Philippine Political Culture: A Conceptual Framework

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This paper constructs a theoretical framework for the study of Filipino political culture. Political culture involves all subjective experiences and objective items that are shared by a group of people involved in political activity. The variable of political culture mediates between an individual's political dispositions and political systems. Filipino political culture has been shaped by a history of colonization and dictatorship, where the holders of political power neither needed nor prioritized the interest of the majority in the process of governance. The paper ends with a list of various research methods that can be used to investigate Filipino political culture.

This paper presents a conceptual framework of Philippine political culture. The introductory section begins with a description of political culture. The first section likewise shows how political culture functions as a mediating variable between actors and political systems/institutions, or – rephrased – how political culture mediates the individual-disposition/social-system distinctions in understanding political phenomena. The initial section further points out that vertical power structures, horizontal interest-based social movements, and colonization histories nest variations in political cultures within a single Third World society like the Philippines.

The second section of this paper offers a variety of research methodologies that may be used to study political culture. A few examples of actual empirical researches on political culture demonstrate the utility of different research methodologies. I have decided to elaborate on the repertoire of available methodologies in order to encourage fellow social scientists to study Filipino political culture using scientific methods, without sacrificing sensitivities to local experiences of political power and influence.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF FILIPINO POLITICAL CULTURE AND GOVERNANCE

Politics involves the production, allocation, and utilization of decision-making powers among large pluralities of individuals. In stable and strong states, political activities usually refer to the powers of the state to govern its people. In unstable and weak states, however, politics encompasses social power issues within and outside the boundaries of the so-called legitimate state. In the Philippines, examples of political phenomena beyond the peripheries of the state are political activities of NGO's such as the women's movements, street protests such as the People's Power Revolution, and the political experiences of armed anti-state organizations such as the Communist Party of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Culture refers to everything socially created (Fiske, 1996). The epistemology of political culture dates back to the 1950s. Political development studies in the 1950s and 1960s became strongly multidisciplinary, integrating discoveries from analogous fields such as anthropology, sociology, psychology and economics (Pye, 1985). Originally, the theory of political culture was created to integrate the application of these related fields in the behavioral approach to political science, specifically between psychology, a micro-analysis of individual behavior, and political sociology, on the level of macro-analysis (Pye, 1965). Gabriel Almond (1978) pointed out that political systems contain actual manifest performance and underlying dispositions. He described such propensities as the psychological dimension of the political system or the political culture. Thus, political culture evolved as a construct consisting of a people's existing political beliefs, attitudes, values and sentiments (Almond and Powell,

1978; Diamond, 1993). With the radicalism of the 1960s to 1970s, the study of political culture suffered a decline due to the proliferation of political and intellectual trends, especially in the social sciences, that disputed or rejected the political culture theory (Almond, 1993; Diamond, 1993). However, with the fall of Eastern European communism and, in the 1980s, the implosion of Marxist-Leninism in the Soviet Union, the reality of diversity and self-government emerged as important intellectual issues (Almond, 1993). More importantly, Marxist theorists realized that, values and attitudes are important in the operations of political and economic institutions (Almond, 1993). Events of that last decade paved the way for what Almond (1993) terms as a "return to political culture" (p. ix), the revival of political culture research and theorizing. More importantly, he observed that the necessity and importance of political culture research is "generally acknowledged to be making contributions to our understanding of economic growth and democratization" (p. xii).

The study of Filipino political culture is crucial in understanding the operations of local politics. Pye (1985) recognizes that Western political theories explained Western experiences, assumed to encompass universal truths, and were repeatedly challenged by Asian facts. As he points out, various cultures require diverse approaches to development; some cultural traits are conducive while others inhibit advancement. Philippine government transactions are influenced by certain factors, which may be more easily understood with a sensitivity to political culture. For example, the local political culture of utang na loob (repaying personal favors) aggravates the practice of corruption.

One key characteristic of culture is that it is shared by pluralities of interacting humans. Culture includes both subjective (Aretxaga, 1993; Barnard, 1969; Clark, 1991; Cole, 1996; Diamond, 1989; Gibbins & Reimer, 1999; Hobart, 1986; Kamrava, 1995; Myers & Martz, 1997; Nesbitt-Larking, 1992; Norbu, 1992; Wood, 1993; Warren, 1993) and objective elements (Barnard, 1969; Cole, 1996; Kamrava, 1995; Myers & Martz, 1997; Nesbitt-Lark-

ing, 1992). The former covers shared group mentalities – thoughts and feelings - while objective cultural items include material symbols, artifacts, and group-accepted practices. The relationship between the subjective and objective dimensions of culture is two-way, with each affecting the other. For example, material symbols acquire meaning as particular group thoughts and feelings become associated with these symbols. Likewise, cultural practices evoke specific feelings when such behaviors are carried out by society members.

Filipino political culture (a) covers all thoughts and feelings, material symbols, group- accepted practices, (b) shared by large pluralities of interacting Filipinos, (c) as they produce, allocate and use political powers within, outside, and in interaction with the state.

Subjective phenomena can only be inferred, and thus studied indirectly by indicators which may or may not have a one-to-one congruence with the subjective experience under examination. This gives rise to methodological issues of validity, especially when a foreign social scientist views subjective political culture from an outsider's lens.

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 aspects of culture are basically psychological in nature. However, unlike dominant psychological discourses, they do not pertain to idiosyncratic singular individuals, but arise during political interactions of human pluralities.

Objective components of political culture include political practices, language, and artifacts. They are objective in the sense that they can be directly observable by any of the five senses. However, one needs to be careful in studying objective political culture. What is manifestly observable may likewise contain latent or symbolical meanings that are not outwardly obvious to one who merely relies on external evidence to obtain cultural information. Objective political culture is usually context-dependent and meaning-sensitive

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 Shared mental scripts 	 During the Visiting Forces Agreement debate in 1998, one ideological vew saw the VFA as a new form of US colonial intervention¹ "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
Negative emotions toward outgroup members	wins • Members of one faction in Malacañang Palace carry in their mind (sometimes exaggerated) narratives of what the rival camp is scheming
Collective memories	 and plotting against them The anti-Marcos group still hold memories of how constitutional changes can be used to
Religious beliefs	rationalize the declaration of martial law ² • Religious faith includes working for social justice and working in favor of issues such as land distribution

- 1. The VFA, forged between the US and Philippines in 1998 under the Estrada administration, resurrected deeply buried anti-American sentiments laid to rest when the Philippine Senate voted for the removal of the US bases on Sept. 16, 1991. (Jumilla, 1999).
- 2. On September. 21, 1972, President Marcos issued Proclamation No. 1081, citing constitutional conditions permitting marshal law.

(Cole, 1996). Table 2 presents a few objective aspects of Filipino political culture, presents examples as illustrations of objective culture, and shows how objective political culture can take on manifest and latent meanings.

Political culture thrives within particular contexts. Such contexts are time-sensitive – i.e., they include collective political experi-

TABLE 2
Objective Components of Filipino Political Culture

Objective components	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 his 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 politicoeconomic favors by this powerful politician. In turn, the Representative can expect the leader's family to help out during the campaign period (Hollnsteiner, 1963).
Political language	"Huwag niyo 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)	"Lat's talk over there (from from the eyes of the people)."	Hand over some bribe money and I won't give you a violation ticket this time.
	ERAP car plate	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.
Political artifact	Red-colored streamers, banners during street rallies		Groups with red-colored streamers/banners are associated with left-of-center political beliefs and political formations.

ences that occurred in the past and continue to influence present political cultures. In many Third World countries, these prior experiences arose during colonial periods and local dictatorships, when governance and bureaucracies remained in the hands of foreign powers or local dictators, with almost-zero concern for the welfare of the local populations. Filipino political culture took shape in this political context. Political practices and mental scripts do not change as rapidly as constitutional paper changes. In the Philippines for example, laws are enacted by the legislature but remain unimplemented for over long periods of time due to entrenched political practices and political mental scripts that override top-down changes in institutional and/or governmental form.

A second context that affects political culture is one's peer group. In a collectivist society such as the Philippines, compared to an individualistic society, one's in-group contributes more significantly to the shaping of one's behavior. For example, Pye (1985) observed that while Westerners strive for individual identity and personal autonomy, Asians seek identity within a group, one that can provide "an appropriate paternalistic form of authority" (p. x). In a society with heterogeneous political cultures like the Philippines, one can sometimes experience various political cultures, as one shifts relationally – for example, from one's elitist family, to an NGO, to a people's organization.

Political culture is also structure-embedded (Aretzaga, 1993; Myers & Martz, 1997; Pye, 1985; Warren, 1993). The political mentalities, practices, and material symbols vary according to a group's position in the vertical social structures of Philippine society. Vertical social structures refer to the relative permanent arrangements of power and wealth, where resources are concentrated in the hands of a few elite, while the majority remain marginalized beyond the boundaries of resource production, allocation and utilization. Structure-embeddedness of political culture implies that an individual or group's position in the vertical arrangement of Philippine social power, is associated with different political cultures. There exists an elite political culture and a

political culture among the poor. These two political cultures complement each other; they are not identical but complementary, each feeding on the other's set of political expectations and practices.

Two structure-related innovations in political culture came with the Marcos dictatorship and the People's Power Revolution. The Marcos Dictatorship inadvertently aided in the nationalization of the Communist Party beyond the confines of Central Luzon, pushing the agenda of the masses to a more central position in Philippine politics (Lande & Cigler, 1990). Furthermore, the People's Power Revolution ushered a segment of the politically active middle class into the arena of Philippine politics, especially in the form of interest-based social movements, slightly altering the terrain of our local political culture. However, both the Communist Party of the Philippines and the politically-active middle class remain largely out of electoral politics — where a huge amount of political resources can be mobilized for transformational purposes.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the theoretical frame of Filipino political culture. Figure 1 presents political culture as an intervening variable between the individual and political governance/institutions (Clark, 1991; Cole, 1996; Diamond, 1989; Kamrava, 1995). In the Philippines, the intervening variable of political culture is often out-of-step with political governance/institution forms. Our political institutions and governance forms – like other Third World societies – are usually copied from foreign systems (Hobart, 1986) without the cultural foundations of political forms that evolve in step with local political culture. Figure 1 also notes the structure-embeddedness of Filipino political culture.

Figure 2 then illustrates an expanded conceptual frame for Filipino political culture, depicting interactions between history, political culture and political behavior. Part of the structure of the framework borrows from Greenstein's (1992) ideas on the relation between politics and personality. Other parts of the theoretical frame in Figure 2 cite Galtung's (1996) commentaries on the various levels of culture.

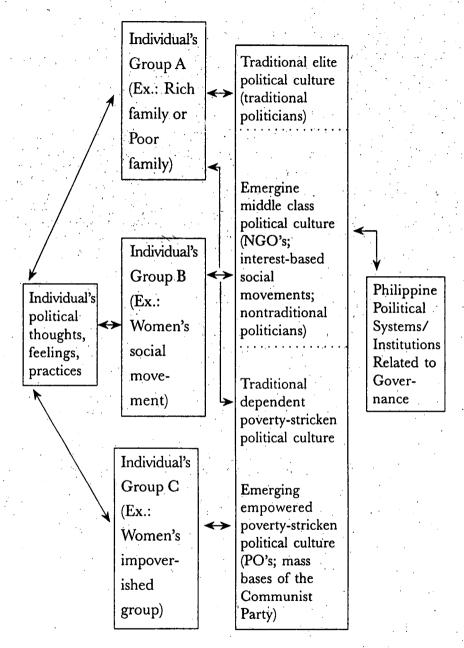


Figure 1. Filipino political culture as structured-embedded and as an intervening variable between the individual and political governance/institutions.

Past Context		Present Context		
Macroenvironment: International and domestic conditions Historical conditions, especially history of colonization and Marcos dictatorship		Macroenvironment: International and domestic conditions Globalization and mediazation of politics (Gibbins Reimer, 1999); Democratic transition and consolidation		
Microenvironment: Socializing groups Family's social class, social movements, local geographical cultures		Microenvironment: Current Family social class; political dynamics within social movements and local geographical power configurations		
\$		\(\)	\$	
	Political	Culture		
Shaping of political culture	Subjective Political Culture Shared perceptions of the political environment a. Shared Conscious political and politically relevant orientations (political and politically relevant cognitive, affective and behavior-tendency dispositions, opinions, attitudes, beliefs, ideology etc.) b. Shared Unconscious political and politically relevant orientations (political and politically relevant cognitive, affective and behavior-tendency dispositions, opinions, attitudes,		Objective Political Culture Shared political practices, language, artifacts/ materials related to the political environment	

<u>Figure 2.</u> Expanded theoretical framework for Philippine political culture, depicting context-sensitive relations between history, political conditions, political culture and political behavior.

beliefs, ideology etc.)

RESEARCH METHODS FOR FILIPINO POLITICAL CULTURE AND GOVERNANCE

Gibbins & Reimer (1999) predicted changes in the future direction of political research methods. First, there will be a shift away from monolithic ideological explanations, to pluralistic discourse analysis. While ideological views consider singular ways of understanding political phenomena, discourse analysis assumes heterogeneity of political perspectives and is topic-based. Further, discourse research permits access to subjective meanings internal to political actors, discouraging the researcher from imposing ideological interpretations on observations. For example, instead of ideologically explaining the increase of Philippine contractual practices through a capitalist lens, discourse analysis would look into the subjective meaning of labor contractualization among contract workers.

Research on political discourse gathers data across a variety of viewpoints, using different research methods (Gibbins & Reimer, 1999; Myers & Martz, 1997; Nesbitt-Larking, 1992). Gibbins and Reimer emphasize the importance of methodological combinations, stating that "Methods formerly considered mutually exclusive, such as the empirical and theoretical, the comparative and the psychological, the qualitative and the quantitative, will be bound together in eclectic mixes... (p. 171)".

Table 3 lists (a) the various research methods that can be utilized to study political culture, (b) a brief description of each method or subtypes of quantitative/qualitative research methods, and (c) 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 kind of knowledge that can be generated by the research.

TABLE 3
Research Methods that can be used to study Political Culture

Brief description of method	Examples of a political culture research
Theoretical research A conceptual essay about fundamental ideas regarding political culture Survey of literature, to summarize the state of past researches on political culture	 Culture and political development; Herder's suggestive insights (Barnard, 1969) (I did not find any research example for this category.)
Empirical research A study of political culture based on primary data	•Please see all the examples below
2a. Quantitative methods Nationwide public opinion surveys Smaller-sample surveys on political	•Glimpses into Philippine political culture (Carroll, 1994)
attitudes	•Philippines today: An empirical study (Sicat, 1976) •Political culture theory and the role of professionals: Data from Valenzuela
Election returns and census data	(Myers & Martz, 1997) •Social cleavage and political parties in the post-Marcos Philippines (Lande
Congressional voting patterns	& Cigler, 1990) Monitoring Congress: A cluster analysis of legislative voting patterns during the Aquino Administration (Montiel, 1990)

TABLE 3 (continued)

Research Methods that can be used to study Political Culture

Brief description of method	Examples of a political culture research
2h. Qualitative methods	
• Content analysis (Silverman, 1993)	• The bishop and the new politics (Conception, 1992)
	Pastoral letters during the Marcos-Aquino transition period (Montiel, 1988)
Ethnography and participant	• The dynamics of power in a Philippine municipality (Hollsteiner, 1963)
observation (Atkinson &	
Hammersley, 1994)	
 In-depth interviews (Fontana & 	• Leaders, factions, and parties: The structure of Philippine politics (Lande,
Frey, 1994) of political elites and	1965)
radicals	Asian power and politics (Pye, 1985)
 Biographical method (Smith, 1994) 	• Imelda Marcos (Pedrosa, 1987)
 Film and visual analysis (Harper, 	Bargaining for peaceful termination of unsuccessful coup attempts in the
1994)	Philippines (Montiel, 1995)
 Conversation analysis (Silverman, 	(I did not find any research example on political culture that used
1993)	conversation analysis.)
Library work analysis	• "Good omens" versus "worth": The poetic dialogue between Ton Tho
	Tuong and Phan Van Tri (Davidson, 1986)
	 The deliberate use of foreign vocabulary by the Khmer: Changing fashions methods and sources (Jacob, 1986)
Historical study of political culture	President Marcos and the Philippine political culture (Gleeck, 1987)
(Tuchman, 1994)	
Case studies (Stake, 1994)	 Boss: Five case studies of local politics in the Philippines (Lacaba & Corone 1995)

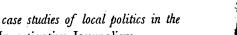
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