

The Dynamics of Congressional Committees in Budget Legislation and Its Impact to Philippine Economic Development

Arvin Karl Demillo Capiral
Polytechnic University of the Philippines
arvinkarldcapiral@gmail.com

Abstract

This research examines the dynamics of the 17th congress in the budget legislation process and posts an argument regarding its impact on Philippine economic development using a qualitative research design. The researchers use theoretical debate and literature study to identify the political motivations that affect the Congressmen in the approval of the budget, namely: self-interest, political clientelism, and political interference. An online interview was conducted with the selected key informants to know the significance of each factor in congress's decision-making regarding the budget's approval. The results indicate that self-interest, political clientelism, political interference, and the executive department significantly influence the congressional committees on the budget legislation process. This article concludes that the effectiveness of lawmakers' roles in managing the economy correlates with the majority of representation held by the government's ruling party, as in the case of the 17th congress.

Keywords: Budget Legislation, General Appropriations Act (GAA), Political Clientelism, Philippine Congress



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HOW TO CITE:

Capiral, A. (2023). The Dynamics of Congressional Committees in Budget Legislation and Its Impact to Philippine Economic Development. *Journal Of Contemporary Sociological Issues*, 3(1), 45-67. doi:10.19184/csi.v3i1.31362

Submitted : May 28, 2022

Revised : June 14, 2022

Accepted : November 14, 2022

Publish : February 28, 2022

I. INTRODUCTION

The term "funds" has several meanings or connotations in the field of government. It describes an appropriation, a legislative authorization to spend, or an allotment authorized by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to obligate or as actual available cash. Public funds or budget is a powerful tool to promote economic development: they can stabilize the economy, catalyze economic growth, redistribute wealth, and fight poverty.¹ Effective budget management is considered a key component of economic growth in a country.² However, a poorly designed and mishandled budget can also result in unmanageable budget deficits, macroeconomic instability, wasteful government spending, rent-seeking, and corruption.³

The Philippine budget system has four phases: Budget Preparation, Budget Legislation, Budget Execution, and Accountability. Each phase is distinctly separate in the process from the others, but they overlap in implementing the budget during the budget year. Budget legislation pertains to the whole range of legislative action on the budget, enacting a General Appropriations Law for the year.

Congress has a very active and vocal role in the budget process in the Philippines. Most members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate are also members of their respective chamber's budget committees is most noteworthy.⁴ The budget approval process is often tense between the House of Representatives and the Senate within the Bicameral Conference Committee. In the country, existing laws determine the totality of the budgets allotted for various national government departments, including Local Government Units (LGUs) and Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations (GOCCs). According to Executive Order No. 292 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, "It is as a result of this declared the policy of the State to formulate and implement a National Budget that is an instrument of national development, reflective of national objectives, strategies, and plans. The budget shall be supportive of and consistent with the socio-economic development plan and shall be oriented towards achieving explicit objectives and expected results to ensure that funds are utilized and operations are conducted effectively, economically, and efficiently.

¹ A. Premchand, 'Public Budgeting and Economic Development: Evolution and Practice of an Idea', *International Journal of Public Administration* 24, no. 10 (31 July 2001): 1023–39.

² Hieu Huu Nguyen, 'The Role of State Budget Expenditure on Economic Growth: Empirical Study in Vietnam', *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business* 6, no. 3 (2019): 81–89.

³ Martino Lual, 'The Systemic Corruption at the Ministry of Finance and Planning in South Sudan: Mismanagement of Public Funds and Procurement Scandals', SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY, 2 May 2020).

⁴ J. Brøndal, 'Progressive Era City Government: Reforming From Within and Without-Mordecai Lee. Bureaus of Efficiency: Reforming Local Government in the Progressive Era', *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 9, no. 2 (2010): 266–68.

The national budget shall be formulated within the context of a regionalized government structure and of the totality of revenues and other receipts, expenditures, and borrowings of all levels of government and government-owned or controlled corporations. The budget shall likewise be prepared within the context of the long-term national plan and a long-term budget program." Moreover, the Overview of the Budget System has identified the groups into which public expenditures can be divided.

Accordingly, these are the economic development expenditures, for example, expenditures on agriculture and natural resources, commerce and industry, transportation and communications, and other economic development efforts. Second, the social services or social development expenditures, for example, the government outlays on education, labor and welfare, public health and medicare, and others. Third, the general government or general public services expenditures such as the administration of justice, expenditures for the general government, legislative services, and pensions and gratuities. Fourth, national defense expenditures, for example, are divided into expenditures for maintaining peace and order and national security expenditures. Lastly, the public debt. Thus, the legal guidelines on which departments and sectors are considered "priority" in budget allocation.

While the issue in public budgeting- how to allocate limited resources to unlimited and ever-changing needs and desires remains a predominant focus of administrators and government officials, as proved by continued efforts at budget reforms.⁵ The public budget is often associated with the required resources to attain and ensure the availability of money in wage war, housing, or streets.⁶ This type of budgeting is not only a technical, managerial process, but it has to consider the political side appropriately and necessarily. Budgets reflect the government's decision about what they will and will not do; the services they will provide for the members of society.⁷

Over the last several years, research has shown that government performance measurement requirements are widespread. Not to mention although, in the Philippines, there is a law governing which departments or sectors should be funded each fiscal year, it does not seem to happen all the time.⁸ These pressing issues inspired the researchers to pursue this study. Thus, this study sought to explore the dynamics of the congressional committees during the budget legislation process. To study such perspectives, a qualitative analysis, through a semi-structured interview of the carefully selected respondents, was conducted by the researchers to determine the political motivations of congressional

⁵ Gerald E. Caiden, *Administrative Reform Comes of Age* (Berlin ; New York: De Gruyter, 2014).

⁶ Kurt M. Thurmaier and Katherine G. Willoughby, *Policy and Politics in State Budgeting* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁷ Kathe Callahan, 'The Utilization and Effectiveness of Citizen Advisory Committees in the Budget Process of Local Governments', *Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting & Financial Management* 14, no. 2 (1 January 2002): 295–319.

⁸ Norris Falguera, 'Budget Politics in the Philippines', *Pilipinas: A Journal of Philippine Studies* 42 (1 March 2004): 1–24.

committees in the approval of the budget during budget deliberations. Furthermore, this paper discussed the impacts of the congressional committee's dynamic in budget legislation on Philippine economic development. As a result, the study may serve as a foundation for additional research and studies.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perhaps, the role of congress in shaping the Philippine national budget is seen during budget legislation or authorization. In the budget cycle, this phase is the primary avenue where the legislatures exercise their "power of the purse." In a nutshell, congress determines the appropriateness of budgetary allocation and decides whether a particular program should be continued or discontinued. In other words, the role of congress can be summarized as the task of approval of the national budget.

In the Philippines, Congress is divided into two constituent bodies: the House of Representatives and the Senate. These two are independent government political institutions. They act on policy-making matters, including formulating the budget for each fiscal year leading to enacting new laws. The Senate has 24 members elected nationwide, while the house comprises 304 representatives. In the budget process, the House of Representatives is the first to review the proposed budget, which would eventually draft the General Appropriations Bill (GAB) and endorse it to the Senate. Any disagreeing provisions and amendments between the House and Senate are discussed in a Bicameral Committee.

The Ratification of the Bicameral Committee Report and the approval of the GAB by the two chambers signals its finalization. Afterward, the house would submit the proposed budget to the President, who will sign it into a General Appropriations Act (GAA). Notably, congress cannot increase the appropriations proposed by the President but may reduce them. The Chief Executive, who is at the same time the President, may veto expenditure items in the GAA (line-item veto power), although congress may override this veto. If congress fails to pass the GAA, the GAA of the preceding year shall take effect.

The scrutiny of the budget by congress starts with assessing the macroeconomic parameters based on what the executive has set as the expenditure level. As the primary actors, congress should be able to independently validate whether the economic projections and targets, like the growth in gross domestic product, imports and exports, and the foreign exchange and inflation, are realistic. It needs to ascertain whether the National Government can generate the necessary revenues to support the proposed expenditure program and keep the deficit and borrowing levels manageable. Consequently, six characteristics describe the Philippine budget process: (1) commitment to fiscal discipline; (2) tax compliance and corruption; (3) subsidies: government-owned and controlled corporations; (4) development budget coordinating committee; (5) national planning function; and (6) unprogrammed funds and special purpose funds. The country has three mechanisms: the President's Ten-

Point Development Agenda, Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan, and Medium-Term Public Investment Programme. These became the framework for how congress approves the budget.

The budget became law in line with the Constitution's requirements. The President submits the proposed annual budget from his office in the form of a Budget of Expenditure and Sources of Financing (BESF) with the details of proposed expenditures using the National Expenditure Program (NEP) and the summarization of the budget policy priorities and thrusts for the year covered called President's Budget.

The series of interviews revealed the political motivations that affect the dynamics of the congressional committees in deciding and approving the national budget for the case of the 17th Philippine Congress. After the President, the budget decision will go to congress - the House of Representatives and the Senate. Thus, the role of congress in budget legislation is crucial because it enables them to plan and manage the financial resources for a year.

Firstly, the government consists of individuals such as elected and appointed officials or bureaucrats. All government actions are the result of their decision-making. Accordingly, the Public Choice Theory applies economic analysis to study government decisions.⁹ Using the same principle in economics, these political actors select options that represent their best set of costs and benefits. In the same context, public choice theory portrays political actors as "political entrepreneurs" who have entered politics anticipating high rewards for their use. Such politicians' actions are highly motivated by their "self-interest."

All the selected key informants agreed that self-interest had always been present whenever congress decided which budget would be approved from 2016 to 2019 during the budget legislation or the whole budgeting process. To quote one of the key-informant:

"Considering that the budget goes primarily on the House of Representatives, in which it is composed of representatives of different districts and different sectors, then definitely, self-interest has a huge influence on the dynamics of congress whether it is budget or otherwise because you are there to represent your people or whatever you are representing is..."

Furthermore, another respondent explained, "the legislative, being a political office, we will always see the key players here. The key players will be lobbying for their interests, and unfortunately, it's not always about the constituents' interests." The presence of self-interest in congress is motivated by incentives similar to those in the private sector. For instance, monetary rewards play an essential role in the decisions of public officials- many of them use public funds to get rich. Aside from that, elected officials consider other

⁹James M. Buchanan, 'Politics Without Romance', *Public Choice* 19, no. 3 (2003), <https://www.cis.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/images/stories/policy-magazine/2003-spring/2003-19-3-james-m-buchanan.pdf>.

incentives like family security, recognition, travel, access to information, and the satisfaction derived from community service.¹⁰

In line with economic theory does not assume that people are originally materialistic, shortsighted, or irresponsible. Thus, according to the public choice theory, the context of "self-interest in budgeting" takes another interpretation. "...What we have to understand here is that our congressmen or those people in the House of Representatives are initially representatives of their congressional districts and elected to the people. They are tied, or they are trying to balance between two (2) objectives: one is the parochial interest of the Congressional District: I have to give something to the people or constituents that have voted me into power. The other one is a broader scale such as nation-building: How do I contribute as a politician or how do they contribute as a public official into nation-building?"

This claim is proven true by another explanation regarding self-interest as one of the motivations of congressional committees in budgeting. To quote:

"Well if you say self-interest para sa kapakanan ng distrito or sector mo, natural ipaglalaban mo kung anong tingin mo yung kailangan. 'Di ba, kasi syempre bawat District Congressman talagang ilalaban nila kung anong sa tingin nila kailangan. 'Di ba pag naliliitan sila sa budget, ilalaban nila dapat lakihan yun kasi maraming kalsada ng kailangan, maraming klase ng mga kailangan. So definitely... I cannot say that it is self interest na pansarili pero it's really fighting for the district: allocation ng district...allocation ng sector. Like ako gustong-gusto ko marami talagang tupad, maraming DSWD educational assistance, 'di ba? Yun yung ilalaban ko... [Well if you say self-interest then it would be for the welfare of the district and sector to which I am representing, it is natural to fight for what I think my people need. Of course, every district is represented by a Congressman, then they would fight for higher budget allocation, they would fight for bigger funds for roads and other necessities. So definitely... I cannot say that it is self interest which resonates with our pursuit for personal gain but it's really fighting for the district: district and sector budget allocation. For example, I really want a higher budget for "Tupad", for DSWD's educational assistance, so yeah...]"

One of the public officials' ultimate goals is to promote their good and pursue their parochial interests.¹¹ Parochialism is the tendency of politicians to favor a group that includes them at the expense of outsiders.¹² Since the people elect the members of congress,

¹⁰ Mark C. Schug and Jennifer Fontanini, 'Public Choice Theory and the Role of Government in the Past', *National Council for the Social Studies* 58, no. 1 (1994): 20–22.

¹¹ Timothy Besley, *Principled Agents?: The Political Economy of Good Government* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹² Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Randy T. Simmons, 'Egoism, Parochialism, and Universalism', *Rationality and Society* 3, no. 1 (1991): 106–32.

they need to give back to them. Parochial interest in budgeting is further explained by the assumption that politicians suffer from "rational myopia." This idea is what was meant by one of the respondents as well when he cited the objective function of government officials: because their primary goal is reelection, politicians tend to prioritize the budget of departments that they think people will remember their name on, and they can insert their pet legislation, they can pursue their big-ticket projects.

Similarly, the Vice-Chair of the House Committee on Appropriations explained that if self-interest involves reelection, then this is definitely in the minds of all elected public officials. However, it is not necessarily the most important consideration. The primary motivation of a congressman in budget hearings is bringing the due share of the district they represent in the GAA. The Chairs, the congressional leadership, and the Senate are to ensure that such parochial concerns are balanced with a more whole-of-nation view.

This explanation can further expound this claim:

"... hindi ka kasi pwedeng entirely self-interest....Pag puro self-interest kasi magba-backfire din sya sa'yo. So, let us say, for instance, you are just doing this project so that you have something to bucket later on, or you have some grease that you can use to oil the whole machinery of your campaign later on. That would not work, 'di ba? ... sya pwedeng puro rent seeking lang, meron syang development aspect. Kelangan mo syang i-cultivate kasi kailangan may bumalik sa tao, diba? [*...it is always about self-interest. If it is highly motivated, it will eventually backfire on you. So, let us say, for instance, you are just doing this project so that you have something to bucket later on, or you have some grease that you can use to oil the whole machinery of your campaign later on- that would not work, right? You have to cultivate it to give back to the people.*] It should always be rent-seeking, development should still be the priority.

Self-interest plays a huge role in prioritizing the budget each department and sector receives annually. Suppose the budget prioritization leans toward the self-interest of the member of congress. In that case, whether it may be for their gain or interest, they will fight for its approval and appropriation. However, this idea also implies that self-interest does not automatically equate to corruption. Nevertheless, this may also promote the country's developmental aspect. This lead drives the Philippine budget legislators to allocate public funds wisely. This perspective explains why the distribution of funds among the different departments of the Philippines seems balanced. There are funds for roads and infrastructure, education, and social welfare development. Likewise, this explains why the departments which received the highest budget allocations were similar throughout a specific congressional term. Still, this practice contributes to budget deficits as those politicians who only seek reelection become anxious to provide the immediate benefits associated with

government spending while shifting the costs onto future generations, given the current composition of government officials in the Philippines and its long history of corruption.

Secondly, having emerged as a tool of analysis used by anthropologists to study interpersonal relationships in small rural communities, clientelism's meaning affixed to the concept has changed as it has come to be used to analyze complex political systems. Clientelism, in its sense, is such a broad concept – "at the crossroads of politics and administration, economy and society".¹³ Particularly, definitions attributed to the very same idea by anthropologists and political scientists proved to be so diverse that it has become indispensable to specify from the outset which type of clientelism or patronage is being analyzed.¹⁴

All the key informants have concluded that political clientelism is a factor in which departments congress will decide to pour a particular amount of budget and what to prioritize each fiscal year. To quote one of the key informant's answers,

"...(ka)pag sinabi nga nating political clientelism mayroong patron-client relations. It is inherently one of the characteristics of Philippine politics primarily because its political system lies on pluralism. So, it is characteristic of Philippine politics. Primarily, dahil plural and ating political system, but also because we don't have very strong party-political party systems so you dole out patronages, you dole out some sort of personal favors so that you can get their way into congress. [*When we say political clientelism, it denotes having a patron-client relationship. Moreover, we do not have a powerful political-party system which results in patronage. Politicians tend to dole out personal favors to get their way into congress*].

"... during the time of GMA, maraming ganitong instances, getting the budget passed but also trying to move forward some important legislations. Dito nagagamit yung party vehicle. Ano yung influence ng partido even the coalitions itself. Uhm, coalitions within congress. Paano natin sya gagamitin as machinery to ensure that we can get our pet legislations. [*...during the time of former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, there were many instances like this. They were getting the proposed budget approved and moving forward to other important legislation. This is where the party*

¹³ Luis Roniger, 'Political Clientelism, Democracy, and Market Economy Economy [Review of *Le Clientélisme Politique Dans Les Sociétés Contemporaines; Poor People's Politics: Peronist Survival Networks and the Legacy of Evita; Clientelism, Interests, and Democratic Representation: The European Experience in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, by J.-L. Briquet, F. Sawicki, J. Auyero, & S. Piattoni]', *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 3 (2004): 353–75.

¹⁴ Alex Weingrod, 'Patrons, Patronage, and Political Parties*', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 10, no. 4 (July 1968): 377–400.

vehicle works, and this is how party politicians use their coalitions to ensure that they pass their pet legislation in congress].

As the data said, the working definition of political clientelism for this paper will be, in Weingrod's words, an "analysis of how persons of unequal authority, yet linked through ties of interest and friendship, manipulate their relationships to attain their ends."¹⁵ That is, having said, the university professor only implied that political clientelism has an influence on the approval of the General Appropriations Act and even in shaping which department has a likelihood of getting a higher budget.

In line with this, an officer from the 17th congress further notes, "...meron siyang [political clientelism] malaking influences sa dynamics. Eto, magbibigay ako ng example, 'yung mga sinasabi natin na may close ties sa congressman, mas close ties sa congress, sila sila rin yung pumupunta sa Batasan. [(political clientelism) does significantly influence the dynamics of congress. To cite an example, those [groups] who have close ties with Congressman usually also have closer ties to the congress; they are usually the ones who go to Batasan. There are courtesy calls, and even before courtesy calls, they are already able to conduct their meetings within the district.] May mga courtesy calls, at maliban don, even before the courtesy call, they can already conduct their meetings within the district.

This statement denotes that a patron seeking the client's vote can make his client's life much easier by ensuring that the state agents either deal with their so-called opponents or, in the end, they must keep close ties to one another to pass a particular legislature. words are "non-monetary forms of patronage." The opposite is also true. An opposition supporter's life can be easily turned into a nightmare by implementing laws selectively. A former Peruvian president words, "for my friends, anything. For my enemies, the law". This premise was also supported by a political officer's statement on political clientelism, quote:

"...may mga instances, I believe 2017 nangyari yun. When opposition senators were removed in their committees. As you all know, kapag ikaw ay chair ng committee, merong appropriations yun, merong budget na nandoon. So si Senator Pangilinan was removed as chair of agriculture. Tinanggal sya kasi opposition siya. I think sa vote yun against. Si Manny Pacquiao pa yung nag move nun para matanggal sila. Si Senator Leila de Lima was removed as chairperson of the committee on justice, senator drilon was removed as Senate President, senator hontiveros was removed as chair of committee on health, senator bam aquino was removed as chair of education. So, what you can see there is, tinatanggalan talaga yung mga kalaban. So yes, there is still political clientelism, it affects the dynamics of congress especially in appropriating the budget." *[There*

¹⁵ Weingrod.

are instances in 2017 when it happened. When opposition senators were removed from their committees, as you all know, when you are the committee chair, there are appropriations in which the budget is also included. Then, Senator Pangilinan was removed as a chair of agriculture since he was part of the opposition. Senator Manny Pacquiao initiated the movement for them [opposition senators] to be removed as committee chairs. Moreover, Senator Leila de Lima was also removed as chairperson of the committee on justice, Senator Drilon was removed as Senate President, Senator Hontiveros was removed as chair of the health committee, and Senator Bam Aquino was removed as chair of education. Thus, we can see that they get rid of the congressional opposition. So yes, there is still political clientelism, which affects the dynamics of congress, especially in appropriating the budget.]

It is similar to pure distributional games of party competition, except in two respects. First, we posit incumbent politicians who exercise monopoly control over a good that is useful to voters in allowing them to reduce the risk entailed in variations in income from other sources. Second, we assume that these incumbents can monitor the vote because voters know that the probability that they will enjoy a reward that the incumbent bestows or suffers a punishment he metes out is positively correlated with their vote choice. The clientelist features that our model predicts are reduced electoral competition, a preference among incumbents against redistribution, and lethargic economic development.

In addition to the statements on political clientelism, a two-term party-list representative, in an interview, expressed that it affects not just the ins and outs of the budget deliberation but the overall function of the county's political landscape, and it immensely constitutes the culture of bad governance in the Philippines. She also expressed her dismay through a statement, "...hindi talaga biro yung nakikita natin na palakasan hindi lang sa kongreso. Sa tingin ko yung express manifestation nito, one is the amount of the lump sum in the discretionary funds in the budget or what we still call the pork fund." [Nepotism is not something that should be taken lightly in congress. One of its manifestations is the amount of the lump sum in the discretionary funds in the budget or what we still call the pork fund.] Such practices are said to be prohibited given the discretionary nature of these funds, making them vulnerable and prone to misuse and abuse for political clientelism.

Politicians, particularly the legislative branch of the government, provide a rationalization for nation-building. Political interference is when a political leader(s) makes decisions concerning public administrative matters such as planning and budgeting.¹⁶ Politics always play a role in developing countries' supply of roads, schools, and hospitals.¹⁷

¹⁶ Allan W.E Mfuru, Africanus C. Sarwatt, and George Kanire, 'The Impact of Political Interference in Public Administration in Kibaha Town Council' 6, no. 4 (2018): 21–31.

¹⁷ F. Wangwe, 'Overview of Social Cognitive Theory and of Self-Efficacy', 2012, <http://www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/eff.htm>.

The presence of political interference in the overall budgeting process is vague and is treated by the existence of checks and balances. According to a university professor, "...if it has illustrated in executive, legislative, judiciary then medyo mahina itong political interference in terms of influence kasi meron tayong checks and balances." [...if it's illustrated in the executive, legislative, judiciary, then this political interference is somehow weak in terms of influence because we have existing checks and balances.] Checks and balances are necessary for the government to enforce constitutional constraints.¹⁸ The university professor also cited this instance as an example:

"once the executive department, through the DBM and the Office of the President, submits the budget to Congress, then it's up to Congress to deliberate on it and do their hearings and call upon different agencies for the budget hearing, so ito 'yung bahagi na sinasabi nating checks and balances among the institutions," [*Once the executive department, through the DBM and the Office of the President, submits the budget to congress, then it's up to congress to deliberate on it and do their hearings and call upon different agencies for the budget hearing, so this is what we call checks and balances among the institutions.*]

Essentially, congress makes budget calls and hearings to deliberate how much budget would be allocated for each department before it becomes a law. These processes are the checks and balances mechanism itself. But again, the decisions of congress are highly influenced by several political factors, which are the primary focus of the study.

Political interference may take the form of the popularity of the President. It plays a vital role in the passing of the budget. Eexplains that in political interference, the meddling of the President in terms of his allies is significant whether the proposed budget will be deliberated and passed. The university professor states that the President holds power and will work under the executive branch. To quote:

"...in terms of appointments, sya yung may hawak (kasi) kung sino ang ini-appoint nya sa office... sa cabinet yun yung magdidirect, ano ang lalamanin ng budget ng per department. And usually, mapapansin n'yo with the dynamics of our political, katulad nitong 2017 to 2019 is very fresh from the 2016 win of President Duterte and even pagtitignan n'yo ang patterns of presidency, basta fresh yung elections tas very strong yung candidacy ng President very popular in President, naglilipatan sila ng political party." [*In terms of appointments, they [presidents] are usually in charge of who to appoint in a particular office, and its cabinet shall*

¹⁸ Randall G. Holcombe, 'Checks and Balances: Enforcing Constitutional Constraints', *Economies* 6, no. 4 (December 2018): 57.

propose how much budget will be allotted for each department. If you ever noticed, with the dynamics of our politics, like in the year 2017 to 2019 where the regime of President Duterte is still new considering that he was only proclaimed in 2016. Even in the past patterns of the presidency, every after elections when the presumptive President is very popular, they [Senators] will usually change their political party to be part of the majority.]

This is what a political officer and a Deputy Speaker-two-term partylist representative meant:

"Anlaki nung effect na may nakikialam sa politika talaga. Kahit hindi sila members ng house or ng senate lalo na kung di kakampi ng presidente." [The effect is really big considering that there's someone who opposes things even though they are not part of the House of Representatives or Senate, especially if it is coming not from the part of the house of majority.]

"Pero it can happen, kasi minsan kung mas malakas sa Presidente or mas kakampi ka nila then there's a tendency na mas paboran ka rin." [Yeah, it can really happen. Sometimes if you are in the same party as the President, then there is a tendency that your [pet legislation] are more likely to be favored.]

The President has a function and influences where the budget allocation goes. In this case, the Congressional Committees consider the President's priority budget. Some members have an easy ticket to approve their budget because they are close to the President. However, Deputy Speaker Congw Herrera stated:

"Pero alam mo ah, hindi talaga ito sa palakasan kundi sa pasipagan, sa experienced ko, its not more on pakalakasan but more on pasipagan mangulit-dito kasi pakulitan yan eh... pakiusapan, pakulitan, kailangan mo ipakita yung need ng lugar mo, need ng sektor mo. It's more of that. but of course, hindi ako na-even out to say na meron taong anak ng Diyos, na malakas sa taas- na pwedeng paboran. It happens, of course." [But you know, this is not totally about being diligent, in my experience, it's not more on being diligent but more on perseverance- here it is perseverance... communicating, determination, you need to show what is the need of your respective place, need of your sector. It's more of that, but of course, I am not even out to say that there is a son of God that is blessed by the one in heaven- that is always in favor. It happens, of course.]

Everything is political. Political interference is evident when there is a clash between congressional committee members. It is further supported by the claim of a civil servant that is working in the house:

"dyan na pumapasok yung mga political rivalries." In politics, there is always a rival between different parties. Sa sobrang significant ng mga rivalries between political clans, it's the difference between being able to implement roads, bridges and not being able to implement roads and bridges" and "A bridge that will bring improvements to the economy. Diba mas madali mag travel from one area to another kung by land or by road lang ano? And the bridge could have made a difference pero because of mga inggitan, dahil magkaaway 'tong dalawang political families na 'to, hindi nangyayari yung mga important projects which is sad. So yes, malaki yung dynamics niya sa approval ng General Appropriations Act." [This is where political rivalries enter. In politics, there is always a rival between different parties. Because rivalries are so significant between political clans, it is the difference between being able to implement roads and bridges and not implementing roads and bridges" and "A bridge that will bring improvements to the economy. It is easier to travel from one area to another by land or road, right? Furthermore, the bridge could have made a difference, but because of envy and the clash of the two political families, the important projects would not have been implemented, which is sad. So yes, there is a major dynamics in the approval of General Appropriations Act."]

As stated above, political interference also decides whether a certain project must be implemented. Legislator interference is somehow evident in different stages, including the management cycle in which kickback arrangements or collision occurs.¹⁹ In project management, political allies are more prominent in having generous funding for their projects. In this case, those who are rivals of the current administration's projects and plans will be compromised due to political interference inside the executive and legislative branches. The study by Batalla et al.²⁰ shows that political interference patterns and modalities are more noticeable in the national roadworks in the Philippines. There has been an abuse of executive discretion that is discerning from the project selection and prioritization following the project maintenance and evaluation. Hence, many projects were discontinued because of different political beliefs or relationships.

A youth party-list representative also notes a political dynasty involved in the congress in terms of political interference. She narrates that:

¹⁹ E. V. C. Batalla, A. R. Torneo, and F. A. Magno, 'A Survey of Political Interference Patterns and Modalities in National Roadworks in the Philippines', *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review* 18, no. 2 (2018).

²⁰ Batalla, Torneo, and Magno.

"Kaya masasabi ko na yes, there's still a very high vulnerability to political interference if the general membership of congress remains limited to political dynasties or those backed by money interests, especially in the party-list system."
[That is why I can say yes, there is still a very high vulnerability to political interference if the general membership of congress remains limited to political dynasties or those backed by money interests, especially in the party-list system.]

To further the discussion on the topic of political interference, researchers will quote another party-list representative's statement regarding political interference through political parties,

"...if you're saying na political interference in a sense that if you're a Liberal Party, then ano, if the ruling party is Liberal Party then the prioritization of the GAA will go towards the direction that will support the stance of Liberal Party in terms of infrastructure projects. The same way if it's [the] National Party, Nacionalista or NPC. Depending yan sa politics will always be essential on the dynamics of congress because these are all political figures that are...hindi naman kami Accountant lahat eh, kaya we are there to protect the political interest of our respective areas and the same way, if you're belonging to a political party, then why join a political party if you cannot push for their platforms, ano?" *[...if you're saying that political interference in a sense that if you're a Liberal Party, then, if the ruling party is Liberal Party, then the prioritization of the GAA will go towards the direction that will support the stance of Liberal Party in terms of infrastructure projects. It's the same way if it's [the] National Party, Nacionalista, or NPC. This depends to the politics [that] will always be essential on the dynamics of congress because these are all political figures that are... we are not all accountants eh, so that we are there to protect the political interest of our respective areas and the same way, if you're belonging to a political party, then why join a political party if you cannot push for their platforms, right?]*

This statement supports Hassan's argument that the budget is one of the political tools for the ruling party in order for their power to remain and continue ruling the country. The budgeting process is related to a political party's policies or interests and not so much to partisan politics. Thus, we can infer that a broken budgetary process is associated with the failure of the political institution or politicians to draft a progressive budget.²¹

²¹ Christopher Adolph, Christian Breunig, and Chris Koski, 'Something's Got to Give: The Political Economy of State Budget Trade-Off', *Midwest Political Science Association*, 2007.

On the other hand, a party-list representative made clear that speakership also plays a role in the decision of the General Appropriations Act. She said:

“The membership itself of congress which makes it vulnerable due to politicking or interference of those from other bodies in the government,” and “...nakaka apekto rin kung ano ba yung priorities ng kongreso pagdating sa kung paano siya mag dedecide sa GAA. Bakit natin nasabi na yung membership changes, shifts, and empowers, including leadership positions dun sa House. Ito yung from speakers to its deputies na biglang lumobo.” [*The membership of congress makes it vulnerable due to politicking or interference of those from other bodies in the government, and ... it can also affect the priorities in congress when it decides on GAA. This is from the speakers to its deputies that increased the number.*] why can we say that the membership changes, shifts, and empowers, including leadership and position in the house.

Political dynasty is giving a wrong impression in politics due to the overstay of one clan to the power. People tend to emphasize that people in the political dynasty family make politics their business. In the narrative of budget legislation, political dynasty exists, and it influences the budget through favoritism in the budget allocation. The balance between positive stabilization effects in the political dynasty has a possible adverse effect related to corruption.²²

These Congressional Committees were considered critically important agents in passing bills and resolutions. The growth and public welfare they will contribute to nation-building are considered great addition. The idea of interfering in political decisions in budget legislation is primarily evident in the political clamor of each government official. Political interference is used as a power tool for those in the seat. The majority of votes they hold with their allies contributed to the biased judgment and decision regarding budgeting.

The findings highlight several important features of Philippine politics and practical implications for legislative work and lobbying. Aside from self-interest, political clientelism, and political interference, the executive department is also shown to be a significant solid determinant of bill passage and rightfully deserves a more expansive and introspective theoretical framing. For example, knowing the temporality of institutional and political resources in capturing legislators' attention should impel lobbyists, policymakers, Congressional staff, and government personnel engaged in drafting and advocating legislative proposals to observe timing as a strategy consciously.

To take the university professors and the political officer from the 17th congress' statement:

²² Eric Rougier, François Combarrous, and Yves-André Fauré, ‘The “Local Economy” Effect of Social Transfers: An Empirical Assessment of the Impact of the Bolsa Família Program on Local Productive Structure and Economic Growth’, *World Development* 103, no. C (2018): 199–215.

"...the other one is that you have this institution, or you have this office called the LEDAC- uhm Legislative, Executive Development something council? LEDAC yung tawag. Tapos meron ka rin sa Office of the President na Office of the Legislative Liaison. So dito pa lang makikita na ninyo kung paano nasha-shape or paano nakakadagdag sya dun sa influence ng executive office to how the budget is shaped." *[The other one is that you have this institution, or this office called the LEDAC- uhm Legislative, Executive Development, something council? It has called LEDAC. Then you have this Legislative Liason under the Office of the President. This only shows how significant the influence of the executive department is on how the budget is being shaped.]*

This statement may directly indicate that legislators, particularly allies of the President, are mindful of their electoral fate and thus are compelled to work harder to accomplish the existing President's policy programs. The single-term limit for presidents is perhaps another institutional basis for this phenomenon. Philippine presidents are aware they cannot run for another term and tend to strategize the timing of legislative programs, submitting the controversial bills that are more difficult to pass at the beginning of their terms to guarantee their passage before their terms expire.

To add a statement from the university professor:

"...yun yung sa institutional processes. Uhm, the other one is more on cultural yun nga yung personality politics natin. Uhm, we really rely on the power of the President uhm to oil on popularity nang President to really uhm ... bring people together even if they come from different political parties or they have different ideologies or have different interests and rally around something that the President wants. So, it depends on how powerful the person is or how popular the President is compared to the previous President." *[That was about institutional processes, whilst the other is more on cultural, which can be observed under personality politics. We rely on the President's power to oil on the popularity to bring people together even if they come from different political parties or have different ideologies or have different interests and rally around something that the President wants. So, it depends on how powerful the person is or how popular the President is compared to the previous President.]*

"...siguro at least in this current administration malaki ang influence because nakikita natin na nagkakaran ng exchange of interests so on one hand, naapprove nga yung budget which is good. And diba and supposedly, nag cocorespond siya sa needs ng district. On the one hand, the budget is being approved, which is good and should supposedly reflect the district's needs. On the other hand, yung district naman, meron don yung mga regional offices ang executive department

... It's an interplay of being able to tie together the interests of the legislators and those in the executive offices within the district. So malaki ang role ng interplaying within that kasi alam natin na may checks and balances kaya magkakahiwalay yung executive, legislative, and judiciary.” *[Perhaps, at least in the current administration, there is such a big influence [of the executive department] because it can be observed that there is an exchange of interests. It is for there is a huge role interplaying within since there are also checks and balances; that's why the executive, legislative, and judiciary are considered co-equal branches. It is an interplay of being able to tie together the interests of the legislators and the interests of those in the executive offices within the district.*

These mentioned statements practically denote that policymakers in the Philippine House of Representatives who peddle the government's policy cart, on the other hand, must make sure that priority measures should as well be exercised. A youth party-list representative further strengthened this narrative through the following statements:

“Very influential, almost tyrannical, bakit ko nasabi na ganon? In the budget delibs, for the OP's budget, if you can recall what happened in the past years, in the 17th congress, laban talaga yung mismong pag tatanong pa lang sa committee level, samantalang dapat diba function mo yun, magtanong, magbusisi, mag suri, mag raise ng policy questions, sa harap ng lahat ng agencies, kumbaga walang mas mataas dapat pantay-pantay yan.” *[It is very influential and almost tyrannical. How so? In the budget deliberations, the office of the President's budget, if you can recall what happened in the past years in the 17th Congress, we fought really hard in questioning the committee level even though that's really part of our job which also includes questioning, debating, researching, and raising policy concerns in each agency. In layman's terms, there must be no hierarchy; all must work equally.]*

“...merong mga instances wherein because the GAA is “certified urgent” di na namin nakikita yung copy nung mismong GAA, nung book with amendments from members of congress. So, andami talagang nasasakripisyo pag napapamahalaan ka ng hindi demokratikong na tipo ng nasa Malacanang, na dapat sinusunod yung boses ng tao na gusto mag bantay, na gustong mag puna, na gustong mag suri, na gustong sumuporta kung may magaganda naman na proyekto dahil sa minamadali yung budget.” *[There are also instances wherein we weren't able to review the copy of GAA with its amendments from the members of Congress just because it is labeled as certified urgent. Truly, many things are sacrificed when those seated in Malacanang don't really respect the democratic process where the voice of the people prevails.]*

This constitutional prerogative of the Philippine President to signify a bill as urgent can be considered an institutional advantage. While the exercise of this prerogative has its costs, such as patronage and pork politics. These practices are not uncommon in presidential systems where strongly empowered political actors are known to "systematically employ them as an ordinary rule."²³

The presidency is a heavy responsibility, and people size up presidents by how they handle the unexpected crises that come their way. In the end, people will hardly remember whose arms were twisted or how much was paid to achieve the President's programs. Being apt for such tasks requires the Philippine President to be a politician who knows what people want and a pragmatist who can shift smoothly between sensible opportunism and flexible response.

Impacts of Congressional Committees' Dynamics in Budget Legislation Process on the Philippine Economic Development

Various elemental facets of the budget and budgetary policy as a tool for economic development are mostly ignored in the tendency to deal with more practical. Moreover, perhaps, we must understand the possibilities, limitations, and constraints of the budget system and its end product, the budget, as a direct tool for planning, managing and controlling government resources. The budget of the Philippines has transformed from a line-item budget to a performance budget. It is being slowly shaped into a form that will link it more closely to the planning process in much the same manner that the fiscal machinery has changed to cope with the increasing complexity of the total management of the development finances of the country. One of its fundamental strengths is the constant efforts to make it a more viable tool for economic development.

This interview data supports one of the party-list representative's statements under the political interference category utilizing political parties, to quote:

"...if you're saying na political interference in a sense that if you're a Liberal Party, then ano, if the ruling party is Liberal Party, then the prioritization of the GAA will go towards the direction that will support the stance of Liberal Party in terms of infrastructure projects. The same way if it's [the] National Party, Nacionalista or NPC. Depending yan sa politics will always be essential on the dynamics of congress because these are all political figures that are...hindi naman kami Accountant lahat eh, kaya we are there to protect the political interest of

²³ A. Fresno, 'Agenda Control in Presidential Systems: Measurement Alternatives to Capture Latent Variables.', EU Working Papers (Italy: European Institute, 2006).

our respective areas and the same way, if you're belonging to a political party, then why join a political party if you cannot push for their platforms, ano?" *[If you are saying that political interference in the sense that you are a liberal party, then for instance: if the ruling party is Liberal Party, then the prioritization of GAA will go towards the direction that will support the stance of the Liberal Party in terms of infrastructure projects. The same goes for National Party, Nacionalista, or NPC. It depends since politics will always play an essential role in the dynamics of congress because these are all political figures. We are not all accountants here. We all have our political interests that have to be protected to serve our respective areas. This is also applicable if you belong to a political party. Why join a political party if you cannot push for their platforms?]*

This data is one of the targets under the Duterte administration through the Build Build Program (BBP), which seeks to accelerate public infrastructure expenditure from an average of 2.9 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) during the Aquino administration to about 7.3 percent at the end of the Duterte administration. The budgeting process is related to a political party's policies or interests and not so much too partisan politics. Thus, we can infer that a broken budgetary process is associated with the failure of the political institution or politicians to draft a progressive budget.²⁴

To add, a University Professor posits that, "You have to give something to the people- so you have to give back something to the people. So that is basically how self-interest is factored into the whole thing. Kaya balanse kapag titignan mo yung itsura ng budget. Meron' dyan portion uhm dapat we would provide on scholarship programs; we would be funding uhm hospital support for the people. *[You have to really give something to the people, and that's how self-interest is factored into the whole thing. That's why if you look at the budget, it should be balanced. There should be a portion there where we will be providing scholarship programs, or we will be funding hospital support for the people, and those kinds of things are parochial in nature.]* Those are kinds of things that are parochial."

These statements imply that despite the national budget being highly affected by the aforementioned political factors, it seems to be allocated fairly. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority data, this leads to higher economic growth, which manifests in the shift of average GDP growth in the 15th congress from 6.21 percent to the 17th congress having 6.65 percent average growth.

A statement from a university professor will be inserted below to discuss further the impacts of congressional committees' dynamics on Philippine economic development.

²⁴ Adolph, Breunig, and Koski, 'Something's Got to Give: The Political Economy of State Budget Trade-Off'.

“... kahit yung budget ng judiciary, hindi yan gaanong pinapakaelaman; binibigyan sila ng judicial autonomy as stated in the Constitution. So, kung ganun yung concept ng political interference then merong tayon institutional checks and balances to prevent such kind, kumabaga turfing...” *[Even the judiciary budget is not meddling that much; they are given by the judicial autonomy as stated in the Constitution. So, if that is the concept of political interference, then we have institutional checks and balances to prevent such kinds, like turfing...]*

This statement denotes that the preoccupation with a balanced budget, as enunciated in RA 992, has been consistent with the effort to pursue a longer-perspective plan for government operations and the desire to utilize the budget as an instrument for planning economic development. Thus, it can be said that if we insist on the "balanced budget" concept per se, for the maintenance of minimum governmental functions and adherence to some form of fiscal discipline, to end this annual structural budget margins based on specific criteria such as political interference, self-interest, and political clientelism as to name a few.

III. CONCLUSION

The four influencing factors in the dynamics of congressional committees in budget legislation were discussed, and all key informants agreed. The study indicated that most of the narratives made by the key informants resulted in the influencing factors: self-interest, political clientelism, political interference, and the executive department were all significantly influential in approving the final budget per department. The presence of self-interest does not automatically equate to corruption, but this may be used as a tool to promote the country's developmental aspect.

In contrast, political clientelism has features that our model predicts reduced electoral competition, a preference among incumbents against redistribution, and lethargic economic development. The key informants of the paper have all come to a consensus that political clientelism is a factor in which departments the congress will decide to pour a particular amount of budget and what to prioritize each fiscal year. Moreover, political interference is used as a powerful tool of the congressional committees – mainly in the power seat. The majority of votes they hold with their allies contributed to the biased judgment and decision regarding budgeting.

The idea of interfering in political decisions in budget legislation is primarily evident in the political clamor of each government official. The President's influence is an influencing factor in budget legislation. The popularity and alliance between the President's seat and the congressional committee are the key players in budget legislation. Therefore, the dynamics

of Philippine politics play a more comprehensive and political approach in budget legislation. The study has also proven that the Philippine government's fiscal position plays a significant role in fostering economic growth and improving social outcomes. It is a crucial indicator of macroeconomic stability and the primary determinant of the country's capacity to spend on essential social services and developmental goals. In the 17th congress, the government's fiscal position relatively increased compared to the 15th and 16th congress. Thus, keeping house members in order is one of the most critical tasks for the next fiscal years to maintain the trend.

The relevance of findings and the inference made by the researchers with the current situation of Philippine budgeting, the researchers were able to formulate the following recommendations: (1) Have more robust policies that would prevent the budget legislators from relying too much on political factors in deciding the annual budget. Also, strengthening the existing checks and balances mechanism of government in budgeting and auditing; (2) Measuring up to what extent each of these political factors affects the budget utilization in order to assess the overall effectiveness of the Philippine budget system; (3) Legislatures should continue to improve their capacity to analyze budget proposals against a standard set of assumptions to help track decisions and produce more informed decisions- whether it is through separate legislative budget offices or the use of executive staff, legislative debates over budget proposals should be grounded in a process geared to produce reliable and credible estimates. Legislatures should also continue strengthening their committee structures to enhance the capacity of members to digest and process complex budgetary information.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researchers would like to extend their profound gratitude to Prof. Ramces Dili for his excellent mentorship, support, and immense contributions to this research paper and Dr. Alexander Gonzales for his encouragement and assistance in initiating this study. This research study would not have been possible without the extraordinary support and cooperation of our Key Informants, who served as a tool to assess and make this study successful. The researchers also acknowledge the concerted support extended by colleagues and friends in completing this study.

FUNDING

None

CONFLICTING INTEREST

None

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