

Z P B

ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR POLITIKBERATUNG

Policy Advice and Political Consulting



Herausgeber: Svenja Falk, Andrea Römmele, Martin Thunert

4 | Political consulting and policy advice in the “emerging markets”

Nandani Lynton Cross-border business consulting: the challenges for European companies in China

Yudhishtir Raj Isar International organizations and culture: new horizons for policy advice?

Louis Perron Election campaigns and the political consulting industry in the Philippines

Prema Sagar/Poonam Madan Public Policy Consulting in an Emerging Indian Framework

Philipp Merkofer/Angela Murphy The e-skills landscape in South Africa

ESSAYS

Z P B
ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR
POLITIKBERATUNG

Election campaigns and the political consulting industry in the Philippines

Louis Perron

Abstract: The purpose of the present article is to describe election campaigns in the Philippines. In order to meet that objective, the article first discusses the environment in which election campaigns take place, including the electoral history, culture and the political institutions. Particular attention is given to the importance of religion in Philippine election campaigns. The paper then analyzes the mix of modern high-tech campaign tools and traditional patronage politics in Philippine election campaigns. In this regard, the role of paid television advertising is of special importance. In conclusion, the implications of these special characteristics for the political consulting industry are shown.

Keywords: Philippines · Election campaigns · Political consulting · Political marketing

Wahlkämpfe und die Politikberatungsbranche auf den Philippinen

Zusammenfassung: Der vorliegende Artikel beschreibt die Wahlkämpfe auf den Philippinen. Hierfür wird zunächst das politische Umfeld für Wahlkämpfe vorgestellt. Neben der Geschichte der Wahlen auf den Philippinen, der Kultur und den politischen Institutionen wird dabei insbesondere auch auf den Stellenwert von Religion in philippinischen Wahlkämpfen eingegangen. Es folgt eine Analyse der besonderen Mischung aus modernen Kampagneninstrumenten und traditioneller Patronage, die die philippinischen Wahlkämpfe kennzeichnet. Diesbezüglich spielt Wahlwerbung im Fernsehen eine besondere Rolle. Abschließend werden die Konsequenzen dieser besonderen Charakteristika für die Politikberatungsbranche dargestellt.

Schlüsselwörter: Philippinen · Wahlkampf · Politikberatung · Politisches Marketing

Published online: 18.03.2010

© VS-Verlag 2010

Dr. des. L. Perron (✉)

Perron Campaigns, Seefeldstr. 69, 8008 Zürich, Switzerland

e-mail: lperron@perroncampaigns.com

KEY MESSAGE

While election campaigns in the Philippines are expensive and competitive, there are very few companies that exclusively specialize in political consulting. Philippine campaigns are usually ad-hoc operations where family members, allied politicians and friends work together with advertising agencies and survey companies.

1 Introduction

The purpose of this article is to describe Philippine election campaigns. The Philippines is often described as the loudest democracy in South-East Asia. At first glance, Philippine campaigns do indeed look like big fiestas with colourful campaign posters and singing candidates. But that's only half of the story. In reality, Philippine campaigns are a fascinating mix of traditional patronage politics and modern high-tech campaigns.

The country is inhabited by a total of 90 million people and consists of more than 7000 islands (!), even if many of them are extremely small and are sparsely populated. Consequently, logistics is a major challenge for every nationwide candidate. The islands are often divided into three major groups, namely Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. The national language is Tagalog, a Malay language, which however, is not understood in many parts of the country. Local dialects such as Cebuano in Cebu, Bisaya in Mindanao but also Ilonggo, Bicolano or Ilocano are quite important. English is de facto the language of business but as far as the broader electorate is concerned, communication, campaign propaganda and public opinion research have to be in the local dialect. Though the Philippines was once the richest country in Asia (except from Japan), it is today officially classified as a developing country and one of the poorest in the region. About half of the country is considered to be rural, while the other half of the population lives in urban areas. The Philippines is still predominantly agricultural and a major source of exported labour. In recent years, however, and until the international economic crisis of 2008, the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo has been very successful in stabilizing the budget and attracting foreign investments. As a result, the economy has been continuously growing and the country has become a major destination of business process outsourcing.

In order to fully comprehend Philippine campaigns, the present article starts by discussing the country's electoral history and its political system. Here, some special characteristics concerning the electoral provisions and the role of political parties are described. Thereafter, a closer look is taken on the campaign environment. It is argued that there is a cleavage concerning voting behaviour (and, thus, campaigning activities) that divides urban from rural areas. Also, the importance of the media and the churches for political campaigns is shown. The following chapter deals with traditional and modern campaign tools and pays special attention to the role of television. The paper concludes with some implications for the political consulting industry deriving from the unique Philippine campaigning environment.

2 The political system, institutions and environment**2.1 The electoral history**

Unlike most countries in South-East Asia, the Philippines has a long history of electoral politics. Limited suffrage was first introduced during American colonial rule at the occasions of the 1901 municipal, 1907 legislative and 1935 presidential elections (Teehankee 2006, p. 79). During the 1950s, the Philippines was a more or less functioning democracy (Vinacke 1947; Ando 1969; Lande 1973). In 1965, Ferdinand Marcos was first elected President and after his re-election he declared martial law and established an authoritarian regime. This regime collapsed in 1986 after the so-called People Power I, a popular uprising provoked by the murder of opposition leader Benigno Aquino (see also Kerkvliet and Mojares 1991; del Rosario 2002). In a snap election, Aquino's widow Corazon succeeded over Marcos (May 1988). A new constitution, which made the Philippines a democratic republic following the U.S. model, was approved.

2.2 Electoral provisions

A typical presidential system, the head of the government, the president, is elected by direct universal suffrage for a six-year term. Philippine presidents are not allowed to run for re-election, while vice presidents are allowed to do so once. It is important to highlight, however, that in the Philippines the president and the vice president campaign together but—unlike in the USA—are elected separately. As a result, it happened in 1992 and in 1998 that the president and the vice president came from opposing tickets. The multi-candidate system without a runoff has consigned the country to be governed by a minority president, which has not helped the stabilization of the Philippine democracy (Son 1998; Wenceslao 2003).

The Philippine Congress has a bicameral structure. Following the U.S. model, it consists of a House of Representatives and a Senate. 216 members of the House are elected for three-year terms in single-member constituencies. Then, there is a varying number of members elected through a party-list system where the total number of party-list representatives can not exceed 20% of the total number of congressmen. The party list seats in the House (in the present Congress there are 52 of them) are thought to help represent the disadvantaged sectors of the society such as labor, the urban poor or the indigenous cultural communities. As a result, each voter can cast two votes for Congress: one vote for one of the candidates in his district and a second vote for a party. Many voters do not use their vote for the party list, however. Congressmen (and the same holds true for local officeholders) are allowed to run for three consecutive terms. In practice, congressmen who are term limited often try to field a family member to take over their seat. If such a succession campaign is successful, the original congressman often comes back after one term. In urban areas, however, voters have become sceptical of such succession strategies. During the 2007 elections, several candidates of well-entrenched political families lost their respective succession bids in Metro Manila.

The Senate consists of 24 members who are elected for a six-year term with half of them being elected every three years. A senator may run for one re-election and then

needs to wait for three years before he or she can run again for another two terms. Unlike in the U.S., however, Philippine senators are elected at large, which has important consequences on campaigns. Since there are about twenty candidates with realistic chances of making it to the winning twelve, about twenty to twenty-five nationwide (senatorial) campaigns are ongoing every election cycle.

What contributes to the description of the Philippines as the loudest democracy in South-East Asia, is the sheer amount of offices that are elected by universal suffrage. In addition to the president, the vice president, the 268 congressmen and the 24 senators, the elected powers include the governors and vice governors of the 81 provinces as well as thousands of mayors and vice mayors. Finally, the legislative power of the cities (the city councilors) and of the province (the provincial board members) are also elected by universal suffrage and at large (for a comparison of local electoral politics in the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia, see Ruland 1990). While the Philippines is not a federal state (a transfer to a federal system has recently been debated), local elections have a long tradition in this country (Kerkvliet 1974, p. 310). As in many other countries, Philippine local government has gained in power and political importance during the past years (see also Rood 2002; Kerkvliet 1990; Coronel and Lacaba 1995; Severino and Coronel 1996; Kawanaka 1998, 2001, 2002; Coronel-Ferrer 2000).

Similar to Thailand, the Commission of Elections “COMELEC” supervises the lawful conduct of elections. Philippine election laws are indeed quite detailed and complex. As an example, campaigns are limited to a certain period of time (90 days for nationwide and 45 days for local elections). All campaign activities have to stop one day before the election and it is prohibited to sell alcohol on Election Day and the day before. While the liquor ban is strictly enforced, other rules such as for example the spending limits seem to be enforced less vigorously. Election Day itself is a holiday. As a result, the Philippines generally has a high turnout with about 75% to 80% of the registered voters going to the polls (Rood 2002). Unlike in the USA, activities to get out the vote are therefore less crucial for electoral success.

2.3 Political parties

Philippine politics is personality- and candidate-centred and as a result, parties are ideologically and logistically weak (Rivera 2002; Rood 2002). Similar to the situation in many Latin American countries, Philippine parties are electoral platforms and network organizations rather than programmatic associations of politicians with a similar political ideology. The weakness of the parties has an important impact on campaigns. In an environment with weak parties and a volatile public opinion, any politician with popularity and money can build a campaign organization (Lande 2001, p. 89). In terms of structuring the political space, the polarization around the president is in fact more important than the parties. Political players are either for or against the president; hence they belong to the administration or opposition camp—regardless of their official party membership.

The most basic unit of Philippine politics is the family. Especially in the provinces, elections have a feudal touch as a few family clans compete against each other. Some political dynasties also split their forces with a few family members belonging to the administration and the others of the same clan siding with the opposition. This being said,

some of the main parties are the Christian Democratic *Lakas*, the Liberal Party *LP*, the conservative Nationalist People’s Coalition *NPC* and the *Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino LDP* (Struggle for Democratic Filipinos). *Akbayan* as well as *Bayan Muna* are leftist parties of socialist inspiration (and therefore not to compare with European social democratic labor parties). In fact, the communist party and the labor movement in general are a special case and subject of important previous research (Jones 1989; Chapman 1987; Rocamora 1994; Abinales 1996, 2000, 2004). In short, the left played an important role during the People Power Revolution in 1986 but then missed subsequent integration into the political system. To an important degree, the left remained an armed, revolutionary force and as a result, a social democratic mass party as there is in European and in some Latin American countries such as Brazil never developed. Hence, the re-distribution of wealth is not really an issue in Philippine politics.

Party switching is rampant in the Philippines. Depending on the posts and positions offered, politicians switch parties and political camps. In the Philippines, such politicians are called “balimbing”. As an example, while presidential candidate Joseph Estrada won a clear victory in 1998, his allies won only about 20% of the congressional seats. Within a few weeks after the election, however, enough congressmen switched so as to give Estrada a majority (May 1988). Tolerance among voters for party switching has decreased in recent years, however. During the 2007 mid-term elections, voters have punished politicians who had just recently switched to the administration side.

3 The state of the Philippine democracy

The quality and the consolidation of the Philippine democracy have been largely debated in previous research (Coronel-Ferrer 2000; Rivera 2002; Lande 1965; Timberman 1991; Montinola 1999; Moran 1999; Conroy-Franco 2000; Traub-Merz 2001; Skene 2003). While democracy has been formally re-introduced after People Power I, the country has still some major problems including rampant corruption and activity of communist insurgents as well as Muslim separatists (see for example Coronel 1993; Honasan 2000; Coronel and Balgos 1998). The latter one is subject of an important amount of research such as for example the studies about Islamic Mindanao offered by McKenna (1998) and Quimpo (2000) (for a comparison of the Thai and Philippine Islamic independence movements, see Islam 1998; for a comparison of secessionist movements in the Philippines and in Indonesia, see Buendia 2001). Further, previous research has also discussed the fact that the Philippine political system is still largely dominated by the elites (Roces 2001; Teehankee 2001). Many members of Congress for example belong to the old rich elite (Coronel 2004a, p. 270). It is also sometimes debated to what degree the military—especially the younger generals—are devoted to democracy (see also Quilop 2001; Jose 2001). Presidents since People Power I have indeed survived numerous coup attempts (see also Arcala-Hall 2004).

3.1 Voting behavior and vote buying in urban and rural areas

Putting the Philippine democracy in comparative perspective, Thompson (1996) concludes in a study that the Philippines is off the list of endangered democracies. Other authors and observers take a similar point of view and note that Philippine elections are more than episodes of vote buying (Abinales 2000). Of course, the attempt of vote buying is (still) omnipresent. The simple fact that many politicians spend a third of their campaign budget on Election Day might be suspicious in this respect. Most Philippine voters have experienced attempts of vote buying and, of course, many voters take the offered money. But, who they really vote for on Election Day is another story. In urban areas, voters feel quite free to vote for the person they wanted to vote for all along. In rural areas, on the other hand, voters feel more obliged to vote for the candidate who gave them money. While irregularities definitely exist, the 2007 elections again offer several examples of underdog candidates winning against well-organized and financed political clans. In the province of Pampanga, Eduardo “Among Ed” Tongol Panlilio, a catholic priest, won an uphill fight against two well-entrenched clans. Grace M. Padaca, a former journalist and polio victim, won re-election as governor of Isabela beating a powerful family clan for the second time in a row. The same holds true at the national level. During the 2007 Senate elections, two imprisoned military coup leaders made it to the (winning) top twelve. Laylo and Dayag-Laylo (1999, p. 24) come to a similar conclusion in an analysis of the 1998 presidential election. Beyond the impact of family clans, regional and ethnic cleavages, the authors of the study found that the image of the main candidates had a significant impact on the vote. While their operationalization of the concept “*image*” is quite superficial (largely defined as trust and other positive personal qualities), the general conclusion (that there is more to electoral success than vote buying) is nevertheless important.

Philippine campaigners often talk about the concepts of *free market votes* and *command votes*, which are indeed helpful in order to comprehend Philippine elections. *Free market votes* are won through campaigning in the sense of ads, billboards, image and speeches. *Command votes*, on the other hand, are votes that local leaders deliver in exchange for patronage, pork barrel or other favors. This second kind of campaigning is often called *local machinery* in the Philippine campaign jargon. During the campaign, most candidates have local leaders on their payroll. They are paid an allowance for each week of the campaign. In exchange, they wear the t-shirt of the candidate, go from fiesta to fiesta and let everybody know how great the candidate is. As television becomes more important and the middle class is growing in numbers, however, the machinery is becoming less important. As a rule of thumb, it can be said that the more local the office a candidate is running for and the more rural the district, the more important are the *command votes*. On the other hand, the higher the office is and the more urban the district, the more important are the *free market votes*.

3.2 The media

With regard to the consolidation of democracy, it is also important to mention that the Philippines has a vibrant civil society with thousands of NGOs that are active for the disadvantaged sectors of the society (Mendoza 1998; Clarke 1998; Law and Nadeau 1999;

Hilhorst 2003). The country also has probably the freest press in the region where most television and radio stations are privately owned (on the Philippine media, see also Coronel 1999, p. 193). The *Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility* regularly monitors the news coverage of presidential candidates (Quintos de Jesus and Teodoro 2004, p. 199). For the 2004 presidential election, when Fernando Poe Jr. challenged incumbent President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the study noted that there was barely an incumbency advantage or challenger disadvantage in terms of air time or news coverage. This being said, the mainstream media is mostly covering poll numbers, the so-called horse race, pseudo-scandals, rumors and intrigues. Media efforts towards real and serious investigative journalism still leave much to be desired. What Plasser (2002, p. 89) calls *merchandising journalism*, on the other hand, is rampant. The concept refers to the idea of politicians paying journalists for (positive) news coverage or interviews. Sometimes, candidates negotiate packages where candidates are offered interviews and coverage in exchange for and together with a certain amount of advertising time buy (Florentino-Hofileña 2004, p. 120).

3.3 Religion

Faith is very important in Philippine culture (on Philippine culture, see also Rodell 2002). More than 80% of Filipinos are Roman Catholic, while 5% are Muslim. The Muslim minority is located in Mindanao, the Southern island of the country. Religion and the Catholic Church in particular are important and powerful in Philippine politics. It firmly opposes birth control, which is one of the reasons why the Philippines has one of the fastest growing population in the world. This has important implications for the election campaigns. Since half of the voters are below the age of 35, it is crucial for every candidate to court the youth (Datinguinoo and Olarte 2004). During the above mentioned People Power Revolution, which ended the authoritarian regime of President Marcos, the Catholic Church played an extremely important role (Hofman 1995, p. 453). According to Huntington's (1991, p. 84) study on democratization in the late twentieth century, Cardinal Sin may have played a more powerful role in bringing about the end of a regime than any other catholic leader since the seventeenth century. He negotiated the arrangements which led to a united opposition ticket in the snap elections of February 7, 1986. He was further engaged in the election campaign and when the ruling regime tried to manipulate the election, he used the church organization and the church radio station to mobilize the population.

This being said, there are also limitations to the political influence of the church. During the 1998 presidential election campaign, the church clearly let voters know that it is opposing the election of movie actor Joseph Estrada—Estrada still won in a landslide. Hofman (1995, p. 453) makes an interesting point in this respect. The author compares the influence of the church in Brazil, the Philippines and Kenya and concludes that in these cases under authoritarian rule, “the church became the primary channel of political opposition and became a surrogate of the interests of broader civil society” (p. 1). Later on, when the political space opened up, the influence of the church became more selective. In all three cases, the churches were more successful in influencing constitutional

reforms, a more restricted and contained process than highly partisan and politicized presidential elections—such as the election of Estrada in 1998.

In addition to the Catholic Church, there are other religious groups that play an important political role. The *El Shaddai* prayer movement and especially *Iglesia ni Cristo* (Church of Christ) are said to deliver the votes of their members *en bloc* (Gorospe-Jamon 1999). Similar to Catholic Latin American countries such as Brazil, Evangelical churches are also on the rise in the Philippines. In addition to the church, it is important to highlight that women played an important role in democratization in Asia (Thompson 2002, p. 535). Indeed, over the past decade and a half, women have led successful popular uprisings against dictators in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Philippines. The female leaders were widows, wives or daughters of political martyrs and continued the cause of their male relatives. As a result, it is no surprise that women are more prominent as office-holders in the Philippines than in many other countries (on the influence of women in Philippine politics, see also Roces 1998; on Philippine gender relations, see also Angeles 2001).

4 Modern campaigning in the Philippines

Philippine election campaigns are festive occasions (Rood 2002). During the campaign, candidates sing and dance, play jingles, bring singers and dancers to rallies, use nicknames and create colorful gimmicks (Datinguino and Olarte 2004). They are often described as candidate-centered popularity contests with name recognition being extremely important (Son 1998; Tiglaio 1993). To understand the reason for this, it is important to highlight a particularity of the Philippine electoral system: voters have to write down the name of the candidates they select for each post (Rood 2002). This means that a voter is required to remember more than twenty names on Election Day. As a result, a candidate needs to appear on television and/or tour the provinces months (if not years) in advance of the election. It is therefore also of no surprise that actors and other celebrities who have universal awareness have often been successful in Philippine elections (Bariuad 2001; Coronel 2004b; Martelino 2001). This being said, it seems that in post-Estrada politics, celebrities have lost some of their appeal. During the 2007 elections, famous actor Cesar Montano and comedian Tito Sotto lost their bids for the Senate. And even star boxer Manny Pacquiao lost his campaign for Congress badly.

4.1 Television advertising

The 2004 presidential and senatorial election was a turning point in Philippine election campaigns. It was the first election that was held under the *Fair Election Practices Act* which allowed political television advertising (Tenorio 2000; Conclara et al. 2001). A relatively new campaign tool in the Philippines, political ads have changed campaigns fundamentally and are now very important in Philippine campaigns (Tabunda et al. 2004, p. 124). During the last presidential election campaign, the main candidates spent roughly half of their campaign budget on advertising. Hence, fundraising is very important in Philippine election campaigns (Plasser 2002). Candidates who have both, the financial

resources and the know how to use the new tool can further influence an already volatile public opinion. This is exactly what happened during the 2004 and 2007 elections: candidates who were completely unknown or have already been written off obtained excellent results thanks to well-orchestrated and well-executed television campaigns. Other candidates who seemed to be strong according to early polls lost badly because they were on the air too late or with poor campaigns. Television networks are highly centralized in the Philippines and, as a result, it is difficult to buy local advertising windows. Nevertheless, during the 2007 election campaign, some congressmen, mayors and even vice mayors were already on the air buying advertising time on the nationwide networks. It is very likely that the trend for local candidates to go on television will further increase over the next few election cycles.

The new *Fair Election Practices Act* does not specifically prohibit negative advertising and there have been, in fact, a few effective attack campaigns. Nevertheless, in view of the political culture and the multi-candidate and multi-party system, negative advertising might backfire very easily. Competitive or confrontational statements are seen as contrary to the Asian culture, which celebrates values such as harmony, politeness and respect. In order to fully comprehend Philippine campaign material, it is also important to highlight that the country is a “high-context culture” as compared to the USA’s “low context culture” (Tabunda et al. 2004, p. 124). In the latter, campaigners rely on straightforward, explicit verbal messages. In the Philippines, however, where mutual respect and harmony are important cultural traits, what is said is less important than who is making a point and how things are said. In this sense, the meaning lies in the bigger environment consisting of a combination of events, relationships and images.

4.2 Additional campaign tools

Other important campaign tools in addition to television—especially for local campaigns—include billboards and campaign posters. In addition, the *Manila Broadcasting Corp. (MBC)* launched an important network of tiny radio stations with the goal of reaching every consumer and citizen at the local level (Neumann 2002, p. 40). With a radius of about six kilometers, these stations represent the most direct media link to communities and offer a precious opportunity to politicians.

Authors and political observers are somehow split on the question whether the internet plays an important role in Philippine campaigns or not (Meinardus 2003). On the one hand, in a poor country like the Philippines, only a minority of the population has access to the internet (see also Lallana et al. 2002; Rye 2002; Zamora-Roldan 2002; Trinidad 2002). As a result, it is an inadequate tool to reach the masses. On the other hand, it is true that the internet played an important role during People Power II, the popular uprising that led to the ouster of President Joseph Estrada (Coronel 2002, p. 61). The driving force behind the uprising was the more educated and internet savvy elite and middle class. As many as 200 anti-Estrada websites and about 100 e-mail groups made it a multimedia revolt (on People Power II, see also Coronel 2000; Coronel and Balatan 2001).

Manila is often described as the text capital of the world. As a result, text messages which are sent over the mobile phone are an important campaign tool (Quintos de Jesus and Teodoro 2004, p. 199). During the mentioned ouster of President Joseph Estrada,

more than 70 million text messages were sent during one day (compared to 30 million messages per day during the all important Christmas break; Ellis 2001). In fact, text messages are sometimes also preferred to diffuse negative and attack propaganda—often in the form of jokes.

Going house to house and holding big rallies is also still quite important in Philippine campaigns. Especially as far as local offices are concerned, voters want to see and touch their candidates. And even in nationwide campaigns, big rallies and campaign sorties can play a role in reaching voters from the lowest economic class. With respect to the vote of the poor, an extensive study of the Institute of Philippine Culture at the Ateneo University (2005) on how poor Filipinos decide on whom to vote for is of particular interest. The study found, for example, that the poor are very sensitive when a politician treats them as dirty or secretly sanitizes hands after making contact.

5 Implications for the political consulting industry

In East Asia—and the same holds true for the Philippines—there are few companies that specialize exclusively in political campaigning (Plasser 2002; Rimban 2004a). Also, there are few networks such as journals or professional associations that are comparable to respective platforms in the United States, Europe or in Latin America. The *Asia Pacific Association of Political Consultants* has been founded only recently. Beyond some short-term seminars, there are also very little academic programs in the area of political campaigns. Oftentimes, journalists, columnists, businessmen, advertising executives and/or legislative staff fulfill the role of campaign operatives and political consultants in the Philippines. In retrospect, the declaration of martial law was not helpful for the development of campaign skills. Rimban (2004b) explains in an investigative report on Philippine election campaigns that this is one of the reasons why some of today's operatives trace their roots to the revolutionary, leftist movement. To a certain degree, public opinion research companies fulfill the role of political consultants and strategists. The country has several polling companies with *Social Weather Stations SWS*, *Pulse Asia*, *AC Nielsen* and *Philippine Survey and Research Center PSRC* being the main ones. However, many candidates rely on self-made surveys which predict the respective candidate an electoral success, only to be surprised when they lose on Election Day.

As a result of the feudal structure of politics, it is often family members who play important roles of campaign operatives—even at the presidential level (Rimban 2004a). Oftentimes, the core group of the candidate, who makes the fundamental strategic, tactical and organizational decisions, largely consists of family members and personal friends. Allied politicians frequently fulfill the role of the campaign manager such as the case of Senator Vicente Sotto III, who served as campaign manager for presidential candidate Poe in 2004.

Philippine presidents have often hired American PR consultants and lobbying firms to polish their personal and the country's image in the U.S. as well as to lobby U.S. Congress (Mangahas 2005). On the other side, there is also a long history of foreigners—especially Americans—coaching Philippine politicians. In 1969, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos hired Joseph Napolitan who had previously consulted with President Kennedy

and President Johnson in the United States. This event most likely marks the beginning of modern international political consulting. Together with Robert Squier, Napolitan polished Marcos' image and assisted in his overall campaign strategy (Johnson forthcoming). Since few people outside of Manila had television, radio became the most important communication tool. The campaign secured fifteen trucks, outfitted them with movie screens and projectors, and drove them from village to village. When Corazon Aquino challenged President Ferdinand Marcos, American consultants were involved on both sides. While media consultant David Sawyer worked for Aquino, Marcos was represented by *Black, Manafort, Stone & Kelly* (Chua 2004). Yvonne Chua (2004), a journalist of the *Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism*, reports that other American political consultants such as Paul Bograd and David Sackett of the Virginia based Tarrance group have also worked for Philippine clients.

It might indeed be helpful for a Philippine candidate to use public opinion research the way American political consultants use it, namely to develop a message and a campaign strategy. The power of message politics has long been underestimated in Philippine politics. It was in fact presidential candidate Joseph Estrada in 1998 who pitched voters with a message that was short but credible and appealing in the eyes of the electorate. The entire campaign—one might say Estrada's entire political life—was an appeal to the masses: that he understands them, cares about them, that now is their time and that he will lift them out of poverty. It was concisely summarized in his campaign slogan "*Erap para sa mahirap*" (Erap for the poor). While previous presidential candidates all belonged to the elite, Estrada tried to convey the impression that he is one with the poor. A good example for this is the day when Estrada filed his candidacy at the office of the Electoral Commission. In the Philippines, people use a *jeepney*, a sort of a small bus, as their most frequent transport vehicle. The day Estrada filed his candidacy, he drove and rode a *jeepney* himself and inside of the *jeepney* were the candidates who ran for the Senate on Estrada's ticket. Further, the campaign had a clear strategy. While politicians normally tried to appeal to the ethno-geographic loyalties of Filipinos, Estrada's strategy was to target the poor nationwide. All the resources such as campaign funds and time of the candidate were allocated according to this strategy.

Since Estrada, several other candidates with an appealing message have successfully challenged frontrunners who only offered motherhood statements. Relying on unprofessional surveys, underestimating the importance of the campaign message and a wrong allocation of resources are the top three reasons explaining why competitive candidates end up losing in Philippine elections. Successful Philippine candidates start early, build up the momentum of the unstoppable winner and find the right mix of *free market* and *command votes*. They have a simple but credible message, enough money to communicate the message and the discipline to implement the campaign plan.

References

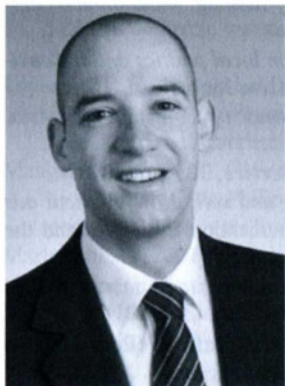
- Abinales, P. N. (1996). *The revolution falters: The left in Philippine politics after 1986*. Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications, Cornell University.
- Abinales, P. N. (2000). Filipino communism and the spectre of the communist manifesto. *Kasarinlan Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies*, 15(1), 147–174.
- Abinales, P. N. (2004). *Love, sex, and the Filipino communist, or, Hinggil sa Pagpipigil ng Pang-gigigil*. Manila: Anvil Publishing.
- Ando, H. (1969). A study of voting patterns in the Philippine presidential and senatorial elections, 1946–1965. *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 13(4), 567–584.
- Angeles, L. C. (2001). The Filipino male as “macho-machunurin”: Bringing men and masculinities in gender and development studies. *Kasarinlan Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies*, 16(1), 9–30.
- Arcala-Hall, R. (2004). Exploring new roles for the Philippine military: Implications for civilian supremacy. *Philippine Political Science Journal*, 25(48), 107–130.
- Ateneo de Manila University, Institute of Philippine Culture. (2005). *The vote of the poor: Modernity and tradition in people's views of leadership and election*. Quezon City: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University.
- Bariuad, A. (2001). TV-secret polls weapon of Philippines' political lightweights. *The Straits Times*, 10 June 2001, 18.
- Buendia, R. G. (2001). A re-examination of ethnicity and secessionist movements in the Philippines and Indonesia: The moros and acehnese. *Philippine Political Science Journal*, 23(46), 3–48.
- Chapman, W. (1987). *Inside the Philippine revolution*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Chua, Y. T. (2004). With a little help from (U.S.) friends. *The Investigative Reporting Magazine*, Special Election Issue, January–June 2004, 22–27.
- Clarke, G. (1998). *The politics of NGOs in South-East Asia: Participation and protest in the Philippines*. London: Routledge.
- Conclara, J. P., Rubrico, J. U., Tenorio, A. S. (2001). Who benefited from lifting of political ad ban? *BusinessWorld*, 8 May 2001.
- Conroy-Franco, J. (2000). *Campaigning for democracy: Grassroots citizenship movements, less-than-democratic elections, and regime transition in the Philippines*. Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy.
- Coronel, S. S. (1993). *Coups, cults & cannibals: Chronicles of a troubled decade, 1982–1992*. Metro Manila: Anvil Publication.
- Coronel, S. S. (1999). *From loren to marimar: The Philippine media in the 1990s*. Quezon City: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.
- Coronel, S. S. (2000). *Investigating Estrada: Millions, mansions, and mistresses: A compilation of investigative reports*. Metro Manila: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.
- Coronel, S. S. (2002). New media played a role in the people's uprising. *Nieman Reports*, 56(2), 61.
- Coronel, S. S. (2004a). *The rulemakers: How the wealthy and well-born dominate congress*. Quezon City: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.
- Coronel, S. S. (2004b). Between tinsel and trapo. *The Investigative Reporting Magazine*, Special Election Issue, January–June 2004, 70–73.
- Coronel, S. S., & Balatan, S. C. (2001). *EDSA 2: A nation in revolt, a photographic journal*. Pasig City: Anvil Publication.
- Coronel, S. S., & Balgos, C. C. A. (1998). *Pork and other perks: Corruption & governance in the Philippines*. Pasig, Metro Manila: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, Evelio B. Javier Foundation, Institute for Popular Democracy.
- Election campaigns and the political consulting industry ...
- Coronel, S. S., & Lacaba, J. F. (1995). *Boss: 5 case studies of local politics in the Philippines*. Pasig, Metro Manila: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, Institute for Popular Democracy.
- Coronel-Ferrer, M. (2000). Recycled autonomy? Enacting the new organic act for a regional autonomous government in Southern Philippines. *Kasarinlan Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies*, 15(2), 165–190.
- Datinguino, V. M., & Olarte, A. (2004). Campaigning Filipino style. *The Investigative Reporting Magazine*, Special Election Issue, January–June 2004, 34–37.
- Ellis, E. (2001). Asia buzz: Revolution. How text messages toppled Joseph Estrada. <http://www.timeasia.com>. Accessed 22 Nov 2007.
- Florentino-Hofileña, C. (2004). *News for sale. The corruption & commercialization of the Philippine media*. Manila: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.
- Gorospe-Jamon, G. (1999). The el shaddai prayer movement: Political socialization in a religious context. *Philippine Political Science Journal*, 20(43), 83–126.
- Hilhorst, D. (2003). *The real world of NGOs: Discourses, diversity, and development*. London: Zed Books.
- Hofman, T. D. (1995). *The church and its influence on democratic transitions: Brazil, the Philippines, and Kenya Compared*. PhD Dissertation at the Michigan State University, Political Science Department.
- Honasan, G. B. (2000). On peace and insurgency: President Estrada and the conflict in Mindanao. *Kasarinlan Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies*, 15(2), 237–244.
- Huntington, S. P. (1991). *The third wave. Democratization in the late Twentieth Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Islam, S. S. (1998). The Islamic independence movements in Patani of Thailand and Mindanao of the Philippines. *Asian Survey*, 38(5), 441–456.
- Johnson, D. W. *Going international*. Unpublished manuscript, Washington D.C.
- Jones, G. R. (1989). *Red revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerrilla movement*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Jose, R. T. (2001). The Philippine armed forces: Protector or oppressor? A historical overview. *Kasarinlan Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies*, 16(2), 73–90.
- Kawanaka, T. (1998). The Robredo style: Philippine local politics in transition. *Kasarinlan Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies*, 13(3), 5–36.
- Kawanaka, T. (2001). The state and institutions in Philippine local politics. *Philippine Political Science Journal*, 22(45), 135–148.
- Kawanaka, T. (2002). *Power in a Philippine city*. Chiba: Institute of Developing Economies and Japan External Trade Organization.
- Kerkvliet, B. J. (1974). *Political change in the Philippines: Studies of local politics preceding martial law*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii.
- Kerkvliet, B. J. (1990). *Everyday politics in the Philippines: Class and status relations in a central Luzon village*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kerkvliet, B. J., & Mojares, R. B. (1991). *From marcos to aquino: Local perspectives on political transition in the Philippines*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Lallana, E. C., Pascual, P., & Soriano, E. (2002). E-government in the Philippines: Benchmarking against global best practices. *Kasarinlan Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies*, 17(2), 235–272.
- Lande, C. H. (1965). *Leaders, factions, and parties; the structure of Philippine politics*. New Haven: Southeast Asia Studies, Cellar Book Shop.
- Lande, C. H. (1973). *Southern tagalog voting, 1946–1963: Political behavior in a Philippine region*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Cellar Book Shop.
- Lande, C. H. (2001). The return of “People Power” in the Philippines. *Journal of Democracy*, 12(2), 89.

- Law, L., & Nadeau, K. (1999). Globalization, migration and class struggles: NGO mobilization for Filipino domestic workers. *Kasarinlan Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies*, 14(3–4), 51–68.
- Laylo Jr., P., & Dayag-Laylo, C. (1999). *The 1998 Philippine presidential elections: Candidate images, media portrayals, and vote intention*. SWS Occasional Paper, presented at the annual meeting of the American Association for Public Opinion Research in St. Petersburg FL.
- Mangahas, M. (2005). Gloria's lobbygate? Government splurges millions on multiple, secret lobby contracts. The Philippine center for investigative journalism. <http://www.pcij.org/stories/print/2005/lobbygate.html>. Accessed 22 Nov 2007.
- Martelino, A. (2001). Politics-Philippines: Actors race for top billing in may polls. *Inter Press Service*, 30 April 2001.
- May, R. J. (1988). Elections in the Philippines 1986–1987. *Electoral Studies*, 7(1), 79–81.
- Meinardus, R. (2003). The political impact of the internet. *BusinessWorld*, 26 March 2003.
- Mendoza, D. J. (1998). Dependence or Self-reliance? The Philippine NGO Experience. *Philippine Political Science Journal*, 19(39–42), 143–172.
- McKenna, T. M. (1998). *Muslim rulers and rebels: Everyday politics and armed separatism in the Southern Philippines*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Montinola, G. R. (1999). Parties and accountability in the Philippines. *Journal of Democracy*, 10(2), 126–140.
- Moran, J. (1999). Patterns of corruption and development in East Asia. *Third World Quarterly*, 20(3), 569.
- Neumann, A. L. (2002). Tuning in to the village voice. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 29 August 2002, 40.
- Plasser, F. (2002). *Global political campaigning—a worldwide analysis of campaign professionals and their practices*. Westport: Praeger.
- Quilop, R. J. G. (2001). Waltzing with the army: From Marcos to Arroyo. *Kasarinlan Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies*, 16(2), 91–104.
- Quimpo, N. G. (2000). Back to war in Mindanao: The weaknesses of a power-based approach in conflict resolution. *Philippine Political Science Journal*, 21(44), 99–126.
- Quintos de Jesus, M., & Teodoro, L. V. (2004). *Citizens' media monitor: A report on the campaign and elections coverage in the Philippines*. Manila: Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility.
- Rimban, L. (2004a). First-world techniques, third-world setting. *The Investigative Reporting Magazine*, Special election issue, January–June, 12–17.
- Rimban, L. (2004b). The X-Men. The story of activists turned political consultants. *The Investigative Reporting Magazine*, Special Election Issue, January–June, 18–21.
- Rivera, T. C. (2002). Transition pathways and democratic consolidation in post-marcos Philippines. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 24(3), 466.
- Rocamora, J. (1994). *Breaking through: The struggle within the communist party of the Philippines*. Pasig, Metro Manila: Anvil.
- Roces, M. (1998). *Women, power, and kinship politics: Female power in post-war Philippines*. Westport: Praeger.
- Roces, M. (2001). *Kinship politics in post-war Philippines: The Lopez family 1946–2000*. Malate: De La Salle University Press.
- Rodell, P. (2002). *Culture and customs of the Philippines*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- Rood, S. (2002). Elections as complicated and important events in the Philippines. In J. H. Fuh-Sheng & D. Newman (Eds.), *How Asia votes*. New York: Chatham House.
- Rosario, T. C. del (2002). *Scripted clashes: A dramaturgical approach to three uprisings in the Philippines*. Boston: PhD Dissertation at the Department of Sociology at Boston College.
- Ruland, J. (1990). Continuity and change in Southeast Asia: Political participation in three intermediate cities. *Asian Survey*, 30(5), 461–480.

- Rye, R. S. (2002). E-Governance in the Philippines: Insights for policy-making. *Kasarinlan Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies*, 17(2), 101–138.
- Severino, H. G., & Coronel, S. S. (1996). *Patrimony: 6 case studies on local politics and the environment in the Philippines*. Pasig: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.
- Skene, C. (2003). Authoritarian practices in new democracies. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 33(3), 189.
- Son, J. (1998). Political fiesta heats up as elections near. *Inter Press Service*, 30 April 1998.
- Tabunda, A. M. L., Gloria, G. M., & Fonbuena, C. S. (2004). *Spin and sell: How political ads shaped the 2004 elections*. Makati City: Foundation for Communication Initiatives and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.
- Teehankee, J. C. (2001). Emerging dynasties in the post-marcos house of representatives. *Philippine Political Science Journal*, 22(45), 55–78.
- Teehankee, J. C. (2006). Electoral campaigning in the Philippines. In C. Schafferer (Ed.), *Election campaigning in East and Southeast Asia* (pp. 79–101). Hampshire: Ashgate.
- Tenorio, A. S. (2000). The road to hell is paved with good intentions (The senate and house are rushing to lift the political ad ban). *BusinessWorld*, 13 October 2000, 30.
- Tiglao, R. (1993). The perpetual campaigner. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 November 1993, 26.
- Timberman, D. G. (1991). *A changeless land: Continuity and change in Philippine politics*. Armonk N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Thompson, M. R. (1996). Off the endangered list: Philippine democratization in comparative perspective. *Comparative Politics*, 28(2), 179–205.
- Thompson, M. R. (2002). Female leadership of democratic transitions in Asia. *Pacific Affairs*, 75(4), 535.
- Traub-Merz, R. (2001). Die Philippinen nach Estrada's Sturz: Demokratie weiter im Notstand. <http://www.fes.org.ph>, Accessed 13 Jan 2004.
- Trinidad, A. C. (2002). An initial assessment of the philippines' preparedness for E-learning. *Kasarinlan Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies*, 17(2), 167–192.
- Vinacke, H. M. (1947). Post-war government and politics of the Philippines. *The Journal of Politics*, 9(4), 717–730.
- Wenceslao, F. (2003). Our senators should rise above themselves. *BusinessWorld*, 6 October 2003, 4.
- Zamora-Roldan, D. G. M. (2002). Bridging the local digital divide: The barangay net project. *Kasarinlan Philippine Quarterly of Third World Studies*, 17(2), 293–310.

Interviews with Philippine political consultants and operatives

- Albert Raffy, Manila, 3 March 2005.
- Almojuela Angel, Manila, 10 March 2005.
- Banayo Lito, Manila, 14 July 2005.
- Domingo Andrea, Quezon City, 28 July 2005.
- Esteban Menchu, Manila, 26 July 2005.
- German Reli, Manila, 18 July 2005.
- Limcaoco Conrado, Manila, 27 July 2005.
- Mangahas Mahar, Quezon City, 11 August 2005.
- Manhit Victor, Manila, 7 July 2005.
- Puno Ronaldo V., Ortigas, 3 August 2005.
- Sotto Tito, Manila, 2 August 2005.



Dr. des. Louis Perron is a political consultant who has advised more than thirty political candidates, parties, interest groups and companies. His clients are from Switzerland, Germany, the United Kingdom, Romania and Asia. He earned a M.A. at the Graduate School of Political Management, The George Washington University.