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Adventures in Political Science, by Agpalo

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Adventures in Political Science. By Remigio E. Agpalo. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1992. 357 pages.

Studies on the social and political systems have earlier been made by David Easton, Gabriel Almond, Talcott Parsons and Karl Deustsch, among others. Theories have been developed in order to determine the relationship between the social system and the political system, the structures and the processes that will enable the system to survive and pursue its goals.

Dr. Remigio E. Agpalo, author of this book has taken steps in several of his "adventures" towards a profound analysis of the Philippine social and political systems by adapting universal concepts to the Philippine context. His "pandanggo sa ilaw politics," "Pangulo Regime," and Philippine interest groups, among others, are unique contributions to the broadening of knowledge of Filipino politics and political culture.

This book deals with diverse areas of political science such as political theory, political dynamics, political culture and comparative politics. Yet, the dominant theme of this book centers on political modernization and political development. Perhaps, the highlight of this book is Agpalo's conceptualization of the Pangulo Regime.

The "Pangulo Regime" appears to be the answer to the author's search for an appropriate government that can best achieve the societal goals of political modernization and political development for the Filipinos. Apparently, the rapid pace of modernization undertaken by modernizing societies like the Philippines has caused several crises. One such crisis in government questions the capability of governments patterned after the West to respond to the needs, conditions and culture of these societies (p. 167). In the Philippines, this skepticism resulted in the Constitutional Convention in 1972.

Agpalo's Pangulo type of government is a remedial version of both the American presidential and the British parliamentary forms of government (p. 167). It is a constitutional and democratic regime (p. 175). Its democratization results from the organic-hierarchical nature of the Philippine social system that provides for the "incorporation" of liberal elements, a tradition that dates as far back as the Propaganda Period until the proclamation of martial law (p. 132). The government is further characterized by a strong executive (pp. 173-74), apparently even stronger than the French presidential-parliamentary model or the Philippine hybrid developed in 1981.

The Pangulo is the highest in the hierarchy of the entire social and political systems. He is equipped with a power similar to the late President Marcos' Amendment No. 6 which allowed the executive to legislate during martial law and during emergency situations, and henceforth, to enforce these laws even after martial rule has been lifted. He is likewise vested with the power to determine the guidelines of national policy and the power to veto laws without the legislative check of a counter veto and non-confidence vote (p. 174). Yet the Pangulo is a "father" more than an aloof leader

(p. 142). As an ideal leader, he has a working ideology to guide his program of government and a strong party organization to support his legislative agenda. This is characteristic of what Agpalo calls a "Supremo" leader (p. 204). Apparently, Marcos was the author's prototype leader for the "Pangulo Regime."

A deliberate disregard and neglect of the native political culture has resulted in failed governments among former colonized societies. At this point in time, the author prescribes a cultural framework that will look into the nature of Philippine politics and society and its relationship with effective government.

The organic-hierarchical paradigm of society is used to analyze the Philippine body politic. Taking culture and historical experience into consideration, this paradigm becomes significant as it views Philippine society in terms of human body composed of parts—the political elite and the people—who are hierarchical yet very much interdependent (p. 132). Because Philippine society is hierarchical, politics based on personality and patronage has been prevalent. Coined by the author as "*pandanggo sa ilaw*" politics, this resembles the manipulative as well as the graceful movements of politicians who compete for power in the political arena (p. 86). Furthermore, it is also the hierarchical characteristic of Philippine society that makes a "Pangulo Regime" most appropriate. On the other hand, the organic attribute of the polity tempers the "Pangulo Regime" by making it more humane. This is also made possible by "*pagdamay*" a value inherent in the body politic (p. 172).

However, it must be noted that a change in the physical set-up of government does not guarantee a solution to the problems that hinder the attainment of societal goals. Today, the motion to change our present government to the British parliamentary model is currently being debated in Congress. Using a cultural perspective, we can conclude that the relative successes of the American and British governments may be attributed to their political cultures. This has resulted in the continuity of their governments despite occasional crises in society.

Using the same perspective, the organic-hierarchical nature of Philippine society necessitates a "Pangulo Regime." This is a very strong type of government that abolishes legislative checks that cause stalemates in the policymaking processes in presidential governments. Yet, this type of government, being a constitutional one, is bound by the Bill of Rights and an independent judiciary. Therefore, the Pangulo government is strong but it is constitutional and humane. The Marcos government very closely approximates the Pangulo Regime. As a constitutional authoritarian government, it was bound by the 1973 Constitution which was amended several times, primarily to legitimize the regime.

Nevertheless, the Marcos government failed to attain the goals of political modernization and political development. First, it failed to provide for

an equitable distribution of wealth among the populace. Second, the concentration of power to the person of Marcos immobilized the Bill of Rights and reduced the political independence of the judiciary. Hence, our experience under the Marcos' twenty-year dictatorial rule only affirmed the ill effects of a very strong executive.

The present (1987) Constitution provides for a limited government. Nevertheless, nowhere in the Constitution is the power of executive prerogative explicitly provided for. As such, the executive, by virtue of his position, is empowered to exercise his prerogative to implement government programs and policies. Here lies the essence of a strong leadership. It comes with the ability of the executive to continually build a political organization to enable him to bargain and deal with his party mates and political opponents in Congress within the limits of power vested in him. Perhaps, it also refers to the ability of the executive to rise above politics when the situation demands for it. Ultimately, however the success of any kind of government will also depend on the collective will of people in society.

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