Many of the analyses on the nature of Philippine politics are anchored on the common patron-client factional (pcf) framework of Lande which he popularized in the 1960s in his article “Leaders, Factions and Parties: The Structure of Philippine Politics”. The five readings under review also center on this topic which I hope to synthesize, as well as present the agreements and disagreements of the writers, and give my overall inputs using the context of politics of the present time vis a vis the discussions presented in the readings.

Although Philippine politics is highly influenced by the Americans, its structure is vulnerable to many problems and issues because of several factors which were not articulated in one single paper. Among these factors are the following: (1) strong presence of political clans in the municipal and provincial levels; (2) weak party system; (3) pork barrel and the use of state resources in the guise of political machines; and (4) the practice of vote brokerage and its effects to politics and elections.

The question that I would like to answer in this paper is, “has there been any change in how politics is practiced across generations in the Philippines?” In the readings, several authors discussed the nature of politics since 1900s up to the post-Marcos era. Although it was not
explicitly presented that there was a change, our politics today is deeply rooted in the patron-client relationship and that the traditional politics that is dominated by leading families or clans which is now regarded as the backbone of political machinery, are the very reason why our party system is weak. Through the years, because of strong patronage and the continuous weakening of political parties, politics in the Philippines has not considerably changed.

In sum, my discussions will revolve around the following: (1) the structure of political leaders in the town or municipal level -- the basic unit of the society; (2) how political machines work; (3) the nature of party system; and (4) vote brokerage and the transformation of election in the Philippines.

It is important in many aspects to understand the nature of politics in the Philippines by looking at how it evolved through time. The answer to the question “has there been any change in how politics is practiced across generations in the Philippines?” is particularly important to understanding the culture of Filipinos in elections.

**The structure of political leaders**

Historically and by tradition, local politicians are from known families who are the elites and landowners in towns or municipalities. According to Doronila in “The Transformation of Patron-Client Relations and its Political Consequences in Postwar Philippines”, society is dominated by upper class who had power and influence over groups of people because of its
control of the access to and use of land. Because of that influence, families who have dominated political offices became the powerful political clans that we now call political dynasties.

While it is true that political clans dominated local politics, in the paper of Machado, “From Traditional Faction to Machine: Changing Patterns of Political Leadership and Organization in the Rural Philippines”, he discussed the case of Taal, Batangas where leading families were replaced by new men. He posited that:

“In some areas of the Philippines, three important and interrelated changes in the traditional pattern of local leadership recruitment and faction organization had been taking place for several decades. Notables from old leading families were being replaced in positions of leadership by upwardly mobile “new men” from more humble backgrounds. Professional politicians were emerging in the local arena. Local factions were being transformed from traditional family-centered organizations into specialized machines. These changes were most likely to occur in areas of comparatively high social mobilization and low concentration of landownership. Changes are explained primarily by the impact of increasingly intense national political competition in rural communities and growing mass participation. These changes represent a decline in the autonomy of local elites, as they were accompanied by the latters' growing reliance on central resources to maintain their machines. These changes and the forces behind them are well illustrated by the pattern of political change in the town of Taal, Batangas during this century, which is reported in great detail.”
The “changes” that he discussed in his paper happened when “new men” rose and challenged the traditional families who dominated local politics. This faction now between families became the new scene. Factionalism became the primary force underlying electoral competition in the communities and now a prominent feature of political life in Philippine towns.

Likewise, Machado posited that the “primary ties binding the heads of lesser families at the periphery to the faction’s leaders were patron-client relationships, personal loyalty and mutual obligation growing out of the exchange of favors between unequals.”

I would like to highlight the three important and interrelated changes in the traditional pattern of local leadership recruitment and faction organization that Machado presented in his paper, these are:

1. While family prominence was traditionally the chief criterion for recruitment to positions of political leadership, there was a tendency for notables from old leading families to be replaced in positions of leadership by upwardly mobile “new men” from small farming, fishing, and business families and other more humble backgrounds.

2. A related dimension of change was the adoption of more professional criteria for recruitment to positions of town political leadership and the consequent emergence of the professional politician in the local arena. For the professional politician, leadership is, first, a specialized political activity rather than an adjunct to a more general social role (like family member) and second, more a career than an avocation.
3. Local factions were losing many of their traditional organizational features and being transformed into specialized political machines.

Therefore, even if traditionally, the landowners and the elite in some communities have dominated politics, changes have occurred already with the coming of new men and those politicians not coming from the traditional families. However, it should be noted that this may not be true to all parts of the country.

Dr. Teehankee in his paper mentioned about the study conducted by the Center for People Empowerment in Governance (CenPEG) in 2007 that there are about 250 families who have dominated the Philippine politics at the national and local level and have monopolized political power for the past 30 years or more. Accordingly, as stated in his paper, this constitute less than one percent of 15 million families nationwide.

Looking at the history as presented in the readings, the wealthy landowners or the elites are the ones who have dominated politics primarily because they have either the resources or followers. Dr. Teehankee noted that ‘dyadic’ ties explain the social relationships in the Philippines which the pcf framework promotes. According to him, “social relations in the Philippines were not structured by organized interest groups or individuals who perceived themselves to be part of a specific social class like in Western democracies. What existed was a network of mutual aid relationships between pair of individuals the he called “dyadic ties”.
“Dyadic ties that are reflected in the Philippine politics are vertical and unequal that binds prosperous patrons who dispensed material goods and services and dependent clients who recompensed with their support and loyalty.”

From this, it can easily be seen that in explaining the structure of political leaders in the towns or generally in the Philippines, those who enter politics are generally those who have maintained good relationships with the people in the community because they have the material resources and the support. For Kerkvliet in “Toward a More Comprehensive Analysis of Philippine Politics”, Philippine politics revolves around interpersonal relationships – especially familial and patron-client ones – and factions composed of personal alliances or the patron-client factional (pcf) framework.”

In summary, the nature of the structure of local politics in the Philippines is really centered on the patron-client relations, kinship networks, other personal followings since they are the basic units within political activity and organizations. Factions are the other building block in political organization beginning at the local level as described by Kerkvliet. It should also be noted that alliances among families, patron-client clusters, and other personal followings are loose, unstable, and often shifting, as are alliances among factions themselves.

**How political machine works**

As discussed by Teehankee, the potency of the kinship system as an instrument of patronage have diminished and replaced by the emergence of the political machine. The social
relations between patron and clients became contractual because of economic transformation and modernity. Because of other political players, not merely based on wealth and landownerships, and probably because of factionalism, Philippine politics shifted from the plain pcf framework to political machine. Political Machines according to Teehankee are specialized organizations set up for the purpose of mobilizing and influencing voter outcome through the dispensation of social, economic, or material benefits.

Political machines are run by politically skilled leaders of elite families as well as by new men from less wealthy and less well-known family backgrounds (Kerkvliet). In order to compete for votes, personal connections are argumented with political machines that provide immediate material rewards and inducements. The use of money became more rampant in Philippine elections.

It was no longer social relations alone but how political machines are used to win in an election. Elections became battles between large political machines and politicians, in order to stay in the game, have to come up with vast financial resources. Without political machine, it will be too difficult for a new player in politics, especially those who have no material resources, to compete with the others.

Political machinery is primarily important in the national level rather than in the municipal or local where patronage and social relations may still work. The culture of politics has shifted to a new dimension where money and tangible projects are more important than ideologies. Because of these changes, people became more dependent on the benefits they could get from politicians.
As Teehankee also noted, benefits are essentially patronage in the form of jobs, services, favors, and money distributed to voters and supporters.

**The nature of party system**

At first, the Philippines was a stable two-party system. In the paper of Teehankee, he mentioned the reasons why party system changed and quoted Yuko Kasuya’s observation that the “increase in the number of parties competing in legislative elections was a result of the increase in the number of viable presidential candidates in the post-Marcos period. As also noted, the increase in number of parties may be attributed to the number of interested candidates in the presidency. Once not chosen by the political party, the tendency of the candidates is to form a new party.

Likewise, Kasuya noted in her “presidential bandwagon framework”, the introduction of a single term limit for the office of the president has destabilized the legislative party system since legislative candidates tend to affiliate with the most viable presidential candidates by witching parties and that the absence of a reelectionist incumbent coupled with weak party loyalties serve as incentives for potential presidential aspirants to launch new parties and entice legislative candidates to switch parties with the promise of access to patronage.

Party switching has been a practice among politicians up to now. This is because politicians as well as the rest of the Filipinos do not identify themselves to a particular party. As pointed out by Teehankee, voters’ identification with political parties has been weak in the post-Marcos period and citing the Pulse Asia in 2010, 91% of respondents do not identify themselves with any party.
thus, party membership in the Philippines is transient, fleeting, and momentary as most political parties are active only during election season.

Interestingly, Teehankee described the two types of political parties that most Filipino politicians affiliate with: (1) one during electoral period to raise campaign funds and another (2) when serving their term of office to have access to patronage. These only indicate that party system in the Philippines is but weak and only function during elections because of the advantages, if there are any, given to candidates in the local and national levels.

Doronilla on the other hand presented a different view and put in the forefront the issue of clientelist politics in analyzing Philippine politics. His paper is a breakaway from Lande’s static model by putting clientelist analysis in the perspective of the Philippines’ capitalist mode of economic development and gave emphasis on the impact of economic change on the class structure. For him, clientelist politics is rife with conflict in the distribution of scarce resources between the demands for particularistic payoffs and those for national economic development.

One important claim of Doronilla is that “political clientelism is a cement of national integration by demonstrating that under the impact of modernizing forces it becomes a breeding ground of tension and conflict leading to political instability.” His paper focused on four important themes: (1) the adaptation of the clientelist politics to economic and political change; (2) the shifting basis of political alliance caused by change – a shift which undermined the relative autonomy of provincial and regional patrons strongly represented in Congress and which strengthened the Executives; (3) the intervention of external forces in the national policy process
arising from the search for development resources; and (4) the disastrous economic cost of sustaining the excessive flow of patronage in mobilizing electoral support.

The clientelist theory considers inequality as one of the essential conditions for the continuation of patron-client relationship. For Doronilla, the implication is that in the Philippines’ case the growth-without-redistribution model provided the environment that permitted clientelism to be incorporated in modern political forms.

Also, as I earlier presented in the nature of politics in the Philippines, my claim about the qualities of politicians and their relationship with people is similar to the claim of Doronilla that historically, Philippine society is dominated by upper class who had power and influence over groups of people because of its control of the access to and use of land. Quoting Corpuz (The Philippines, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965:99), “the basic structure of Filipino parties has been determined by the social class of their members. Each party is made up of leaders who bring their respective followers with them. These followers owe a personal allegiance to the corresponding leaders, not to the party as an organization.”

At the end of Doronilla’s paper, he gave two important outcomes of the party system from the perspective of clientelism: (1) the need to accumulate substantial resources to meet the demands for particularistic rewards from growing clientele followers, and (2) conservative policy outputs which perpetuated economic inequality and neglected welfare programs.
I note the following important findings of Teehankee in his paper which capture the discussions of some of the scholars:

1. Party politics in the Philippines is best explained in the context of a “patronage-based, party voter” linkage that weakens “citizen-party” linkages.

2. The mobilization of material resources by political machines, instead of propagation of issues and ideologies in Philippine election campaigns, has resulted in the proliferation of patronage and clientelism that reinforces elite democracy.

3. Regular splits and mergers of political parties into ad hoc coalitions replaces “democratic accountability” with “clientelistic accountability”.

4. Citizen-party linkages failed, instead the political parties were built around vast networks of well-entrenched political clans and dynasties that constantly switch their affiliation from one administration party to another in order to gain access to state resources and patronage.

5. The [incumbent] President’s control over patronage resources has further encouraged constant party-switching by politicians to the political party or coalition in power.

To resolve the issues about political parties, Teehankee discussed the proposed “Political Party Development Act” which was introduced to promote the institutionalization of political parties in the Philippines by addressing four essential reform issues: (1) campaign finance reform; (2) state subsidy to political parties; (3) a ban on party-switching; and (4) strengthening citizen-parties linkages.
He also maintained that there are two ways by which institutions can either restrict or mitigate political behavior:

1. Rules of the game can provide incentives and disincentives for individuals to maximize their utilities, and
2. Institutional choices can influence future decision making of individuals through a process of path dependency.

I now note, considering all the discussions by the various scholars of the papers under review, important themes about political parties in the Philippines: (1) political parties *vis a vis* the political machines are operational only during elections; (2) politicians affiliate themselves to political parties due to access to patronage and resources during elections; (3) the concept of political ideology is abstract among most politicians because of the prevalence of party-switching; and (4) political clientelism leads to conflict because of the growing demands for payoffs.

**Vote brokerage and the transformation of elections in the Philippines**

Because of the weak party system and the prevalence of party-switching and coalescing in the Philippines, and to add the non-affiliation of the people to a particular party, makes the political system of the country even weaker. As years passed, it seems that we are faced with even more problems: growing political clans or political dynasties, political machines that have become vehicles for raiding the state and distributing political and economic largesse, the use of money during elections, weak multiparty system, party switching, the use of pork barrels by the politicians to advance their own personal, familial, and factional interests and for the voters to use elections
as opportunity to exact money, personal favors, or other immediate returns for themselves and their families in exchange for their votes.

The problems mentioned above are what Aspinall et. al. in *Local Machines and Vote Brokerage in the Philippines* are trying to explain now about Philippine politics or elections. To them, local electoral dynamics shed light on two key dimensions of Philippine elections: (1) the nature of political alliances and machines and (2) the role of money in greasing the wheels of those machines and steering voters’ loyalties and votes.

As observed, those two key dimensions was brought about by the issues and problems identified in the beginning. Our politics now can be understood using the two dimensions discussed by Aspinall et. al. Since after the Marcos regime, there are more political parties and political alliances available to anyone who would want the presidency or be elected in the congress. In the case of local politics, at the present time, they are only part of a political party for the purpose of accessing the machinery because party affiliation is not important to local citizens in elections as already pointed out in most of the readings under review. From the strong two-party system during the pre-Marcos regime, a plethora of new parties have emerged in the post-Marcos period. From two parties – Nacionalista Party and Liberal Party, four relevant parties emerged. These are (1) Liberal Party; (2) Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino; (3) Lakas Kampi CMD; and (4) Nationalist People’s Coalition. However, at the present time, we have more than that. In Teehankee, new parties these days were classified by Takashi Inoguchi as: (1) mushroom parties; (2) ideological gap-filling parties; (3) splinter parties existing from other parties; and (4) special issues parties. None of these parties however are important to the citizens of the Philippines primarily because
our culture of politics is not based on party ideology but more on populism. This is what Teehankee also discussed in his paper about the nature of Philippine electoral and party politics. According to him, little or no importance is given to serious programmatic development.

During elections, most candidates would present almost the same platforms and programs and this trend is now considered more of a political marketing rather than programs and ideologies. It is true that most of them would promise to address poverty, promote social justice, stimulate economic development, eradicate graft and corruption, provide social services, implement good governance, ensure peace and order, and protect the environment. But then again, all these campaign promises are not ideological programs of the parties but merely campaign marketing strategies.

The other issue now in Philippine politics as presented by Aspinall et. al. is the role of money in greasing the wheels of those machines and steering voters’ loyalties and votes. This was discussed by all other scholars when referring to the nature of politics and elections nowadays. To reiterate, in order to compete for votes, personal connections are argumented with political machines that provide immediate material rewards and inducements. Money is important in Philippine politics. The *pcf framework* allows that monetary inducements to support or oppose particular candidates or factions. Therefore, elections became battles between large political machines and politicians are now required to come up with vast financial resources in order to stay in the game. Otherwise, it will be too difficult for a candidate without party nor political machinery to win in the election.
The concept of vote brokerage is now important to describe what politics and elections have become. According to Aspinall et. al., “the bone of the local campaign team are networks of leaders well-connected local residents, arrayed in pyramidal fashion from the mayor or mayoral candidate at the top, down to the sub-barangay (district) or neighborhood (purok) level.” Alliances with local machines are essential because elections became more and more expensive since candidates spend money years before the actual election time.

It is not ideology or programmes, the bottom line in election at the present time is financial, because you have to help the voters financially. As what Aspinall et. al. put, “a good patron cultivates his leaders carefully, focusing on KBL (Kasal, Binyag and Libing).”

Conclusion

The answer to the question that I posed at the beginning of this review paper, “has there been any change in how politics is practiced across generations in the Philippines?” is very clear. Politics has not changed considerably but the changes discussed in this paper if we look at the discussions of Teehankee in “The Philippines in Political Parties and Democracy”; Machado in “From Traditional Faction to Machine”; Kerkvliet in “Toward a More Comprehensive Analysis of Philippine Politics”; Doronila in “The Transformation of Patron-Client Relations”; and Aspinall et. al. in “Local Machines and Vote Brokerage in the Philippines” are apparent but in terms of the transformation of politics and elections from patron-client factional (pcf) framework to political machine and other dimensions within it like the use of money, party politics, party alliances and party switching to campaign and election practices at the present time.
The changes that happened are not really indicators of success in politics but merely transformations of the very nature of Philippine politics. If our politics is weak before, it is weaker these days because the very Filipino themselves are key participants in making it so. Therefore, the problem about Philippine politics is not just about the elites, political clans and dynasties, political machinery, weak party system, but the tradition of campaign and elections where the voters themselves allow such practices. Instead of focusing on ideologies and programs that can change the Philippines for the better, Filipinos are key participants in allowing the continuous weakening of the political system. Only if the voters are wise and will not allow the use of pork barrel and money politics in elections, political candidates will focus on important programs that can bring economic development to the Philippines. It will also lead to strengthening the party system and hopefully, Filipinos will affiliate themselves with a political party just like in Western countries.

In terms of policy implications, I see no other way but to accept the proposed Party Development Act and implement the four important reforms: (1) campaign finance reform; (2) state subsidy to political parties; (3) a ban on party-switching; and (4) strengthening citizen-parties linkages. I see no other recourse but to reform the system.

However, how do we implement these reforms when our culture of politics is deeply rooted in the patron-client factional framework? If the proposed shift from presidential form of government to federal system can resolve the problems discussed and implement the proposed reforms of the Party Development Act, then our politics is something to look forward to by the generations of politicians and Filipinos to come. ###