

Much Ado about Nothing? : Clan Politics and Term Limit in the Philippines

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Introduction

The Philippines is one of the few countries in the world that prohibit unlimited re-election of national-level legislators. Aside from the Philippines, Costa Rica and Mexico are the only two other such cases. At the sub-national level, 22 states in the United States introduced term limits on their legislators. The term-limit rule in the Philippines was instituted in the 1987 Constitution, which was ratified after the 1986 democratization. Under the current rule, House of Representatives members can only serve up to three consecutive terms, or 9 years. For Senators, they can serve up to two consecutive terms or 12 years.¹ The main intention of Constitutional framers to introduce legislative term limit was to reduce “clan politics,” namely, the concentration of power in the hands of politically prominent families. Has this intension being served by the term-limit rule? In other words, has the term-limit rule helped dismantle clan politics in the Philippines? This is the question addressed in this paper.

Although a considerable amount of studies already exists on the legislative term limits in other countries, (e.g. Carey 1998; Carey et al. 2000; Sarbaugh-Thompson et al. 2004; Kousser 2005), very few scholarly investigation has been done on the Philippine case so far. Available information is mostly journalistic in nature, reporting anecdotal stories that sons, daughters, and wives of legislators replacing them when they faced the three-term limits.² This lack of systematic study on Philippines’s legislative term limit does not mean

¹ In addition, the president can only serve one six-year term.

² One important exception is Coronel et al. 2004. This study is not focused on the effects of term limits, but provides systematic analyses of clan politics in post-Marcos era. Another exception is Teehankee (2001), which assesses that clan politics is unaffected by term limits.

that this question is unimportant. On the contrary, this topic addresses several issues that warrant serious investigation. First, it provides some basis for the debates about constitutional reform in the Philippines. So far, the major issue in the debate has been whether to adopt a presidential or parliamentary forms of government (e.g. Abueva et al. 2002). Lifting of legislative term limit is not going to be an issue if parliamentarism is adopted. However, when the terms of amendment debate are within the framework of presidentialism, as many of the recent discussions are framed in that manner, the lifting of legislative term limit is one of the proposed amendments (e.g. Quezon III 2008). The findings of this paper will provide some basis for judgment for policy-makers on this aspect of constitutional reform debate. Second, this question is important as it is one of the ways to explore the quality of democracy in contemporary Philippines. As discussed below, Philippine politics has traditionally characterized as clan or family dominated. By studying how the clan politics has been affected (or unaffected) by the term-limit rule, it provides understandings about the continuity and/or change of political landscape in the Philippines.

The central finding of the paper is that term limit is not entirely “useless” in curbing the clan dominance, counter to the popular notion that it has been ineffective.³ It is true that sons, daughters, and wives of the outgoing incumbents very frequently (about 50% of the time) enter the race and win. However, statistics show that clan members were not as strong as the incumbents in electoral competition. Incumbents have about 13% higher probability of winning than the clan-member candidates of the outgoing incumbents. Since the term limit rule creates a larger number of open seats, its presence *per se* increases the

³ For such evaluation, see Datinguino and Olarte (2001) and Teehankee (2001).

chances of new comers to enter the race and win, therefore creating a more open space for competition. In this concern, the term limit rule has indirect impact on curving clan politics through creating a larger number of open seats. The paper also found that clan members had a higher chance of winning in poorer districts, suggesting that the poverty is one of the causes of clan dominance. Another interesting finding was that legislators who belong to political clans were actually more interested in national issues than district-level needs, in comparison to their counterpart who do not belong to political clans. Also, clam members have more liberal political attitudes than non-clan members regardless of their age.

In the following, I first provide some backgrounds about political clans in the Philippines and how the introduction of the term-limit rule came about. The second section analyzes the term limit's impact on the electoral arena by comparing the term-limited and non-term limited districts. The third section studies whether legislators who belong to political clan and those who do not have any difference in terms of their political attitude, based on the mail survey I conducted in 2006. The conclusion part discusses implication my findings.

1. Backgrounds

1.1 Clan Politics

The resilience of “political clans” or “political families” has been one of the fundamental characteristics of Philippine politics since the American colonial period up to the present. Political clan is “a family and its extended relations or network, whose members have controlled for over a long period (twenty or more years) the formal elective

posts in a locality” (Gutierrez et al. 1992: 8).⁴ In the Philippine Studies, political clans, political family and political dynasty are the terms used interchangeably. Conventionally, the basic political unit of Philippine politics has been thought to be the clans, but not the individual, class, or political parties. Reflecting this situation, many scholars have studied the dynamics of clan politics in the Philippines (e.g., Landé 1965; McCoy 1994; Sidel 1997, 1999; Roces 2001; Coronel et al. 2004; Simbulan 2005).

The endurance of clan politics can be understood by looking into the supply side and demand side. For the supply side, clan’s dominance has been maintained by the use of state resources. Under the American occupation that started in 1899, the colonial government designed to set the state structure in which elected officials are given substantial power (Hutchcroft 2000). The state was “strong” in the sense that the state resources were formidable vis-à-vis the private sector (Sidel 1999), although it was “weak” from a Weberian viewpoint which assesses the state strength based on the bureaucratic competence. As Sidel (1994: 112) writes: “The availability of electoral positions has allowed *hacenderos* throughout the archipelago to set up their scions as town mayors, congressmen, and provincial governors, to such an extent that political office remains seemingly inherited or passed along within the family. Moreover, the patrimonial nature of the state apparatus has encouraged such “political clans” to accumulate, expand, and upgrade their proprietary wealth through privileged access to contracts, concessions, licenses, and behest loans.” This mechanism of rent-seeking allowed them to establish solid

⁴ See also Collins 2004 for the concept of clan and other related concepts. For a list of prominent political family, see Teehankee 2000 for overview, Simbulan 2005: 305-322 for the pre-Marcos era, and Co et al. 2005:11 for the post-Marcos era.

economic base, which was then used to finance their political activities.

As for the demand side of the clan persistence, clans have been indispensable to organize electoral campaigning. Elections in the country started in early 20th century, which was relatively early compared to other colonized non-Western countries. The first election for the national legislature was held in 1907, and by 1935, Filipino voters elected their own president. Since the beginning of the election under the American occupation up until today, Philippine electoral politics has been characterized as “patronage driven.” What this means is that the provision of material inducements to voters was the major determinant of electoral outcome. And it was local political clans that organized political machines to distribute patronage to the grass-roots voters for presidential and senatorial candidates. In some occasions, clans used coercion to influence voter’s choices (Sidel 1999). Political parties did exist, but these parties were amalgamation of political clans and did not control machines.

While the prevalence of clan dominance has been a persistent feature in the Philippines, it does not mean that a particular set of clans always dominate. There have been rises and falls. Typically, when a clan only relies on state resources but fails to create its own economic base, once it is cut off from the state patronage, its machine quickly dissolves (Sidel 1994). The “old” clans emerged from the landed elites, and replaced by those who had close association with President Marcos during the authoritarian regime. In the wake of 1987 democratization, yet a new set of clans came to prominence, those who were active in anti-Marcos movement.

Despite some changes in the prominent names over time, clans have persisted in

the Philippine political landscape. Once political power is gained by one clan, that power is used to accumulate family wealth and prominence, which is then used to gain electoral posts, and then the cycle continues. One obvious result of persistence of clan politics is the concentration of power in the hands of clans. It was against this background that the term-limit rule was introduced.

1. 2. Term Limit

The Philippines's term limit on legislators was instituted in the wake of democratic transition. At the time of regime change from Marcos to Aquino in 1986, there was an enthusiasm to alter the traditional forms of elite-dominated politics, and to open space to ordinary Filipinos. Such desire was reflected in the provisions of the newly drafted Constitution, which was ratified in 1987. The 1987 Constitution includes the so-called "pro-people power provisions" which mandates the State "to guarantee equal access to opportunities for public service, and prohibit political dynasties as may be denied by law" (The Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines n.d.: Section 26, Article II).⁵ In accordance with these general guidelines, the Constitution introduced term limits on legislators, which read: "No member of the House of Representatives shall serve for more than three consecutive terms" (ibid: Section 7, Article VI). This means that a House

⁵ No law has passed to ban political dynasties yet in the Philippines. In Costa Rica's Constitution, there is a more specific provision that reads: "Relatives of the person who is then holding office as President of the Republic, to the second degree of consanguinity or affinity inclusive may not be elected." (Constitution of Costa Rica n.d.: Title IX, Chapter 1, Article 109).

member can only serve 9 consecutive years, and have to sit out at least once term before he or she can run for office again.

The intention of Constitutional Convention members to limit terms of legislators was to prevent monopoly of political power by political clans. In the words of Commissioner Garcia, “history has shown that prolonged stay in public office can lead to the creation of entrenched preserves of political dynasties.”⁶ The Constitutional Commissioners were concerned with the heavy advantage of incumbent in winning elections which was the main source of clan dominance. Thus by introducing term-limit rule, they wanted to relinquish the incumbent advantage and as an extension the control of politics at a locality by the same political clans. During the deliberation, there was also a proposal of a life-time ban after serving three consecutive terms, but this idea was not adopted in the final plenary voting. In the final version, members agreed that the House members who served three terms can run again after resting at least for three years.

At the superficial level, the term-limit rule under the new Constitution did increase the legislative turnover. Table 1 shows the overview of turnover at the House of Representatives. It reports the number of terms consecutively served by House members from the 6th Congress (1965-1969) to the 13th Congress (2004-2007). It reveals that before the term limit was imposed, there were some legislators who served as long as 6 terms (24 years). During the 1960s, about 20 percent of legislators served more than three consecutive terms. In the post-Marco era, the term-limit rule started affecting politicians in

⁶ Republic of the Philippines, *Record of the Constitutional Commission: Proceedings and Debates*, Vol.2, July 25, 1986, p. 236.

the 1998 election, and since then, the percentage of first term legislator has increased to about 60 percent.

Table 1 Number of Terms Served by the House Members, 1965-2004 (percentage in parentheses)

No. of terms	6th 1965	7th 1969	8 th 1987	9 th 1992	10 th 1995	11th 1998	12th 2001	13th 2004
1 term	50 (49.0)	52 (47.7)	194 (100.0)	95 (47.7)	51 (25.1)	130 (62.5)	129 (62.0)	109 (51.9)
2 terms	18 (17.6)	26 (23.9)		104 (52.3)	70 (34.5)	31 (14.9)	32 (15.4)	78 (37.1)
3 terms	13 (12.7)	8 (7.3)			82 (40.4)	47 (22.6)	47 (22.6)	23 (10.9)
4 terms	13 (12.7)	9 (8.3)						
5 terms	7 (6.9)	9 (8.3)						
6 terms	1 (1.0)	5 (4.6)						
Total	102	109	194	199	203	208	208	210

Source: Compiled by the author based on COMELEC Reports.

Note: Above figures are slightly different from the data shown in Coronel et al. 2001, p.17. Unlike Coronel et al.'s, my data do not include the terms served under the Philippine Legislature, the Commonwealth Legislature, Interim as well as Regular *Batasan Pambansa*.

Despite the apparent increase in the turnover rate, above statistics does not tell us to what extent clan members replace the predecessors. If the “new face” belongs to the same political family of the predecessor, in effect it does not mean that the power was decentralized as intended by the Constitutional framers. In this concern, this paper studies the following set of questions: To what extent are the term-limited incumbents replaced by someone from the same clan? Does the competitiveness of election change due to the presence of clan-member candidate? Under what conditions do clan members more likely to win? Do clan members, once elected, have different attitudes as legislators than non-clan members once they are elected? Section 2 deals with the first three questions that pertain to

electoral politics, and the fourth question, which concerns legislative arena, is investigated in Section 3.

In analyzing these questions, the availability of data permits me only to compare the clan- and non-clan legislators in the post-EDSA period. As such, my analyses do not compare the clan politics before and after the 1986 regime transition. Also, this paper is limited to the study of the clan members of the incumbent legislators. It lacks the analyses of political clans that did not field incumbent legislator at the time the data was taken.

2. Electoral Arena

Table 2 reports the extent to which clan members run when incumbents do not run, either because they were banned by the term limit provision, or just decided not to run. The table is based on the data compiled by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ; Coronel et al. 2004 in CD-ROM). The “clan member” here refers to the spouse, child, parent, or relative of the incumbent legislator as coded by the PCIJ database. There may be the case that non-incumbent (challenger) might field his/her clan member in the next election, but this information is not coded in the PCIJ database thus not analyzed.

Comparing the term limited and non-term limited districts, the table suggests that there is no significant difference in the degree of entry by the incumbent’s clan members. The percentage of clan member’ entry is almost the same. In the 2001 election, 50% in both types of districts had clan member entry. In 2004, 57.7% among the term-limited districts and 59.4% among the non-term-limited districts saw the clan members of the outgoing incumbents running. At the same time, the success rate of clan members does not show

Note: Actual numbers are in the parentheses.

Has electoral competitiveness changed due to the entry of clan members? Table 3 reports several measures of electoral competitiveness by district type, which include the raw number of candidates, the effective number of candidates (Laakso and Taggepera 1979), and the margin of winning. The larger the raw number and effective number of candidates, the more competitive the electoral race is. Also, the larger the margin of winning, less competitive the race (i.e., single candidate dominate the race). Districts are classified first between those where the incumbent is not running (open seats) and those where the incumbents run (non-open seats). Among the open seat districts, I divided those where the incumbent faced term limits, and those where the incumbent did not. I then divided, for each category, districts where a clan member of the incumbent run, and those where a clan member did not enter.

Table 3 Electoral Competitiveness by District Type

		Open Seats								Non-open seats (incumbent run)	
		Term-limited Districts				Non-term-limited Districts					
		Clan-run Districts		No-clan-run Districts		Clan-run Districts		No-clan-run Districts			
		2001	2004	2001	2004	2001	2004	2001	2004		
Raw Number of Candidates	Average	4.7	3.2	4.2	3.0	2.7	3.3	3.5	3.6	2.8	2.8
	Median	4.0	3.0	4.0	3.0	2.0	3.5	3.0	3.5	3.0	3.0
	Standard deviation	2.7	2.2	2.7	1.2	1.1	1.6	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Minimum	2.0	0.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	0.0	0.0
	Maximum	15.0	9.0	14.0	5.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	10.0	9.0
	# of obs.	27	13	22	7	18	10	17	10	123	129
Effective Number of Candidates	Average	2.3	2.1	2.7	2.2	2.1	1.9	2.1	2.3	1.9	1.8
	Median	2.0	2.0	2.4	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.2	1.9	1.8
	Standard deviation	0.5	0.8	1.1	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.5
	Minimum	1.8	1.0	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.0	1.0
	Maximum	3.3	4.0	5.9	2.9	3.1	2.8	3.4	3.6	5.9	3.6
	# of obs.	22	13	19	7	16	10	14	10	98	129
Margin of Winning	Average (%)	20.2	33.0	16.2	26.1	19.1	39.6	29.8	24.7	33.3	44.3
	Median (%)	20.8	23.2	13.2	14.7	11.6	28.2	18.8	10.7	26.2	35.2
	Standard deviation	9.7	33.1	14.0	26.2	20.6	35.8	26.1	30.4	27.2	32.0
	Minimum (%)	0.1	0.5	1.0	0.9	1.0	4.1	1.5	4.5	2.3	1.7
	Maximum (%)	41.7	100.0	61.7	69.3	74.1	100.0	90.4	85.4	100.0	100.0
	# of obs.	22	13	19	7	16	10	14	10	98	129

Source: Same as Table 2.

First, let us compare the open seats and non-open seats. Table 3 indicates that when incumbents run, the competition is less tight: the raw number of candidates, the effective number of candidates are lower on average in the districts where incumbents run than where incumbents are not in the race. At the same time, the margin of winning is higher in non-open seats than in open seats. Given that the most of the winners in the non-open seats are the incumbents (re-election rate being around 80 to 90%), the presence of incumbent in the race deter the entry of other candidates. In this regard, term limits inevitably increases the number of open seats, which in turn increases the electoral competition. Second, if we compare the term limited and non-term limited districts, there is little significant difference. The raw number of candidates, the effective number of candidates, and the margin of winning is more or less the same between the two categories.

Third, comparing clan-run districts and non-clan run districts, again, Table 3 does not show significant difference. The raw number of candidates, the effective number of candidates, and the margin of winning is more or less the same between the two categories for both term limited and non-term limited districts. What this suggests is that even in the presence of clan member entry, other aspirants are not really deterred to enter. It can be analyzed that this is because the clan member lacks the history of winning, although he or she carries the family name and may have the support of the clan-based machinery.

Table 4 Clan Candidates' Entry and District's Socio-economic Level

Type of District	Clan Member Run				Clan Member did not Run			
	Income		Expenditure		Income		Expenditure	
	2001	2004	2001	2004	2001	2004	2001	2004
Average	150,642	139,972	123,467	118,124	129,724	171,690	107,626	143,021
Median	110,114	110,114	98,289	96,209	106,737	138,067	89,183	118,402
Standard Deviation	86,680	76,261	72,290	64,814	89,044	104,762	73,352	92,239
Minimum	78,409	61,609	63,237	54,184	67,104	61,609	54,698	54,184
Maximum	393,082	393,082	354,918	354,918	534,702	393,082	423,023	354,918
No. of Obs.	41	27	41	27	39	28	39	28

Note: The unit of analysis is at the household level and the income and expenditure is annual figures in Philippine pesos.

Source: Compiled by the author based on PCIJ data (Coronel et al. 2004) and the Family Census of the Philippines (National Statistics Office 2000).

Table 5 Clan Candidates' Electoral Success and District's Socio-economic Level

Type of District	Clan Member Won				Clan Member did not Win			
	Income		Expenditure		Income		Expenditure	
	2001	2004	2001	2004	2001	2004	2001	2004
Average	139,364	136,483	115,307	116,385	168,264	152,186	136,217	124,211
Median	110,057	110,114	97,647	91,900	131,280	127,068	104,148	106,450
Standard Deviation	80,731	79,771	67,618	69,128	95,207	67,517	79,598	51,694
Minimum	79,770	61,609	63,237	54,184	78,409	85,240	64,411	69,586
Maximum	393,082	393,082	354,918	354,918	393,082	256,152	354,918	195,084
No. of Obs.	25	21	25	21	16	6	16	6

Source: Same as Table 5.

Next, let us investigate the types of districts where clan members are more likely to enter and win. Table 4 differentiates the districts where clan members run and those that they did not run, and reports the level of annual household income and expenditure of the province where the district in question is located. In the case of Table 5, it differentiates the districts between those where clan members won and those where they did not win. These statistics are taken at the level of the province where the district in question is located. Comparing these two tables, it suggests that there is not much difference in terms of the level of socio-economic development that differentiates whether clan member enter or not. But, when it comes to whether a clan member can win or not, he or she has a higher likelihood of winning if running in a poorer district. The median household annual income is about 20,000 pesos (USD 400) lower among the districts where clan member won. The reason for this result can be that poorer voters are more prone to vote for a member of a clan that controls provision of material benefits. In this regard, one can conclude that poverty is one of the causes of perpetuation of clan politics.

To summarize this section, one can say that the term limit has some indirect impacts on curbing clan politics. My analyses showed that it did not affect the entry of clan members: either with or without term limit, clan members of the incumbents enter about 50% of the time. However, in terms of electoral competitiveness, the term limit rule per se increased the number of open seats where no incumbents run. These open seats allowed the entry of larger number of entrants, although about half of them were clan members of the outgoing incumbents. Since the winning rate of clan members were about 13% lower than

that of the incumbent running for re-election, the term limit rule, by creating a larger number of open seats, contribute to make elections more open to new comers and more competitive. This section also found that clan members have better chances of winning in districts where the level of socio-economic development is lower, suggesting that one of the causes of clan dominance is poverty.

3. Legislative Arena

This section examines politician's attitudes in legislative arena. I compare the attitudes of clan and non-clan legislators on several dimensions based on the mail survey I conducted among the House members in 2006. The sample size is 70 in most survey questions, which amounts to 30% response rate. The classification of clan or non-clan legislators is based on respondent's own assessment to the survey question on political clan.⁷

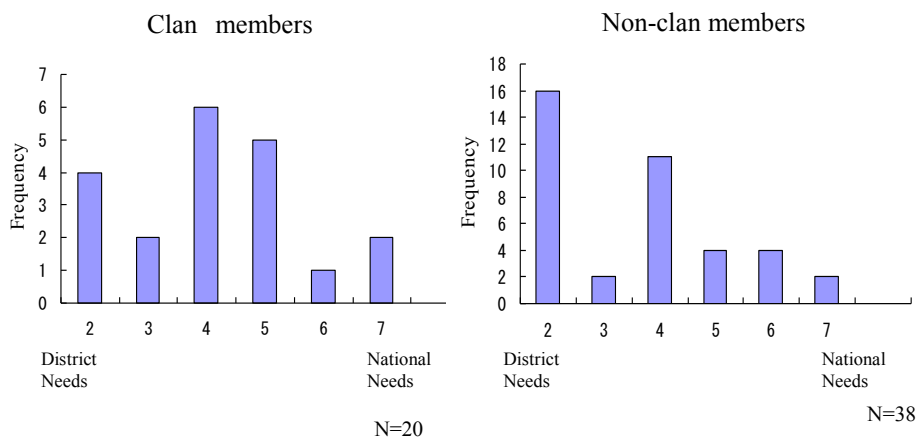
The first question concerns the attitude of legislators in terms of allocation of their attention, whether they are more concerned with the district needs or national needs. It can be expected that clan-member legislators are more likely to care about their district needs than national needs, since maintaining and expanding the local clan influence can be their foremost concern. The result is reported in Figure 1. It reveals that non-clan members are more concerned with their district matters than clan members. Forty-one percent of non-clan legislators answered that their primary interests are the district needs, while only twenty percent of clan-members answered to be so. One may think that this difference may

⁷ The question asked was: Do you consider yourself a member of "political clan"?

be the result of age difference, clan members being younger on average, since being young can be less parochial than older members of the House. However, the average age of clan legislators is 57 years old, while that of non-clan members is 54 years old. At the same time, one might think that clan members come from urban districts than non-clan members, thus show more interest in national affairs. On this aspect, again, difference appears negligible. On the survey question asking about respondents' district characteristics (1 = highly rural, 5 = highly urban), the average score for clan members is 2.7, and that for non-clan members is 2.5. This means that clan members on average come from districts located somewhat more urban locations, but the degree of difference appears to be marginal. It can be analyzed that clan politicians can afford to be less concerned with their districts since their local support base is more solid than non-clan legislators, while non-clan members are more pressed to attend district needs to build up their machines.

Figure 1 Role as a Legislator

Q. Do you feel you should be primarily concerned with looking after the needs of your district, or the needs of the county as a whole? (1=district, 7= nation)

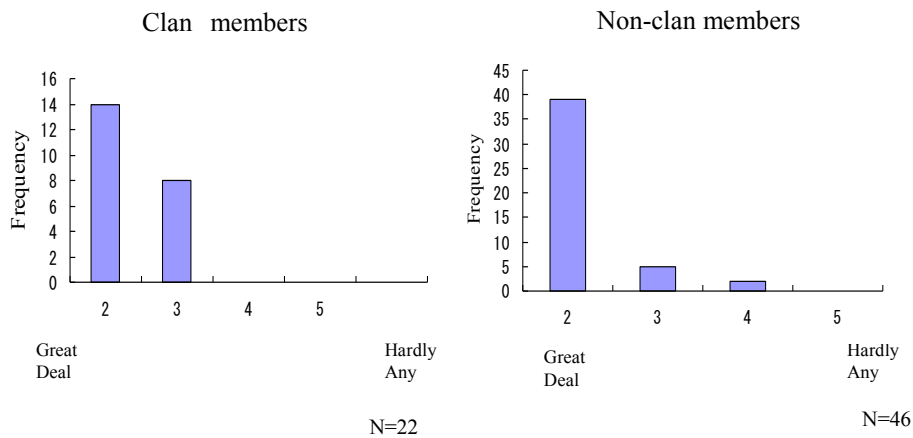


Source: Compiled based on mail survey conducted by the author

The next two questions concern legislators' efforts in legislation of bills. Figure 2 reports on the question asking to what extent a legislator studies proposed legislation, and Figure 3 addresses the question about to what extent a legislator spends in developing a new legislation. One can expect that clan-members have less interest in studying proposed bills and/or developing new bills of their own since their political survival would depend less on legislative records than records on providing patronage to constituents. The results show that there is little discernible difference between the two groups. Most legislators in both categories answered that they spend considerable efforts in studying and proposing bills.

Figure 2 Studying Legislation

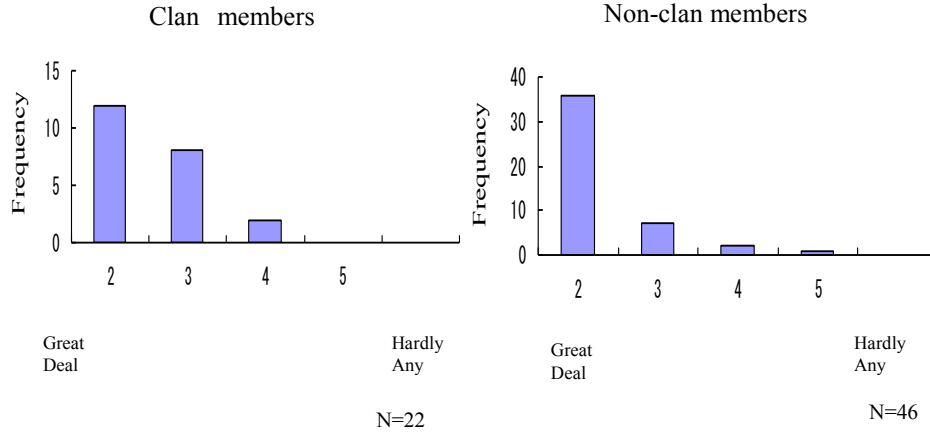
Q. How much time do you spend on studying proposed legislation?
(1=great deal, 5=hardly any)



Source: Same as Figure 1

Figure 3 Developing New Legislation

Q. How much time do you spend on developing new legislation?
(1=great deal, 5=hardly any)

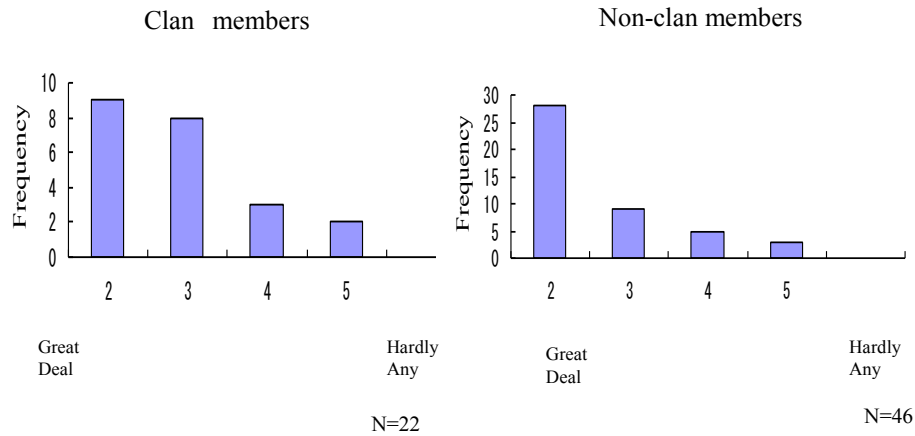


Source: Same as Figure 1

The next two questions also examine legislator’s efforts in legislation, this time asking about their involvement in intra- and inter-party legislative coalition making. Figure 4 reports on the within-party efforts to form alliance to pass legislation, and Figure 5 is about the inter-party coalition efforts. Again, expectation is that clan-members have less interest in making efforts in coalition building since their political survival would depend less on legislative records than on patronage provision. The results show that there is little difference between the two groups. Most legislators in both categories spend some extent of efforts (no one answered “great deal”) in studying and proposing bills.

Figure 4 Building Coalition within the Party

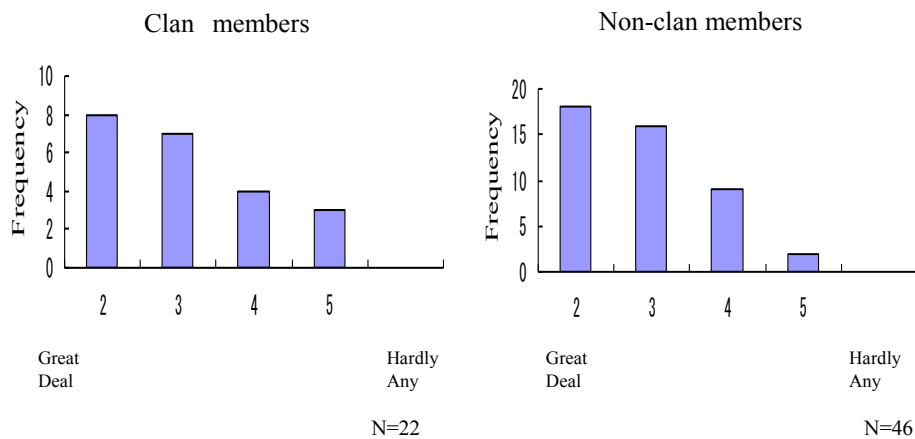
Q. How much time do you spend on building coalition within your party?
(1=great deal, 5=hardly any)



Source: Same as Figure 1

Figure 5 Building Coalition across Parties

Q. How much time do you spend on building coalition across parties?
(1=great deal, 5=hardly any)



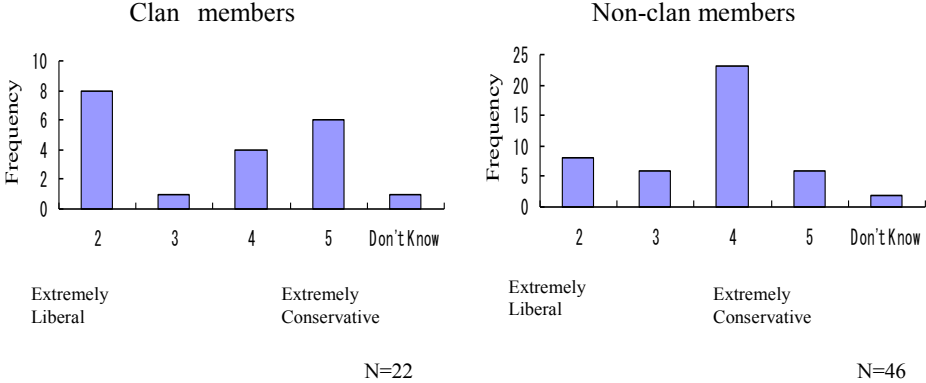
Source: Same as Figure 1

The next question is about the political views of legislators in liberal-conservative scale. The question asked respondents to locate their political stance in liberal-conservative

scale. While the survey sheet did not have the space to specify the exact meaning of liberal and conservative, in the general usage of the term, being liberal can mean an attitudes that is tolerant of reforms, values individual freedom, and being conservative can imply the support for status quo. Here, expectation is that clan members can be more conservative since they would be more interested in maintaining the status quo, than non-clan members. The result, however, reveals the opposite. Figure 6 shows that clan members tend to be more liberal than non-clan members. Again, this difference cannot be traced to the age difference or due to the difference in their district characteristics (urban versus rural), as discussed earlier.

Figure 6 Political Views

Q. How would you describe your political views?
 (1= extremely liberal, 5= extremely conservative)



Source: Same as Figure 1

To summarize, survey results reveal that clan members are not any more parochial or lazy than non-clan members. The extent to which clan members are concerned with

national issues, rather than their district needs, is higher than those who do not belong to political families. Their efforts in legislation, in terms of studying and preparing bills and making intra- and inter-party legislative alliance is done about the same extent as non-clan legislators. Moreover, clan members have more liberal attitudes than non-clan members. Based on these results, one implication is that political representation may be dominated by clan members in the Philippines, its substantial effects, at least at the level of legislative process, may be indifferent to the case of representation by non-clan members.

Conclusion

Did the term-limit rule have some impact on reducing clan politics in the Philippines as intended by the Constitutional framers? Many have argued it miserably failed (e.g. Datinguino and Olarte 2001; Teehankee 2001). Based on the evidence shown in this paper, my assessment is that it had some indirect effect for the purpose. As many casual observers observed, many clan members entered election and won, either with or without the term limit. In comparing the term limited and non-term limited districts, this paper showed that clan members run almost at the same rate anyway, and the success rate of clan members did not show systematic difference in either type of districts. However, term limit rule inevitably increased the number of open seats (where incumbents were not in the race). For open seat districts, there were a larger number of entrants and the competition was tighter, than in the districts where the incumbent was running. Also, while the clan members of the outgoing incumbents were in the race about 50% of the time, the chances of winning for those clan members were about 13% lower than when the incumbents were

running for re-election. This means that other non-clan candidates have a higher chance of winning in an open-seat district while the incumbent dominates the race when he runs for re-election. In this regard, while clan politics still continues, the term limit rule, by virtue of creating a larger number of open seats, increases the chances for non-clan aspirants to enter and win elections.

Concerning the properties of districts where clan members are more likely to thrive, the paper found little difference in terms of the relationship between the level of socio-economic development and whether clan member enter or not. However, when it comes to the question of whether a clan member wins or not, districts with lower socio-economic conditions have higher tendencies to witness clan candidates succeeding. The median annual household income and expenditure of districts where clan member won were about 20,000 pesos (400 USD) higher than those of districts where clan member did not win. In this regard, one can conclude that poverty is one of the causes of perpetuation of clan politics.

This paper also showed that politicians who belong to political clans are no less parochial, conservative, or lazy than those who do not belong to political families. Based on my survey, clan member legislators are more concerned with national issues (as opposed to their district needs) than non-clan counterparts. They also have more liberal attitudes than non-clan members. These results imply that electing clan member does not mean that they represent narrow local interests.

Finally, as the implications of this study, two points can be addressed. One is on the constitutional reform. How can we think about the lifting of legislative term limit?

This paper showed that while term limits might not have direct impact on clan politics, it did have some indirect effect through creating a larger number of open seats. In open seats, although a clan member of the outgoing incumbent may enter, he or she has lower chances of winning than when the incumbent is in the race, thus creating a more open space for newcomers. Thus even clan politics may continue under the term-limit rule, the competitiveness increases which might weed out undesirable candidates. On this issue, however, there are other aspects to consider. One of them is the professionalization of legislative expertise. Studies in the American state legislatures show that term limits hamper the professionalization of legislative expertise (Kousser 2005). One needs to weigh these trade-offs in considering whether to lift the legislative term limits in the Philippines.

The other implication is on the quality of Philippine democracy. This study calls for a re-thinking about clan politics which has been conventionally viewed as “traditional” and “parochial.” The survey results revealed that clan members could be actually more liberal and concerned with national issues than non-clan legislators. This suggests that scholars should investigate not only the apparent continuation of clan politics, but also its substantial aspects. In particular, since the existing studies of clan politics have unbalanced focus on clan members (but non-clan legislators), we lack knowledge about how, or whether, clan politicians and non-clan politicians differ in their styles of representation. Together with the question of how clan politics has been changing (e.g., Teehankee 2000), this aspect needs to be investigated in future research.

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