

## NON-TRADITIONAL FILIPINO POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE AQUINO CABINET

CRISTINA MONTIEL

*Department of Psychology  
Ateneo de Manila University*

*This study investigates the traits of non-traditional politicians, and applies a theoretical construct to assess the current Aquino government. Using data from 60 respondents, half of whom were students and the other half workers, the study finds Ex-Labor Minister Sanchez as the most non-traditional and Ex-Minister Enrile the most traditional. Taken as an aggregate, the present national leadership seems to be a centrist collective. In turn, President Aquino is perceived as non-traditional on certain aspects but a traditional politician in other respects. She is, however, the only leader whose average rating places her in the exact center of the leftist-rightist scale. Further research can build on the initial findings of this exploratory study.*

*"Politikong tradisyonal, ibagsak!* ("Down with traditional" politicians!)." During the last few years of the Marcos regime street protesters repeatedly shouted this demand in anti-dictatorship rallies. Apparently, much of the heat was vented towards Marcos himself. But with the downfall of the country's authoritarian ruler last February 1986, the epitome of a Filipino traditional leader left our political arena.

Nearly a year has passed since the February Revolution. The new Aquino government still enjoys tremendous popularity in spite of the odds (Ateneo — Social Weather Station, 1986). And while the present cabinet seems to be a mixture of traditional and non-traditional politicians, Aquino herself is often referred to as a non-traditional politician. This study looks at the various dimensions of a new kind of power wielding (Burns 1978). Specifically, it investigates the nature of non-traditional Filipino political leadership.

### Objectives and Significance

This research has two thrusts: one theoretical and the other, applied. First, it tries to explain the construct of non-traditional leadership by looking at its different expressions in Philippine politics. Second, it uses these measurements to describe the cabinet of the Aquino government. A special section is devoted to assessing the non-traditional

political image of President Corazon Aquino, nearly a year after her ascendance into power.

This study contributes to the field of political leadership. The twentieth century has witnessed an extraordinary rise in the power of political executives. This phenomenon is a central analytical problem for our era, just as direct democracy was important to eighteenth century analysts and stratification issues salient to nineteenth century political thinkers (Seligman 1950, cited by Paige 1977).

Findings from this research may help generate new politico-psychological theories about Third World realities. What is investigated here is political leadership of a unique kind, one which inspires and continues to propel tremendous democratization changes in a Third World country and which ended, through the non-violent phenomenon now known as "people's power", the twenty-year reign of an authoritarian ruler.

Aside from its theoretical contributions, this work may also help altruistic individuals involved in pragmatic Philippine politics. Non-traditional leadership tends to use political power to serve the collective good rather than one's personal interests. Crystallizing the construct both for academicians and politicians alike may make this political tool more accessible to Filipino leaders. The emergence of a deeper and longer-lasting democratization of power can be hastened when specific person-

alities take on the cudgels of effective non-traditional political leaderships.

### Method

The following presents a description of the survey's sample, interview instrument, information gathering procedure and method of data analysis.

### Sample

Sixty respondents participated in the survey. Half of them were student leaders and the other half, workers. Of the 30 student leaders, 15 came from the Ateneo de Manila Central Student Council while the other 15 were from the University of the Philippines Student Council. From among the 30 workers, 15 were top officers of the *Kristiyanong Alyansa ng Makabayang Obrero* (KAMAO), while the other 15 were the lead officers of the *Kilusang Mayo Uno* (KMU).

These respondents were purposively selected according to two criteria: They were (1) the political elite relative to the student and worker sectors active in the "parliament of the streets" of Metro Manila, and (2) leaders of ideologically-conscious sectoral organizations. This mode of sample selection permitted this study to get the political pulse of left-of-center organizations with relative access to the lower classes. One of the better judges of non-traditional political leadership are the under-privileged classes of a Third World country such as the Philippines whose national history speaks of long-time concentration of power in the hands of a few. The workers are the deprived elements themselves, while the students interact directly with the masses in their different political conscientization programs.

Although selection was not randomly effected across entire organization lists, the study assumed that the leaders' views correlate highly with their politicized members' perspectives. This was because the students and workers interviewed took on leadership roles in

their respective organizations through some form of democratic election process.

Because of the sampling method, data interpretation should proceed with relative caution. First, the study's respondents come from a particular type of political elite in our country today. They are members of the dominant collectives (Paige 1977) that lead student and worker ideological movements in Metro Manila. Second, the study's theoretical value depends on the extent to which leaders represent the views of their followers. In turn, the political importance of this research depends on the extent to which the student and worker sectors can be highly politicized in the coming years.

### Interview Instrument

The interview guide was written in Filipino. It includes twelve indicators of non-traditional leadership. Most of these indicators were developed through consultation with upperclassmen from the University of the Philippines (UP) and the Ateneo de Manila University. Four classes, three from Ateneo and one from UP, were asked to give their descriptions of a non-traditional politician. The traits were then grouped into ten central themes. The other two indicators were general questions on traditionalism and the degree to which the respondent liked a political leader. Each indicator was measured on a five-point Semantic Differential Likert scale. Some items were presented in reverse order to control for response tests.

Initial apprehensions were expressed about the capacity of the worker respondents to discriminate within a five-point scale. In fact, pretest respondents were asked to make three binomial decisions for each attribute to cover the five-point scale. The pretest interview, which lasted from two to three hours, made many respondents refuse to complete the interview session. The research team then decided to present the five-point scale entirely, without the binomial substeps. It was argued that the workers, in spite of their relatively low educational attainment, were cognitively

complex relative to politics. Because of their ideological orientation, they had engaged in political activities which had sharpened their judgements (Bennet 1976).

The twelve indicators, their respective themes (based on the initial consultation with upperclassmen) and their nonreversed scores are the following (the numbers represent scale points):

A. "NOTR"

- (1) Non-traditional politician
- (5) Traditional politician

B. "AVER"

- (1) From an average family (simple and unextravagant lifestyle; family/clan has no political power)
- (5) From an elitist family (rich; family/clan has political power)

C. "NATI"

- (1) Nationalist (anti-bases; anti-multinationals)
- (5) Pro-American (pro-bases; pro-multinationals)

D. "DEMO"

- (1) Democratic in political style (listens to the pulse of the people; does not use the *amo* (political boss) system in politics; does not dictate; democratic; consults the people)
- (5) Authoritarian; Paternal (does not listen to the pulse of the people. uses the "amo" system in politics, dictates, not democratic; does not consult the people)

E. "LEFT"

- (1) Leftist; leftist political views
- (5) Rightist; rightist political views

F. "STAN"

- (1) Unwavering political views, stands; keeps promises given to the people
- (5) Wavering political views, stands; does not keep promises given to the people.

G. "NOSU"

- (1) Not supported by the business sector and other "big" people in society
- (5) Supported by the business sector and other "big" people in society

H. "MASS"

- (1) Protects the interest of the people in politics, pro-masses (fights for human rights; helps the oppressed and the poor; is cause-oriented; does not enrich himself in politics)
- (5) Protects personal interest in politics; not pro-people (does not protect human rights; does not help the poor and oppressed; is not cause-oriented; enriches himself in politics).

I. "CLEN"

- (1) Clean politics (does not lie; does not cheat or steal while in office; recognizes the dignity of man in politics)
- (5) Dirty politics (lies; cheats or steals while in office; uses people in politics)

J. "COMM"

- (1) Not anti-communist (not angry at communists; not an enemy of the communists)
- (5) Anti-communist (angry at communists; an enemy of the communists)

K. "SEXI"

- (1) Not sexist (does not try to appear "macho"; respects the capabilities of women in politics)
- (5) Sexist (tries to appear "macho"; does not respect the capabilities of women in politics)

It is noted that one attribute of the fifth point scale in this item which was mentioned in initial consultations with the upperclassmen but which was deleted from the interview schedule owing to ethical reasons was the question: "Has one wife and many mistresses."

L. "LIKE"

- (1) Liked by me
- (2) Disliked by me

The above traits were used to assess President Aquino, Executive Secretary Arroyo and all other individuals who had occupied a Cabinet position between February 1986 and January 1987.

### *Data Gathering*

Survey data were gathered during the second week of January 1987. The date of information gathering is important because the political situation in the Philippines has been extremely fluid at this time. Studies in cognition suggest that perceptual accuracy and availability in memory are related to the salience of the stimulus at the time it was encountered (Tversky and Kahneman 1973, cited in Nisbett and Wilson 1977). Hence, judgements made about the political leaders may have been influenced by the extent to which the stimulus was "in focus" or "out of focus" in the political arena during January 1987.

Instead of using the usual paper-and-pencil interview instrument, the research tried an approach which apparently appealed to students and workers in a Third World country such as the Philippines. The five-point levels of each trait were first presented in front of the respondent on five different cards horizontally lined up from lowest to highest values (or highest to lowest, for reverse scales). The subject was then handed a set of 24 cards containing the different names of the stimulus political leader. All the respondent had to do was to "deal out" his stimulus cards in front of the respective levels of the Likert scale to which the political leader belonged. This task was repeated 12 times, corresponding to the 12 different traits. The whole interview was finished in 15 minutes, with the respondent enjoying the "card game."

### *Data Analysis*

Each respondent had to describe 24 political leaders with all of the 12 traits. Hence, each survey participant obtained a total of 288 Likert-scale scores. With 60 respondents, the survey worked with a 60 x 288 matrix containing 17,280 cells.

In the first stage of data analysis, the entire original matrix was used. By getting column means, the research extracted average ratings of each political leader on each of the 12 traits. These means were used to describe the non-traditional and/or traditional styles of each politician. Five leaders who were unknown to more than half of the respondents were excluded from further computations.

A new matrix was created for the second stage of data analysis. This time, the rows included the 19 remaining politicians while the columns covered the 12 traits. The 19 x 12 matrix had 228 cells. The cells contained the mean scores of each politician on each trait.

Two correlation matrices were extracted from this 19 x 12 matrix. The first set correlated traits, treating leaders as cases and traits as variables. High inter-trait correlations would suggest that such a theoretical construct as non-traditional political leaders exists. The second set correlated political leaders, treating traits as cases and leaders as variables. High inter-politician correlations would point to political leaders who are perceived as being similar to each other relative to the indicators of non-traditionalism.

## **Results and Discussion**

This section summarizes the study's key findings. Results are disaggregated into three general areas: (1) the theoretical construct of non-traditional political leadership, (2) the political leadership style of the Aquino cabinet, and (3) the political leadership of President Corazon Aquino.

### *Theoretical Construct*

The findings suggest that non-traditional political leadership is a unidimensional variable composed of the ten indicators included in this study. These indicators are: (1) coming from an average (not elitist) family; (2) being a nationalist; (3) having a democratic political style; (4) being leftist; (5) keeping promises and sticking consistently to one's political views; (6) not being supported by the business sector; (7) protecting the interests of the people

in politics; (8) not lying, cheating or stealing; (9) not being an anti-communist; and (10) not being a sexist.

Table 1 supports the unidimensional pattern. It shows that the mean for the single indicator on non-traditionalism is equivalent to the mean of all other research indicators (except the liking measurement) put together. This is a type of content validation; comparing the judgement on non-traditionalism with the evaluations on all other indicators that were suspected to measure non-traditionalism. Notice that the means in Table 1 are not identical with each other. This implies that the different items have to be taken in aggregate and cannot be used in isolation to reflect non-traditionalism.

Table 1: *Means and Standard Deviations of Political Leaders (N = 10) per Attribute (January 1987)\**

<i>Variable Name</i>	<i>Means</i>	<i>Standard Deviations</i>
NOTR	3.2	1.0
AVER	3.8	0.7
NATI	3.4	0.9
DEMO	2.9	0.8
LEFT	3.5	0.9
STAN	2.9	0.7
NOSU	3.6	0.8
MASS	3.2	0.9
CLEN	2.8	0.9
COMM	3.5	0.9
SEX I	2.8	0.8
LIKE	3.1	0.9
Mean of Means	3.2	

\*1 - Non-traditional Traits; 2 - Traditional Traits.

A correlation matrix of traits also supports the unidimensional pattern. In general, inter-trait correlations are high and all except one correlation is significant on a two-tailed, .05 level test. The exception has a value of 0.42, which is near the critical value of 0.45. The high inter-trait correlations may be traced to the unifying effect exerted by the construct of non-traditionalism.

What non-traditional attributes are related to popularity? The correlations which refer to the indicator LIKE may be examined to answer this question. The results suggest that being liked as a politician is highly related to one's perceived sincerity and political integrity, as the highest correlations of the LIKE variable are with the following: (1) having a democratic political style; (2) keeping promises and sticking to one's political views consistently; (3) protecting the interest of the people in politics; and (4) not lying, cheating or stealing. Next in importance is ideological direction. The following indicators had medium-level correlations with LIKE: (1) being a nationalist; (2) being leftist; (3) not being anti-communist; and (4) not being a sexist. The politician's social class connections do not seem to influence his or her popularity too much. LIKE was weakly (but still significantly) correlated with: (1) coming from an average family and (2) not being supported by the business sector.

#### *Political Leadership Style*

Out of the original 24 political leaders, five were dropped from analysis because more than half of the respondents did not know them. They were: (1) Minister Heherson Alvarez; Agrarian Reform; (2) Minister Antonio Gonzales, Tourism; (3) Minister Victor Ziga, General Services; (4) Minister Vicente Jayme, Public Works and Highways; and (5) Minister Carlos Dominguez, Natural Resources. The last two were newly appointed cabinet members at the time of the survey.

Table 2 shows the mean scores of the politicians across all eleven traits (excluding LIKE). Ex-Minister Augusto Sanchez, of the Ministry of Labor, is the most non-traditional. A far second is Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo. The most traditional is Ex-Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, followed by Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs Salvador Laurel.

An interesting feature of the results is that statistically, the present national leadership seems to be a centrist collective. Almost

all points of the traditional-nontraditional spectrum are represented by members of the Cabinet. The grand mean of all the politicians' separate means approximate 3.0, which is the center of a five-point Likert scale. If the Cabinet were more traditional the scores would have been positively skewed and would pull the mean above 3.0. If the leadership were more non-traditional then the overall mean would have fallen below 3.0.

Table 2: *Means and Standard Deviations of Attributes (n = 11) per Political Leader with "LIKE" Variable (January 1987)\**

<i>Political Leaders</i>	<i>Means</i>	<i>Standard Deviations</i>
Sanchez	1.8	.3
Arroyo	2.1	.3
Pardo de Tavera	2.3	.7
Pimentel	2.4	.3
Bengzon	2.7	.6
Aquino	2.8	1.1
Quisumbing	2.9	.5
Gonzalez	3.0	.5
Mitra	3.1	.5
Mercado	3.3	.3
Romulo	3.3	.5
Concepcion	3.5	.7
Ferrer	3.6	.4
Ileto	3.6	.5
Drilon	3.8	.4
Ongpin	3.9	.6
Maceda	4.1	.3
Laurel	4.5	.3
Enrile	4.6	.3

\*1 - Non-traditional; 2 - Traditional.

What happens if we treat traits as cases and cabinet members as variables? We constructed a correlation matrix of cabinet members which shows how one's political style is correlated with his fellow politicians. By counting the number of significant correlations associated with a cabinet member, the research identified (a) leaders whose political styles overlapped

with many, and (b) members whose styles were relatively unique.

Minister Jaime Ongpin correlated with the most number of other politicians. Excluding President Aquino, Ongpin overlapped with 11 others. Next came Minister Alberto Romulo who had significant correlations with 10 others and Minister Jose Concepcion with nine other Cabinet members.

Loners also appear in the correlation matrix. Ex-Minister Enrile had a significant correlation with no one else except Ex-Minister Ernesto Maceda. Pimentel only overlapped with Mercado. Sanchez, the most non-traditional in the list, had insignificant correlations with all other cabinet members.

#### *Political Leadership of President Aquino*

President Aquino combines non-traditional and traditional traits. Compared to the summary mean score of the rest of her colleagues in government, she was perceived as being relatively higher on the following points: (1) having a democratic political style; (2) keeping promises and sticking to her views; (3) protecting the interest of the people in politics; (4) not lying, cheating or stealing; (5) not being an anti-communist; and (6) not being a sexist. These characteristics seem to be her strong leadership points vis-a-vis the left-of-center groups in the country today.

Aquino possesses other traditional political traits that may make her appealing to the country's "American friends". She is less of a nationalist, comes from a more elite family and receives more support from the business sector than most other members in her Cabinet.

One interview item asked respondents to locate the politicians on a leftist to rightist scale. The average score of all ratings for all leaders was 3.5. President Aquino was the only leader whose rating landed exactly on the overall mean of the left-right scale. Apparently, she is perceived as being in the exact center of the rest of her Cabinet members, a true political balancing point.

The correlation matrix of cabinet members shows that no significant correlations existed

between President Aquino and eight of her Cabinet members. This result suggests that her political style was dissimilar to some of her own leaders. Interestingly, most of the Cabinet members who had non-significant correlations with her were those who were either asked to leave their office within a year after the February Revolution or served as their replacements. They were Ministers Enrile, Ileta, Ferrer, Pimentel, Maceda, Mercado, and Sanchez. Vice President Laurel's trait scores were also not significantly related with Aquino's. Sanchez's replacement in the Ministry of Labor, Minister Drilon, had the lowest of all other significant Aquino correlations in the matrix.

### Summary and Recommendations

This study investigated the traits of non-traditional politicians. It attempted to describe a theoretical construct and subsequently used this concept to assess the current Aquino government.

Sixty respondents participated in the survey. Half of them were student leaders and the other half were workers. They were selected because the study wanted to get the political pulse of left-of-center organizations with relative access to the lower class.

Findings showed that a nontraditional politician is a leader who: (1) comes from an average (non-elitist) family; (2) is nationalistic; (3) has a democratic political style; (4) is leftist; (5) keeps promises and consistently sticks to one's political views consistently; (6) is not supported by the business sector; (7) protects the interest of the masses in politics; (8) does not lie, cheat or steal; (9) is not an anti-communist; (10) is not a sexist.

Among the Aquino government's key leaders, Ex-Labor Minister Sanchez was the most non-traditional. He was followed by Executive Secretary Joker Arroyo. Ex-Minister Enrile

and Minister Laurel were the most traditional. Taken as an aggregate, however, the present national leadership seemed to be a centrist collective.

President Aquino was non-traditional in certain aspects concerning integrity, being pro-masses and having a democratic style. In turn, she possesses some traits of a traditional politician like her associations with the elite class and the business sector. But she remains the only leader whose rating landed exactly on the overall mean of the leftist-rightist scale. Apparently, she is perceived as being a balancing point among her Cabinet members.

Further studies can build on the initial findings of this research. Since correlation matrices produced significant scores, there may be underlying factors operating beneath the observed data patterns. Factor analysis of both traits and political leaders is highly recommended to identify principal factors. Further analysis should also disaggregate data by ideological affiliation, sex and sectoral identification to pinpoint other possible correlates.

For those involved in politics or political training programs, it is recommended that non-traditional traits be encouraged in Philippine politics. Elections for legislature and local governments are fast approaching. Although Ferdinand Marcos is gone, 20 years of authoritarian rule have left their legacy in the present political culture of this country.

Power has to be consciously distributed to the majority, especially to the millions of people in the deprived sectors. Deeper democratic transformation may be contingent on the emergence of politically conscious mass bases and their nontraditional political leaders. Only then perhaps can we attain lasting social peace. In any case, active non-violence through the effective democratization of power in Third World politics has come of age.

## References

- Ateneo Social Weather Station.  
1986 The Ateneo Social Weather Station's Public Opinion Reports Project. Final Report, Quezon City: Center for Social Policy.
- Bennet, W.L.  
1976 *The Political Mind and the Political Environment*. Lexington: Lexington Books.
- Burns, J.M.  
1978 *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Nisbett, R.E. and T.D. Wilson.  
1977 "Telling More Than We Know: Verbal Reports on Mental Processes." *Psychological Review* 84: 231-259.
- Paige, G.D.  
1977 *The Scientific Study of Political Leadership*. New York: The Free Press.
- Seligman, L.G.  
1950 The Study of Political Leadership, APSR, 44, 904-915. In G.D. Paige, ed. *The Scientific Study of Political Leadership*. New York: The Free Press. 1977.
- Tversky, A. & Kahneman, D.  
1973. "Availability: A Heuristic for Judging Frequency and Probability," *Cognitive Psychology*, 5, 207-233.