to every citizen 20 years of age and above for Japan and at least 18 years old for the Philippines. Except for the age requirement, suffrage and the right to run for office have no discrimination due to race, sex, creed, family origin, education, property or income.

Import stipulations in Japan's POEL which restrict the character and features of election include the setting of 15-20 day campaign period, the use of only one sound truck which broadcasts only the candidate's name but not his program, equal maximum media exposure consisting of five newspaper ads and five and a half minute radio and TV spots, and the prohibition of privately-funded ads and door-to-door canvassing. The PFCL specifically deals with the regulation of *seiji kenkin* or political contributions which has been a controversial feature of Japanese politics.

In the same vein, the 1985 OEC of the Philippines contains some 25 articles that regulate elections, including the spelling out of duties and powers of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), the constitutional agency that supervises all elections in the Philippines. The OEC's salient provisions consist the setting of realistic campaign period (45 to 60 days), equal and publicly-financed media exposure known as COMELEC time, the limitation of campaign expenses (P1.50 maximum per voter) and prohibitions against harassments and

political partisanship of public officers and employees.

The Electoral Systems of the Diet and Congress

Japan's legislature known as the Diet is essentially a British-type bicameral body in which the Lower House with 512 members is more powerful than the Upper House with 252 representatives. The former's powers include designating the prime minister, approving the budget, and initiating constitutional amendments. It can also override the Upper House.

Elections are held either at the end of the Legislature's regular four-year term or within 40 days from the date of its dissolution. The HC unlike the HR is not subject to dissolution and half of its seats are contested every three years.

A peculiar feature of the Diet electoral set-up is the multi-district, one-man, one-vote system whereby an elector casts his ballots for only one candidate regardless of the number of HR members to be elected in this prefecture. The top three, four or five candidates (depending on the allocated HR members in the district) are declared as winners. As many have observed, this method leads to intense competition not only between candidates of different parties but also among those from the same party who compete with each other for the highest vote.

The Philippine Congress on the other hand, is analogous to the US legislature under the presidential system of government. It has the Lower House or HR with 250 members (50 of which are presidential appointees) and the Upper House or Senate with 24 members. The HR's powers are similar to its Japanese counterpart especially in the enactment of laws, approval of the budget, and the power to override the President and the Senate by a two-thirds majority vote. The Senate sponsors bills of national significance and approves treaties, quite different from that of Japan where the latter power is vested in the HR.

The HR members are elected at the end of their regular three-year term from 200 legislative districts apportioned from 59 cities and 73 provinces. The maximum length of service of HR members is three consecutive terms. The 24 senators are elected nationally for a six-year term with two consecutive terms of maximum length

of service. This constitutional restriction on the number of consecutive reelections of Philippine legislators, absent in the case of their Japanese counterparts, is aimed to curb oligarchic tendencies and practices in Philippine politics.

To the extent that both countries have adopted the multi-district system whereby the allocated number of HR members to be elected varies (in Japan's case, from one to four and in the Philippines, from one to six), the electoral systems of Japan and the Philippines are similar. The difference lies on the appreciation of a voter's vote vis-a-vis the designated number of HR members in the district. Where Japan has a one-man, one-vote set-up, the Philippines has a one-man, multi-vote system whereby one voter casts his ballot for the allocated number of representatives in his district. If he belongs to a six-member electoral district, then he can vote for a maximum of six candidates.

The Two HR Elections as Focus of the Study

The 1986 Diet elections and the 1987 Congressional elections are significant not only in that they are the most recent national political exercises in the two countries but also because they manifest two interesting features. First, there were the unprecedented landslide victories of the ruling parties in both countries. Second, the roles played by popular personalities in winning the elections were conspicuous.

In Japan, the victory of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in capturing 304 of the 512 seats in the HR was the party's biggest gain since it assumed control of the legislature in 1955.⁹ This latest electoral harvest refuted earlier claims and forecasts on LDP's imminent decline,¹⁰ especially if one takes into account the five HR members from the dissolved New Liberal Club (NLC) who joined the party soon after the election.

Former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone's significant role in bringing the LDP to its biggest electoral victory was acclaimed by many, including some opposition leaders. In the same way that previous leaders like Ikeda and Tanaka (the latter before the infamous Lockheed scandal) contributed much to their party's outstanding success, Nakasone's popularity also brought electoral fortune which apparently

surpassed that of his predecessors. "Because Nakasone is great"¹¹ was the quick reply of one member of the opposition when asked of the reason for LDP's victory in the 1986 elections.

The success of the ruling party-coalition, the *Lakas ng Bansa* (LABAN), in the 1987 Philippine Congressional elections was likewise outstanding as it captured 150 of the 200 elective seats in the HR and 22 of the 24 senatorial posts.¹² Just as the leaders of the NLC dissolved their party and joined the LDP, several HR members in the Philippines who ran and won as independents or affiliates of different parties soon defected to the LABAN party. Turncoats or *balimbing*, as they are popularly referred to, further strengthened the ruling party's control over Congress and made the opposition a pitiful minority. This situation was dramatized by the defection of Senator Joseph Estrada to the Liberal Party, a LABAN affiliate. That act left the opposition in the Senate with only one member, Senator Juan Ponce Enrile.

If it was Nakasone's "greatness" that worked for the LDP, it was the so-called "Cory magic" that helped LABAN. Aquino's open and active endorsement of LABAN candidates was decisive in the victory of administration bets, many of whom were considered political greenhorns. Aquino's popularity was more significant in the light of the fact that the election saw the participation of all major political groups in the country such as the *Kilusang Bagong Lipunan* (KBL), the Grand Alliance for Democracy (GAD), and the leftist *Partido ng Bayan* (PnB).

B. Electoral Factors in the Two Elections

Winning HR candidates in the 1986 Japanese Diet elections believed that the key factors in the party's landslide victory were public support to the LDP's policies and performance, and good campaign tactics. Forty percent of respondents in the survey pointed to the first as the most important while 32 percent claimed it was the second. Other reasons cited were the country's economic progress (18 percent) and high voter turnout (4 percent) (See Table A).

The views expressed in the survey supported Sato Seizaburo's and Matsuzaki Tetsuhisa's analysis of LDP victory. Citing Yomiuri surveys, the two authors claimed

that recent LDP supporters were already three times as many as those of the combined opposition. This mass support, they argued, was amplified by good electoral methods as seen in the party's proper timing of the national election in relation to local election, the resilience of candidates narrowly defeated in the previous elections, and the weeding out of candidates expected to deprive potential winners of enough votes to push them across the finish line.¹⁴

With regard to the basis of LDP support however, the respondents seemed to differ with Sato and Matsuzaki's assertion that Nakasone's popular leadership was primordial.¹⁵ None of the respondents considered Nakasone's popularity as the most crucial electoral factor despite his central role in instigating the election, his active campaigning for the LDP, and the opposition's elevation of his character and leadership as the main election issues.¹⁶

One plausible argument on the LDP support is the so-called theory of the rise of new political conservatism. Briefly, this paradigm states that the prevalent attitude among the Japanese favors the continuation of the status quo as represented by LDP rule. This partisanship to the existing affluent lifestyle is resistant to sudden changes which tend to undermine the bases of the reasonably comfortable living.

An NHK opinion poll in October 1986 provides an indication of this sentiment. Eighty two percent of those polled expressed satisfaction with their present

Table A

Most Important Factor to the Ruling Party's Victory	Percentage	
	Japan	Philippines
High Voter Turnout	4%	
Nakasone Popularity		40%
Aquino Popularity		
LDP's Performance	40%	
LABAN Performance		6%
Weak Opposition		
Good Weather		33%
Widespread Anti-Marcos Sentiment		
Japan's Economic Progress	18%	
LABAN Machinery		6%
Good Campaign Tactics	32%	
Others		13%

living standards. Asked if they want political and social mechanisms changed, only 32 percent said yes. The rating in 1982 for the same item was 42 percent, or a 10 percent decline of those supportive of political changes. More so, 47.3 percent said they "support the LDP". In a similar poll in 1976, only one-third supported the party.¹⁷

"During a 40-year period, Japan had an average of one national election every 18 months."

The 1980s conservatism is however different from the classical, militaristic, and ideologically-based Japanese conservatism. It is not more than what C. Wright Mills has aptly referred to as conservative mood.¹⁸ Its followers are actually "life conservatives" contented with their stable lives and who wanted no turn for the worse. Their support is generally passive as indicated by 62 percent of those polled by NHK expressing reluctant support and only 19 percent strongly endorsing a continuing LDP administration.¹⁹

Triggering this current political mood, according to Takashi Inoguchi, is economic conservatism or lower economic aspirations and lower spending due to Japan's slow growth, low inflation rate, and fiscal measures such as tax increases and reduced social welfare expenditures.²⁰

In the 1987 Philippine Congressional elections, Aquino's popularity and the widespread anti-Marcos sentiments were, for the winning candidates surveyed, the most important factors that shaped LABAN's outstanding victory. Aquino's popularity was cited by 40 percent of the respondents and the widespread anti-Marcos public opinion was claimed by 33 percent.

The views of the candidates reaffirmed the findings of various surveys notably the Ateneo Social Weather Station's opinion poll in May 1986 which found Aquino's popularity rating at 60 percent as against Marcos's 38 percent. In February 1987 Aquino's popularity apparently increased with the overwhelming ratification of the 1986 Constitution which she vigorously

endorsed for approval. The voter turnout was over 75 percent of which 80 percent voted in favor of the new Charter amid the frenzied campaigns of opposition forces for its rejection.²¹

Held only two months after the popular ratification of the new Constitution, the timing of the election was very favorable to LABAN. It was able to optimize the Aquino factor and its new but extensive grassroots machinery and resources through the OICs (officers-in-charge) who replaced Marcos-era governors and mayors.

Against these LABAN advantages were the appalling state of division and disorganization of the opposition which was split into the Grand Alliance for Democracy (GAD) of former defense minister Enrile, the *Kilusang Bagong Lipunan* (KBL) of Marcos loyalists, and the *Partido ng Bayan* (PNB) of the legal Left. This disunity inevitably led to dispersed efforts and resources, to the point of failing to deploy poll watchers in many voting precincts.²² Cheating, which the opposition later claimed to be massive, was not documented largely because of this pitfall.

However, what proved to be the campaign blunder of the opposition, particularly GAD and KBL, was linking their victory to the possible return of Marcos. This simplified the electoral equation thus: a vote for the opposition is a vote for Marcos's return. LABAN fully exploited strong anti-Marcos sentiments in reactivating the strong moral basis of the Aquino regime and her party's popularity.

Aquino and Nakasone As Electoral Factors

There is little doubt that personal charisma played a major role in the elections discussed. As a tool for generating support, personalism has a long history in Japan and the Philippines. Various movements and parties have proven time and again to be nothing more than vehicles for their founders' and leaders' careers.

Aquino and Nakasone being both popular heads of their respective parties and governments were widely credited as primary factors for their parties' landslide victories. However, where Aquino's role was indisputably recognized, that of Nakasone's was somehow qualified if not overlooked. This mirrors the difference in the two countries' political set-ups.

Under the presidential system, the Philippine president has a built-in popularity, being directly elected by voters. He wields firm constitutional powers as the single head of the executive arm of the government, which is co-equal to the legislature and the judiciary. Also the president's six-year term notably exceeds the congressmen's three-year term. With strong powers, widespread prestige, and influence, the president can certainly make or break candidates through his direct involvement in election campaigns.

On the other hand, as prescribed by the parliamentary set-up, the Japanese prime minister has a narrower base of mandate and popularity. He is chosen not through direct popular election but via majority votes of HR members. And because the HR has been effectively dominated by the LDP since 1955, the prime minister has consequently been its party president, making the entire selection of the prime minister the exclusive affair of the ruling party. The dominance of factions (*nabatsu*) in the LDP further reduces the election to simple factional maneuvers and horsetrading with the leader or in some cases, the puppet of the largest group or alliance becoming the party head and prime minister.

The intricate factional division, the method of resolving conflicts through the slow process of consensus-building, and the short term of two years emasculate the position of the prime minister. With a tint of lament, Henry Kissinger described the Japanese prime minister as a mere custodian of the national consensus and not its creator.²⁴

It took Nakasone some time and considerable acumen to rise above the custodian nature of his position and to adopt a high-profile top-down leadership or what he

Table C

Which Helped Most in Personal Campaign		
	Japan	Philippines
Political Party Personal Support Organization (<i>koenkai</i>)	77%	40%
Relatives	4%	
National Leaders' Endorsement		27%
Local Leaders' Endorsement		13%
Others		20%

calls the "strategy of a presidential-type prime minister"²⁵. Despite his success in challenging the mainstream views in his party and leading it to unprecedented electoral victory, many of his colleagues did not credit his role as Filipino politicians did Aquino's. The reason is rather obvious. While the latter's popular role was a given in its presidential system, Nakasone's role was an exception or even an aberration in its parliamentary set-up.

C. Campaigns and Tactics

Tactics in the Philippine Congressional Elections

The most popular campaign technique was house-to-house visit, with 53 percent of the respondents claiming to have used it most. Mass political rally came in second with 27 percent. (See Table B).

Asked which support factors helped them most in winning, 40 percent claimed their support organization, 27 percent the endorsement of national leaders, 13 percent the support of local leaders, and 20 percent cited other factors as the most supportive to their victories (See Table C).

On the most difficult problem in the campaign, 53 percent pointed the issue of limited funds. This was followed by other reasons and limited access and exposure to voters with 20 percent and 13 percent ratings respectively (See Table D).

The dominance of house-to-house and personal support organizations as electoral techniques underscores the prevalence of personalistic campaigning which is a basic feature of patron-clientele politics.²⁶ In these face-to-face campaign methods, candidates often act like benevolent benefactors with pledges if not actual

Table B

Electoral Method Mostly Used

	Japan	Philippines
Radio, TV Appearance	40%	
Newspaper and Magazines		6%
Mass Rallies		27%
Bulletin Boards		
Cards and Posters	18%	
Individual Interviews (<i>koko mensetsu</i>)	32%	
House-to-House Campaign		53%
Others	9%	13%

Table D

Most Difficult Campaign Problem

	Japan	Philippines
Party Support	4%	7%
Electoral Issues	18%	7%
Access and Exposure to Voters	40%	13%
Apathy of Voters	27%	
Limited Funds		53%
Short Campaign Period		
Others		20%

favors to followers and voters in exchange for the latter's support. *Utang na loob*²⁷ or reciprocity more than formal sanctions on non-compliance of voters is invoked in this relationship. Stress is on interpersonal ties, thereby making support on the the basis of programs blurred if not non-existent.

Other techniques like mass rallies do not deviate much from personalistic campaign. These gatherings usually have a *fiesta* atmosphere complete with noted entertainers and personalities as crowd-drawers. The crowd though dwindles as soon as the performers finish their act.

That the personality-oriented campaign prevailed even after the 1986 EDSA uprising and the emergence of new politics (i.e. cause-oriented) shows the remarkable tenacity of traditional configurations revived by the restoration of the presidential set-up and other pre-martial law institutions, which in turn had thrived on this kind of electoral politics in the past. Pres. Aquino herself seemed responsible for its comeback when she used her powers and popularity to endorse and choose Congressional candidates. The Catholic Church ably joined in this resurrection of traditional politics when it came out with open support for LABAN candidates. Jaime Cardinal Sin, a staunch Aquino supporter, went to the extent of exhorting voters to reject candidates whose morals were not up to the Church's standard, in snide reference to the candidates of the leftist PnB. This personality-oriented campaigning was dramatized by some candidates who unabashedly billed themselves as "Cory's candidates", "Cory's choice" and other variations on the same theme including "Ang Tito ni Kris" (uncle of Kris, Aquino's popular daughter).

Politics between national and local leaders goes this way: the President supports

local politicians who helped him during his election campaigns and who get his programs approved in the legislature. The latter in turn, court the support of a wider coalition of national and local leaders for their candidacies, with the local influentials acting as middlemen between candidates and voters. These local or ward leaders consolidate and mobilize the mass electorate for high level politics beyond their own community. The ward leaders in effect are the commissioners of the latent mass base of patron-clientele politics.²⁸ This multi-level politicking jacks up campaign costs, making limited funds the biggest problem of candidates. With exchange of favors as basis of support, cost-orientation has indeed reasserted itself against cause-oriented politics.

Party system and support in the election under study were nominal and ceremonial in some cases. No one among the respondents considered party label or support as being the most helpful. In the same manner that the members of the old Nacionalista and Liberal parties were not more than Osmeñistas and Cuenquistas²⁹ those of LABAN, GAD and KBL were obviously not more than Coristas, Enrillistas and Marcosistas.

Tactics in the Japanese HR Elections

Radio sessions and TV appearances were the most popular techniques in the 1986 Japanese HR elections, with 40 percent of the respondents reporting these to be the method they used most. Individual interviews (*koko mensetsu*) came in second with 32 percent. Other methods were cards and posters with 18 percent. Party propaganda and meetings of organization heads got a nine percent rating each (See Table B).

The data seem to complement previous studies done with regard to Japanese electoral politics. That radio and TV were mostly used in the 1986 HR election affirmed Gerald Curtis's prediction in 1971 on the more extensive use of mass media by politicians to obtain mass support.³⁰ But as argued by Joji Watanuki, Curtis's forecast on the subsequent and inevitable erosion of community interest and *koenkai* turned out to be wrong.³¹ Always adaptive to changing situations but personalistic in outlook, Japanese politicians took advantage of the inroads and impact of modern media on the lives of voters. But at the

“ . . . In the Philippines, over a shorter period of 26 years, there was an average of one national election every 16 months.”



same time they retained and in fact, strengthened their traditional campaign infrastructures, particularly the *koenkai*.

Popularity of TV is seen in the rise of the number of households that had televisions from 80 percent in 1970 to 99.2 percent by 1983. For large electorates whose populations range from 600,000 to 1.5 M, and where campaign period was short, television appearance is an excellent method for candidates to surmount their arduous problem on access and exposure to voters. Unsurprisingly, they fully utilized the free (albeit very limited) time given to them as provided by Japan's electoral laws. As revealed in the Akarui Senkyo Suishin Kyokai surveys, the impact of these TV appearances on the electorate was significant. Around 68 percent of the voters said they watched these programs and 30 percent claimed they were useful in deciding which candidate to choose.³²

In the Philippines, radio and TV political ads were limited to senatorial and a few well-financed HR candidates due to media's prohibitive cost. Radio spots which are cheaper and more popular were utilized more than TV ads, especially in the provinces where not more than 15 percent have TV sets.

Aside from being efficient means of communication, radio and TV cater to the personalistic nature of campaigning in Japan and the Philippines. Radio for instance, lets a candidate speak directly to the audience, thus allowing his personality to come across. Television with its inherent intimacy as a medium combines both audio and visual impact, plus motion, to present a

“Candidates, as well as voters, are trapped in a cultural milieu that admires the moral man. . . and prefers those endorsed by respected leaders.”

candidate-in-totality. For an attractive candidate who also looks sincere and friendly, TV can be the most effective vote-getting tool. This fact is indicated by victories of a number of media personalities who ran in the elections under study, as well as in previous electoral exercises.

Media campaign techniques however remain underdeveloped in Japan and the Philippines when compared to that of the United States.³³ The strict prohibition of private purchase of TV time outside the officially-set period is the major deterrent for its development in Japan. In the Philippines, what hampers its improvement is primarily the candidates' small and limited campaign funds.

Individual interview (*koko mensetsu*) approximates the house-to-house method in the Philippines. This approach is a clever recourse to circumvent door-to-door canvassing which is strictly prohibited by

Japanese laws. Passed off as an innocent visit to a friend's house on other business, where politics and endorsement of a candidate are "inadvertently" discussed, *koko mensetsu* had indeed become an innovative tactic. Another form which is becoming more popular is the telephone call which however indirect, still retains the personal touch of *koko mensetsu*.

Koenkai has been a major campaign structure since 1955. Though mostly set up by the LDP members, opposition leaders in recent years have also been establishing their own in their parties' respective sectoral and territorial electoral bases. Frenzied and intense organizing of *koenkai* is indicated by its soaring memberships, thus further enhancing its role in Japanese elections. Total membership was at one time estimated to be at least 50 M,³⁴ 13 M of whom were voters.³⁵

Japanese traditional values like deference to authority and group loyalty and the Filipino sense of gratitude and neighborliness are best expressed and utilized in personal support organizations. Candidates in these groups act as generous patrons dispensing favors to supporters in exchange for votes and patronage. The candidates' services vary in forms and range from holding parties and outings, giving donations to community projects, attending weddings and funerals, and to helping the supporters' children be admitted in schools and even giving them jobs or recommendations to prospective employers.³⁶ Established for the advancement of its founders' political careers, Japanese support groups or *koenkai* are characterized by regularity of projects and activities for members. Some, especially those of veteran politicians called *zoku giin*, are so large and well-financed that they rival those of the candidates' party structures and resources. In stark contrast, the Filipino support groups are mostly of the seasonal type which mushroom before and peak during election only to lay dormant after a long period until their reactivation in the next political contest. *Ningas cogon* culture is often invoked as the explanatory variable in this situation, excluding of course, other underlying factors such as the enormous financial requirements for this type of endeavor which is beyond the means of most Filipino politicians, and the appalling lack of well-defined and coherent visions and goals of candidate-leaders that would sustain and

develop the members' enthusiasm beyond elections. This flaw has in fact led to what one might refer to as *ningas cogon* enthusiasm which creates this mushroom-type *koenkai* and eventually weakens the party system in the Philippines.

Due to affluence of its members as a consequence of the country's post-industrial impressive economic growth, Japanese support groups are not as paternalistic and hierarchic like those found in developing countries such as the Philippines. Here, poor economic performance is exacerbated by a worse distribution of wealth which had brought no less than 50 percent of its 50 M population below the poverty line or a living standard that is devoid of the most basic human needs. Thus, voters especially in the rural areas have little leverage vis-a-vis politicians who aside from being political lords are, at the same time, economic powers in their localities. They find it difficult if not dangerous to ignore or resist these elites who can easily make life harder for them. Authority of superior in Japan on the other hand, is more limited and the relationship between leaders and members is by in large mutually beneficial. This is indicated by the increasing number of *koenkai* members who have joined more on the basis of policy views than on the ground of personal obligation. Thirty three percent of *koenkai* members polled in 1983 claimed programs were their basis for joining. The 1972-1983 surveys also revealed a supportive finding as it reported that an average of 46.2 percent of the electorate voted on the basis of party as against 40.8 percent who voted on the premise of candidates' personality.³⁹ Though there were disparities in the voters situations and behaviors (Japanese voters tend to exercise more independence and options than their Filipino counterparts), it is worth noting that politicians in the two countries practiced and promoted the same personalistic and candidate-centered campaigning. Differences in the voters' economic conditions seemed to play little role in electoral forms and styles of Japan and the Philippines.

Japan's party system and support is stronger as compared to that of the Philippines. Where eighteen percent of the Japanese respondents claimed it was decisive in their victories, not a single Filipino respondent credited his political party for his victory (see Table C).

One explanation for this difference is Japan's longer and uninterrupted history of elections throughout the post-war years which provided more time and opportunities for parties to develop. The growth of party politics in the Philippines on the other hand, was considerably stunted during the Marcos authoritarian regime (1972-1986) when elections were either suspended or manipulated. No more than three to four years old, the parties in the 1987 Congressional elections had yet to consolidate and strengthen their forces.

But what seems to be a more crucial variable is the difference in ideology among leaders and groups which is extant in Japan but lacking in the Philippines. Since 1946, ideological conflict has been a major factor in the formation of growth of electoral parties in Japan. In 1955, it was the impetus for the dichotomy of Japan's party system into two opposing camps of the socialist front of Japan Socialist Party (JSP) on one hand, and the conservative bloc of the LDP on the others. This schism persisted through the years of rapid economic growth and social-cultural changes amid intervening splits in each bloc, is evident in the current alignment of three distinct major main-streams of Japanese politics namely: the dominant conservative LDP; the social democratic camp of the JSP, Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) and Clean Government (CGP); and the radical Japanese Communist Party (JCP).

In contrast, Philippine electoral parties have rather fragile foundations for sustenance and growth. Today's LABAN, GAD, and KBL are no different from pre-martial law cadre parties⁴⁰ or associations that depend largely on few and powerful individuals in terms of programs and memberships and where competing personal ambitions become bases of party differences. Originating mostly from the same economic level, these leaders have also the same ideology as indicated in similar platforms and programs of their respective parties. Because of this programmatic commonality, defections and party transfers, which are rare and scorned in Japan and other liberal democratic states, are quite common among Filipino political leaders. The favorite justification for turncoatism before 1972 was the late President Manuel Quezon's famous sentence: "my loyalty to my party ends where my loyalty to my country begins."⁴¹ In the 1987 elections, the

popular calls and rationale ranged from "national reconciliation" to self-contradicting "critical collaboration" and "opposition from within". These new and old justifications for turncoatism only confirm the absence of programmatic views and differences and the prevalence of personal opportunism in the Philippine party system. This likewise accounts for the weakening of electoral parties and its insignificant role in the 1987 HR elections as perceived by victorious candidates.

D. Summary and Conclusion

As a way to sum up the findings of this study, a few observations that answer the three issues and questions raised in the first part of this paper are hereby presented.

First, the personalized popularity electoral factor, although evident in the two recent national elections, was stronger in Philippine case. What accounts for this disparity is the difference between the Philippine presidential system and Japan's parliamentary set-up. The former's President is naturally high-profile and popular being directly elected as compared to the latter's Prime Minister whose selection is determined by the HR members or in actuality, only by the factions of the dominant LDP. Thus, the Aquino factor was strongly recognized and that of Nakasone was overlooked by the surveyed electoral victors. Aquino's popularity was a given in its set-up while Nakasone's "presidential style of being prime minister" was an exception, even an aberration of Japan's political system.

Second, campaign tactics in the two elections were similarly candidate-centered and personalistic. Emphases were placed on personal appeals, face-to-face canvassing and reliance on personal support organizations than partisan or party activities and structures. Disparities in the voters' economic conditions played little role in the campaign strategies of surveyed Japanese and Filipino candidates. Regardless of the affluent lifestyles of Japanese voters on one hand, and the lower living standards of Filipino voters on the other, personalized electoral styles have prevailed in both countries. Neither did differences in the electoral systems had bearing on the form of electioneering in Japan and the Philippines. Though not held under the highly competitive multi-district, one-man

one-vote method (which is often claimed as the reinforcing factor for personalistic campaigning in Japan) the campaign techniques of Filipino candidates were still very much akin to their Japanese counterparts.

Lastly, explanatory variables on the bases and functions of personalized electoral politics are not lacking. The following three different but not mutually exclusive paradigms and interpretations are perhaps the most inductive and best guideposts for further study.

1) **Personalistic Tradition.** This model views candidate-centered campaigning both as a reflection and function of a country's political culture with strong elements of what is referred to as the personalistic tradition. Although it is present in almost all cultures, it is particularly strong and prevalent in Japan and the Philippines and other societies with long experience of vertical and hierarchical social structures or a patron-client system. Personalized political culture that arose from this common set-up and tradition is one major sustaining factor of personalistic campaigning in Japan and the Philippines.

"Personalistic campaigning invigorates the voters' false or enslaving consciousness. . ."

Relationships in this type of culture revolved heavily around small groups, kinship or non-kinship, that are tightly connected and sustained by a complex set of obligations. Group loyalty is along the highly personal patron-client system and intergroup relations for greater goals are therefore forged via an intricate system of individual liaison and consensus.⁴² This personalistic political culture is expressed in the admiration for the moral man, attachment to neighbors, schoolmates or provincemates, and preference to those endorsed by respected ward or local leaders.

Candidates as well as voters are trapped in this cultural milieu and therefore behave

accordingly. The former propagates personalistic campaigning in the belief that voters are conditioned to positively respond to such electoral technique. And in the sense that candidates often get elected via this method, voters do seem to act in accordance to this political culture which engenders and reinforces personalized politics in Japan and the Philippines.

2) **Personalistic Electoral and Party System.** This interpretation explains personalized campaigning not so much as a manifestation of political culture but as a logical response to the demands of uniquely competitive electoral system of Japan and the cadre or leader-centered party system in both countries.

Intense rivalry which is bred by Japan's multi-district, one-man, one-vote system compels the candidate to emphasize his personal qualities and circumstances in order to win. Partisan and party calls are impractical in this context because they do not directly enhance the candidate's personal winning chances. This electoral method is further complemented by Japan's leader-centered parties. With the exceptions of the JCP and CGP as mass parties, other parties are controlled and directed by few powerful leaders. The latter supports candidates from its respective factions whose loyalty inevitably goes to their factional benefactor over that towards the party. These candidates don't feel obliged to carry party calls thereby stressing themselves and their factional leader during election campaigns. Enormous power and influence of factional heads have, in effect, made them not merely group leaders to their members but actual representatives of the entire party.

Free of the unique and competitive electoral set-up of Japan, personalistic campaigning in the Philippines is the consequence of its cadre or leader-oriented parties with identical platforms and programs. With very little policy differences to present and discuss before the electorate, Filipino candidates do not differ much from their Japanese counterparts in primarily dealing with themselves and their benefactors during election campaigns.⁴³

3) **Personalistic Parliamentarism.** This is a Marxist or class conflict interpretation which considers candidate-centered campaigning as a strategy for elite and

bourgeois hegemony through personalization of parliamentarism. It argues that the latter serves the interests of the bourgeoisie, as represented by ruling parties, in that it mystifies the iniquitous class relations which are the bases of bourgeois rule in Japan and the Philippines. Political participation is illusory in this electoral method because voters are made to choose and decide without meaningful discussion of issues. This technique is no different from what is done to consumers who are seduced to patronize inferior products by means of deceitful but effective advertisements.

The ruling parties according to this view, has assumed dominance not only due to superior financial resources and having more well-known personalities which are crucial to personalistic campaigning, but also because of successful cooptation of the opposition to their kind of electioneering. Though initially reluctant, opposition parties in the desire to gain broader electoral support had in effect emulated the candidate-centered style at the expense of party policies and programs. Because of the common way in which the ruling and opposition parties approach the voters, any programmatic differences which they might have possessed before are either diluted or lost in the electoral campaign.⁴¹ Voters are thus drawn into making choices from among competing parties on the basis of personalities rather than on issues and platforms. Though many voters want changes, the opposition's behavior which differs very slightly from that of the ruling party discourages them to strongly support it. This frustration over the opposition translates to the voters' patronage to the ruling party more as a passive no-better-choice decision than a complete adherence to its platforms.

This kind of electoral support as the basis of the people's consent to be ruled by the party in power is regarded by Gramsci and other consensus theorists as farce and superficial, having been extracted from elections which provides voters with little political education and very few options. For them, personalistic campaigning is indeed a technique of the hegemonic order because it invigorates the voters' "false" or enslaving consciousness as it suppresses their "true" or liberating awareness.⁴⁵

NOTES

¹Thayer, N. (1969) *How the Conservatives Rule Japan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; 104.

²Gabby Concepcion is a young movie actor and Edgar Mortiz is a fat comedian.

³Japan Times (4 July 1986).

⁴Magsanoc, L. (2 May 1987) *Adopt Bobbit*, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*.

⁵Mason, R.H.P. (1969) *Japan's First General Election, 1890*. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press.

⁶Agoncillo, T. (1960) *Malelos: The Crisis of the Republic*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.

⁷Koichi, K. (1982) *Politics in Modern Japan*. Tokyo: Japan Echo: 66-67.

⁸Commission on Elections. (1949-1971) *Annual Reports*. Republic of the Philippines. Mimeographed.

⁹Liberal Star (10 July 1986).

¹⁰Hirohide, I. (1963) *Hoshu seito no bison* (A Vision for the Conservative Party). Tokyo: Chuo Koron and Watanuki, J. (1967) *Nihon no Seiji Shakai* (The Japanese Political-Social Structure) are representative samples of these studies and predictions.

¹¹Interview with Masamori Kato, Chief of the International Affairs Bureau of the Clean Government Party (Komeido) (17 December 1987)

¹²*Manila Bulletin* (20 May 1987)

¹³A Philippine fruit with many equal sides and divisions. This term was popular right after the 1986 uprising to refer to political opportunists who quickly dropped their pro-Marcos stance to be acceptable to the new regime of Pres. Aquino.

¹⁴Satō, S. and Matsuzaki, T. (1986) *Anatomy of the LDP Landslide*. *Japan Echo* 13: 9-17.

¹⁵*Ibid.* 17

¹⁶*Asahi Shimbun* (4 July 1986).

¹⁷Yoshikatsu, T. (March, 1987) *No Surprise Please*. *Look Japan*: 10-11.

¹⁸Ishida, T. (1983) *Japanese Political Culture: USA*. *Transaction Inc.*: 43.

¹⁹Yoshikatsu.: 11.

²⁰Inoguchi, T. (April, 1987) *The Japanese Double Election of 6 July 1986*. *Electoral Studies* 6: 66-68.

²¹*Manila Chronicle* (15 February 1987).

²²Interview with Paul Aquino, LABAN President and Campaign Director (3 August 1987).

²³Tanaka, T. (October-December 1987) *Break Up of the Tanaka Faction*. *Japan Quarterly* cites the Tanaka fac-

tion's claim of Nakasone as a mere "fox" riding on an elephant, the latter being the faction.

²⁰Pyle, K. (1987) In Pursuit of A Grand Design: Nakasone Betwixt the Past and Future. *Journal of Japanese Studies* 13: 245.

²¹Muramatsu, M. (1987) In Search of National Identity: The Politics and Policies of the Nakasone Administration. *Journal of Japanese Studies* 13: 335-339.

²²Powell, J.D. (1970) Peasant Society and Clientelist Politics. *American Political Science Review* 64: 411-413.

²³Hollnsteiner, M. (1963) The Dynamics of Power in a Philippine Municipality. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press. *Utang na loob* is claimed by anthropologists as Filipinos' strong sense of gratitude and reciprocity for favors done or given.

²⁴Ando, H. (1971) Election in the Philippines: Mass-Elite Interaction Through the Electoral Process (1946-1969). University of Michigan. Ph.D. Dissertation.

²⁵Corpuz, O.D. (1958) Filipino Political Parties and Politics. *Social Sciences and Humanities Review* 23: 145. This is in reference to the Osmeña and Cuenco families that have dominated the politics of Cebu, the second largest urban center after Metro Manila.

²⁶Curtis, G. (1971) Election Campaigning. Japanese Style. New York: Columbia University Press: 251-254.

²⁷Watanuki, J., Miyake, I., Inoguchi, T. and Kabashima, I. (1986) Electoral Behavior in the 1983 Japanese Elections. Tokyo: Institute of International Relations, Sophia University: 13.

²⁸*ibid.*

²⁹Diamond, E. and Bates, S. (1984) The Spot: The Rise of Political Advertising on Television. USA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology extensively discusses media techniques and actual effects of TV political campaigns in the US.

³⁰Inoguchi: 63.

³¹Akira, H. (1986) Political Parties and Voters in Japan. University of Connecticut. Ph.D. Dissertation.

³²Curtis (1971) extensively discusses candidates' obligations to their *koenkai* members in Japan. Filipino 'koenkai' members' demands include not only for politicians to be their employment agency but also as blood banks. Interview with Senator John Osmeña (August 4, 1987).

³³Agoncillo, T. (1973) *A History of the Filipino People* Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press: Chapter I.

³⁴Tan, E. and Holazo, V. (December, 1978) Measuring Poverty Incidence in Segmented Market. Quezon City: University of the Philippines, School of Economics. Mimeographed.

³⁵Akira, H.: 130-131, 164.

³⁶Duverger, M. (1955) Political Parties. London: Methuen and Co. Cadre party is one of the two classifications of Duverger. The other type is mass party which has more rigid and formal membership requirements such as the Communist Party.

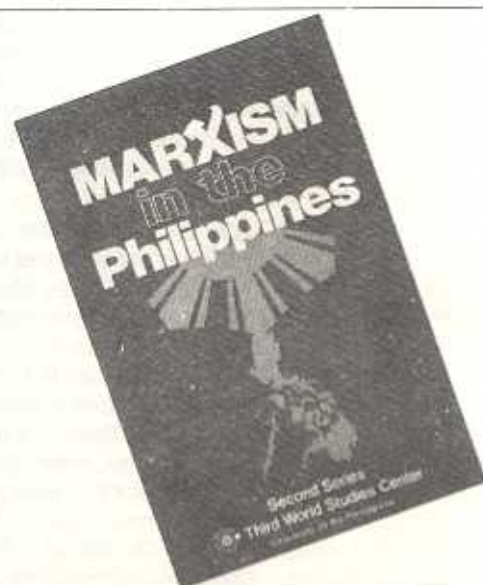
³⁷Corpuz, O.D. (1965) The Philippines. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.: 101.

³⁸Chie, N. (1970) Japanese Society. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press provides a controversial yet stimulating discussion of Japanese culture.

³⁹Sison, J.M. (1980) Struggle for National Democracy. Quezon City: A. Hernandez Foundation: 74-76.

⁴⁰Steven, R. (1983) Classes in Contemporary Japan. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press: 302-309.

⁴¹Femia, J. (1987) Gramsci's Political Thought. Great Britain: Oxford University Press: 37-45.



IT'S OUT!

MARXISM IN THE PHILIPPINES II

Another Publication
of the Third World Studies Center
University of the Philippines