

Party switching in the philippine political agenda history essay



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Introduction

Party switching seems to be a trend in the Philippine political agenda.

Members of political groups tend to switch their loyalties to different parties, when they have the urge to do so or when the necessity comes. This so called party switching could also be coined as political turncoating.

Political turncoatism could be traced back from our history. This case study will aim to analyze the party turncoatism throughout the Philippine history. This will aim not only to explain the elitist and self-interest nature of politicians switching to different political parties, rather it will also explain other factors which influenced them to do so. Through a proper understanding within the nature of the political turncoatism in the country, the study also aims to strengthen its initial conclusions and findings through the use of a bill. Housebill 3655 is one important bill that needed to be focused on in this study. The nature and context of the Housebill is important, for it is the actual link and evidence of the eminent political turncoatism in the country. The Housebill 3655, an

This study will really aim to explain the reasons of the unchanging trend of turncoatism in the country through analyzing an actual bill in the country. It will also aim the political dynamics of turncoatism and the bill itself. It focuses on the bill and it will try to explain what the bill says about the current political party system here in our country.

Historical Development of the Political Parties and Turncoatism in the Philippines

According to Huggins and Turner (1997), “ parties have become the principal way in which demands and expectations in society can be expressed and channelled (p. 372).” Political parties play an important role in the government. In the Philippines, it can be seen that we have a multi party system present in the current political system. These political parties are very important in the decision-making and implementing processes here in the country. Due to this, it is inevitable politicians to switch on their loyalty and candidacy to different parties. We could observe this so called switching, or turncoatism, dating back from the previous years.

Before the colonial period, the country had a baranganic type of system, wherein we people are ruled by datus or chieftains. With this, we could say that there were no political parties formed yet during the era. Although, we could obtain an important element within the system that we had a few years ago. For Banlaoi and Carlos (1996), the chieftain playing the role of the padron, with the obligation to defend and advance the welfare of the commoner, shows the being clientelistic of the baranganic system. This moulding of clientelism in the political agenda is important in the later analysis of the paper.

With the colonialization of Spain, the baranganic system was merely abolished, but not completely in the whole country. According to Corpuz (as cited in Banlaoi & Carlos, 1996, p. 43), “ former barangay chieftains were coopted and converted into the principalia class assuming the position of either gobernadorcillo or cabeza de barangay whose function was

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predominantly those of tax collectors.” There has been a transition on the status becoming members of the so called “ principalia” class, and we could see that their rankings and job went down as tax collectors instead of rulers. Most of the members of the principalia class are linked to the colonizers, since they are granted to be in that class. However, importance of the establishment of *governadorcillos* should be noted. According to Banlaoi and Carlos (1996):

“ Electoral System was introduced in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial period. The position of *governadorcillo* became an elected office. But the introduction of an electoral system in the Philippines did not lead to the organization of political parties because the *governadorcillo* was not elected by the people. The *governadorcillo* was elected by an electoral board composed of the outgoing *governadorcillo* and twelve members of the principalia class. This elite-based electoral system hampered the development of political parties in the Philippines during the early part of the Spanish period especially during the 16th and 17th centuries (p. 43).”

Although the establishment of political parties happened during the Spanish era, the emergence of major parties occurred during the Early American colonial period. An American type of government was established and a different form of system was created.

Political parties with independence platform are banned because of the Sedition Law. Only the Partido Federal received strong American support due to its platform. It was reported that their membership reached 200, 000 in 1901 and was the most popular political organization in the country. Almost

all Filipinos appointed to offices are from the party (Banlaoi and Carlos, 1996). It is important to know that there are other parties formed within the said period. But because of having the American support of the Partido Federal, the other parties lasted shortly only.

Then turn the two-party system within the colonial period. With the rise of the two-parties, turncoatism became predominant. According to Banlaoi and Carlos (1996), Pedro Paterno, a former member of Partido Federal and a founder of Partido Liberal, also joined the Nacionalista party which emerged as a dominant party until 1947. Banlaoi & Carlos (1996) said that the other party, the National Progresista Party, was a reactivated Partido Federal, yet it did not gain much of the support what Partido Federal used to have.

Eventhough the Nacionalista Party was the dominant party during a number of years, it experienced crises too. Major conversions of political party happened. As what Banlaoi and Carlos (1996) said:

“ The first crises occurred in 1914 when some of its members, spear-headed by Teodoro Sandiko, bolted of the party to form Partido Democrate Nacional. The second crises happened in 1922 when Manuel Quezon, one of the very young leaders of the Nacionalista Party, organized Partido Nacionalista Collectivista (p. 65).”

The Partido Democrata Nacional’s members were former Nacionalistas. It became the “ third party” in the country. They accused Sergio Osmena, the president of Nacionalista, of authoritarianism and centralist leadership. They condemn the party and its leaders (Banlaoi and Carlos, 1996).

As what is stated earlier, another crisis of the Nacionalista Party was when Manuel Quezon organized Partido Nacionalista Collectivista. Banlaoi and Carlos (1996) described the Nacionalista Collectivista Party as Nacionalista Party Quezon Wing. It was said that Quezon accused Osmena “ of unipersonalist and undemocratic party leadership” (Banlaoi & Carlos, 1996, p. 67). Some Nacionalistas supported the cause of Quezon, and thus followers of Osmena and Quezon were soon described as Unipersonalistas and Collectivistas (Banlaoi and Carlos, 1996).

It is important to take note on the “ crisis” of the Nacionalista Party. As what Banlaoi and Carlos (1996) concluded that “ the split of Nacionalista Party was not brought about by opposing principles or ideologies and that the major factor that caused the division of the party was the question of who would govern the country (p. 68).” Through it, we were to see that opposing principles are not only the main reasons why the officials switch their parties during that period.

During the commonwealth period, the Quezon and Osmena Wings of the Nacionalista party were reunited. Thus it became the dominant party during the period with Quezon as the president and Osmena as the vice (Banlaoi and Carlos, 1996). The authors added that, during the commonwealth period Quezon adopted a strong presidency, thus weakening party activity.

Minor parties are also active during the commonwealth period. But Banlaoi and Carlos (1996) asserted that these minor parties were organized and to adopt a common policy and platform that would challenge the dominant

party, which is the Nacionalista Party. It should be noted that some of the minor parties were created by former members of the majority parties.

The Commonwealth period was interrupted by Japanese intervention in the country. As what our history tells us, the mark of Japanese Invasion was the mark of a new regime and ruling powers in the country. Banlaoi and Carlos (1996) said that parties led to voluntary dissolution during the Japanese occupation and it led to the rise of KALIBAPI that was created by Japanese Administration with former Nacionalistas as the leaders.

We can see that there had been transitions between the different parties during the different periods. First, we saw the dominance of a one-party system, the Partido Federal, which is backed up by the American government. With the decline, of the dominant Partido Federal, there had been an immediate emergence of a two-party system. The two-party system had been dominant in a number of years and because it had been active for quite a time, members of these groups tend to switch, create or split their own parties. With some members of groups making their own parties, this led to a multi-party system before the Japanese occupation period. However, we also encountered earlier that the other newly created wings or split of their own parties soon merged as one again. Eventhough there had been a weaking in the party system in the Quezon regime, the most weakening point of the multi-parties would be during the Japanese occupation. With the Japanese occupying the country, the multi-parties dissolved, and the dominance of a ' one-party' happened again in the history. With KALIBAPI backing up by the Japanese, some former Nacionalistas shifted their support to the dominant party during that period and they played an important role

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in the Philippine history. With this kind of trending in the party system in the Philippines, it is inevitable to have the same cases in the following years.

Banlaoi and Carlos (1996) proved that during the independence period, 1946-1972, the two major political parties (Liberal and revived Nacionalista Party) competed for political supremacy although there were minor parties present during the post war period. Thus, we had a two-party system again in our history. Then there has been a split again in one party during in 1949. Banlaoi and Carlos (1996) added that the Liberal Party- Avelino wing and Liberal Party-Quirino wing was created. If we were to look at this split of the Liberal Party into different wings, we had the same encounter during the Nacionalistas split in Quezon and Osmena wing. The reasons of split in the Nacionalistas may be the same in the Liberal period. As what Banlaoi and Carlos concluded in the Nacionalista party split – that the split was about who would govern the country – it may hold the same truth in the Liberal Party split. Again if we were to look in the previous trends, we could see that there would be a merge again between the two wings. This is proved by the writing of Banlaoi and Carlos (1996); during the Quirino period, the president made the move to reunite the Liberal Party. The two major parties still became the dominant parties until the mid-way of the Marcos regime. The two parties had a shift of dominance in those periods. Former president Marcos, according to Banlaoi and Carlos (1996), was the standard bearer of the Nacionalista party, however, during the Martial Law period there had been a revival in the one-party politics and it is the dominance of his organized Kilusang Bagong Lipunan, or KBL. However, it is important to know that there are still minor parties within those periods, and that their number has increased, but they remained not dominant in the political arena. After <https://assignbuster.com/party-switching-in-the-philippine-political-agenda-history-essay/>

the long reign of the Marcos regime, it is important to take note the regime that followed him, the Aquino period. Banlaoi and Carlos (1996) said that the former president Corazon Aquino replaced the constitution and this provided the establishment of a multi-party system in the Philippines. It was during the Aquino period, that multi-parties gained dominance in the political arena and that the position was not easily determined by a one or two party system. This kind of trend, the multi party-system, follows until the present Benigno Aquino Jr. regime.

The historical context of the switching of dominance and membership of political parties is important for the succeeding analysis of the political turncoatism in the Philippines. It will support our claims and it will help us develop an understanding better regarding the said issue.

Analyzing turncoatism through the nature of Political Parties

A. Composition of Political Parties

Elitist Nature of Political Parties

Lande (1964) discussed that “ in the Philippines as elsewhere parties led by the wealthy give considerably greater attention to the needs of the rich than those of the petty village elite or those of the common tao”. If we were to look at the membership of the political parties, we could see that mostly those who are active or having major contributions are the rich. As we saw earlier in the historical context, this kind of elitist system probably emerged in during the Spanish era. However, the rich does not compromise the whole membership in political parties.

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It should be understood that looking at the elitist nature of the parties are not enough to explain turncoatism at large. The elitist nature of the political parties gives way to an explanation on the rampant patron-client relationship within the system.

Patron-Client relationship

B. Interest within Political Parties

Personal motives and ties

Political convenience

Party sponsored candidacy and election financing

C. Representation of Political Parties

Duties

Responsibilities

D. Legal Framework Influence

The Party-List Law

Constitution

E. Failure of minor parties

F. Media, business and foreign intervention

Media

Business

Foreign Intervention