Belgira, Gino

Cruz, Raymond JNC

Lee, Seo Hyun

11/27/2013

Hi166 – H

Philippine Elections – Then and Now

The political nature during both phases of the revolutionary period in Philippine history differed greatly compared to how government, candidate selection and elections are conducted today. Taking into consideration the context of the Philippines then, there were a lot of mixed feelings of turmoil, excitement and anxiety as the concept of an independent nation that was free from the shackles of our late colonial masters filled the hearts and minds of the Filipino people. In terms of political selection and election during the revolutionary period, there were not as many positions to fill and many times the higher-ranking officials would have the power to choose their subordinates.

In 1898, during the time of the first phase of the revolutionary period, General Aguinaldo issued several degrees that would serve as the foundation of political stability under a new administration in the areas that were liberated (Cortes 2000, 181). According to these degrees, the qualified voters in 1898 have to be high character, social position and honorable conduct, provided that they are "friendly to Philippine independence and are of 20 years of age. These so called qualified voters would then congregate to elect the *Jefe Local*, who was the chief of the town, as well as a headman for every suburb (ibid). After which, the town chief, the elected headmen and three delegates would then decide on the assemblies that would act as a pseudo-judicial party whose interest is to see to the fulfillment of the laws of the force. The elected headman of the Poblacion, or town center, would act as the vice president of the assembly as well as the delegate of justice. In the provincial level, the chiefs of towns would elect the *Jefe Provincial* in addition to three other councilors for the three branches, similar to that of town governments. Instructions from the central government and propositions for measures that it can conduct would be carried out by the provincial council, constituted by the councilors with the provincial chiefs as president and the town chief of the capital as vice president (ibid).

From the qualifications and the manner of political selection, the qualification for office during these times was very vague and it raised discrimination that only the ‘elite’ could vote. For instance, the parameters as to what would be considered “high character” were not particularly elaborated on. Unlike the elections in the revolutionary times, the qualifications of voters in today’s context is much more fair and simple since anyone who is at least 18 years old, has had at least one year of residence in the Philippines and has lived for a minimum of 6 months in the place where he decides to vote, can and has the right to vote ("Republic of the," 2011). With the new qualification of voters, there is no vague statement, which led to any form of ambiguity or discrimination.

On the other hand, during the second phase of the revolutionary period, which was the time of American occupation, the political climate was very much centered on U.S. political structure as the ongoing argument of the time was that the U.S. denied Philippine’ independence on account that the Filipinos were not capable of self-governance (Cortes 2000, 279). With that, the U.S. played a large role in terms of facilitating the manner by which government and office was run. In the U.S. pursuit of Filipinization of government, all municipal offices were left in the hands of the Filipinos where municipal officers were generally held by popularly elected Filipinos (Cortes 2000, 280-281). On the provincial level, both Filipinos and Americans were appointed but there was more preference for Filipinos to take the position. The highest ranking positions of government however were run completely by the U.S. while the other levels were occupied by the locals (ibid). In sum, the general motif of the political selection and election during the second phase was primarily run on appointed positions on the part of the Filipinos.

As part of the Community of Democracies, the Philippines hold regular elections as part of the commitment (Abad, 2013). All the politicians in present times go through the electoral process to have legitimate seats in the government, unlike the appointed positions for the political leaders during revolutionary times. The politicians have to earn the most number of votes in order to be elected except the cabinet members and justices who are appointed by the president. The citizens have the right and civic duties to choose their representatives through regular, free and fair elections with universal and equal suffrage, conducted by secret ballot, monitored by independent electoral authorities, and free of fraud and intimidation (Abad, 2013). Therefore, automated electoral process was enforced first time in 2010 to support the democratic processes become more transparent and free of frauds.

For the eligibility of candidates and certificate of candidacy is explicitly stated in the constitution. Therefore, there are no vague statements about the qualifications on candidacy like in the revolutionary times. Candidates’ eligibility is clearly enumerated in the article IX of Omnibus election code ("Omnibus election code," 2012). Also, qualifications for Senator and the lower house of Congress is found in different articles of 1987 Constitution. It depicts detailed and specific qualifications for political selection and election that leads both voters and candidates for no space of discrimination.

There are more positions in the government to share their different tasks assigned to work more efficiently. The government is basically divided into three branches, namely executive, judiciary and legislative ("Philippine government”, 2012). The legislative branch has the house of senate, the house of representatives and different assemblies like regional legislative assembly, provincial assembly, municipal assembly, barangay assembly and youth assembly ("Philippine government”, 2012). The executive branch has the president, vice-president, Cabinet, governors, mayors, and barangay captains ("Philippine government”, 2012). The judiciary branch has the supreme court, court of appeals, sandiganbayan, court of tax appeals and different trial courts ("Philippine government”, 2012). Therefore, unlike the revolutionary period, there are more politicians to be elected by the citizens to practice the right to choose for their leaders.

Abad, J. (2013, 05 12). [Web log message]. Retrieved from http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/blogs/opinions/05/12/13/international-significance-philippine-elections

Commission on Elections, (2011). *Republic of the Philippines: Commission on Elections*.

Retrieved from website:

<http://www.comelec.gov.ph/?r=Elections/2013natloc/VoterReg/Requirements>

Commission on Elections, (2012). *Omnibus election code - article ix*. Retrieved from website: http://www.comelec.gov.ph/?r=laws/OmnibusElectionCode/OECArt9

Cortes, et. al. (2000). *The Filipino Saga: History as Social Change*. Quezon City: New Day

Publishers.

(2012). *Philippine government*. Retrieved from website: http://www.gov.ph/about/gov/