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# OF SCREAMS AND SILENCES: THE POLITICS OF SPACES AND VOICES

PPSA Webinar Series Working Papers  
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## *Message*



At the core of politics is power, but the coordinates of power are changing. Today's digital era is atomizing claims to power and reconstituting the space in which these claims could be made. We are witnessing an explosion of power-claimants—the social media influencer, the tech-savvy crowd mobilizer—who are harnessing various communication platforms for good and ill. On one hand, this is great news for students and researchers of political science as there are more exciting things to examine besides the state. On the other hand, the seeming pluralist universe belies the underlying asymmetries of structures and relations from which power proceeds.

The barriers to entry in discursive politics may have been lowered by the internet, but those at the margins can never quite challenge those who wield power. Who belong to the margins? The concerns of minorities, poor, displaced and victims of violence may have gone mainstream but they pull little political weight. The usual guarantors of the interests of those belonging to the margins—vibrant civil society, political parties, competitive elections, free press, and service-driven state agents—are losing substantial ground to entrenched elites and new social forces. Freedoms and guaranteed rights to these minorities, key tenets of a liberal democracy, are under siege.

The papers in this series cover a wide array of topics interrogating power at various scales and contexts. State disposition of power, via the President, agents like the Ombudsman and legal institutions like the Peace and Order Council are examined in terms of how they facilitate or constrain participation from below. The mechanisms and outcomes in public-service delivery in the areas of heritage, solid waste, domestic water, local development, infrastructure, and health are described. Local government initiatives and civil society agency around conflict, peace, violence, and human rights are mapped to identify gaps and challenges. The papers also showcase narratives of rebels, the displaced, women, and peace-builders. Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the new terrain of state centrism and community responses in the peripheries (i.e., Bangsamoro



Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao or BARMM, Baguio, Davao and Kalinga province) are explored in several papers.

The PPSA expresses enormous gratitude to the authors for agreeing to have their manuscripts published in this volume as working papers. The papers were earlier slated for presentation in the PPSA International Conference in Iloilo City for April 23-24, 2020. Following the conference's cancellation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the authors agreed to present them instead in a series of weekly web-based seminars (webinars). The PPSA successfully migrated the keynote speeches by Dr. Alfred McCoy and Dr. Leonora Angeles, and the panel sessions for the PPSA International Conference online. A total of 42 presentations in 10 webinar sessions were held via Zoom and live-streamed through Facebook from June to October 2020.

The great feat of undertaking the webinar and completing this publication was made possible largely through support from Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), which has agreed to realign the approved 2020 grant to the PPSA towards these endeavors. It is a testament of the faith of KAS-Philippines Country Director Dr. Stefan Jost on the PPSA leadership to rise above adversity—as the 2020 international conference was the second time in a row that a KAS-sponsored event fell victim to a disaster. Much credit also goes to the 2019-2021 PPSA Board of Trustees, who took on the enormous task of organizing and moderating the webinar panels, and shepherding the manuscripts through peer review and revisions. Enormous thanks as well to our disciplinary comrades-in-arms, political science academics and practitioners who agreed to review the manuscripts over a tight timeframe, and the pool of copy editors and layout artists from the University of the Philippines Visayas who labored through hundreds of pages. Administering this publication project and taking care of the traffic are Jerome Jogno, Program Manager of KAS-Philippines, and Febrey Esclares, PPSA Research Assistant.

As a professional association, we practice what we preach. This volume reflects the diverse scholarship of our members, writing from and about politics of their locality and about issues that matter to them and their communities. This echoes the gender- and region-balanced profile of the PPSA Board of Trustees. It is also living proof that the business of creating and connecting can and will continue, pandemic or not. Moving forward, we hope to continue to provide the space for truly inclusive, participative, and meaningful engagements.

Rock on, PPSA!

  
ROSALIE ARCALA HALL, Ph.D.  
President  
*PPSA Board of Trustees 2019 – 2021*



## *Message*



State power, Bob Jessop writes in his work “The State: Past, Present, Future”, is a property of the state acting in the capacity of an autonomous subject. The state is ought to stand outside and above the various formal and informal social formations and establish rules that bind the behavior of people. Aside from regulating social relationships, it is also assumed that states have its own resources and appropriate these in determined ways.

The state is seen to favor select actors in the society and privilege few and their accompanying interest over the others. Interests stemming from multiple elites, however, seem to undermine the capacity of the state. In

fact, it puts into question on whether the state has its own embedded autonomy, or it is being captured by a force above its own machinery.

In the Philippines, various historical factors have interacted over different spatiotemporal horizons that shaped the country’s structural and institutional arrangements. Experiences from the past have illustrated how power can lead to various patterns of domination and transformation. Ideally, changes of balance of forces have to be mediated through institutional structures and procedures of the state embedded in the political system. In case of the Philippines, however, as seen by myriad political scientists, the state is captured by diverse interests and enjoys little autonomy from dominant classes, in particular political clans and powerful families.

The product of historical events produced institutions that renounced the former. The historical and formal constitution of states, Jessop argues, always results from past struggles, and is reproduced (or transformed) in and through struggle. In the process of undergoing changes, however, the normative function of the Philippine state to liberate Filipinos from its socio-economic problems remain unchanged even up to this date. Scholars have attributed this inability to solve pressing issues to the institutions that were inherited from its colonial past.

With the successful removal of dictatorship in 1986, civil society in the country is described to be vibrant. Yet, there are still limitations especially in the face of persistent weak political institutions and practice of patronage. In a time where democratic ideals are being questioned, it is crucial for the last bastion of democracy to stand as a beacon to guide and inspire others.

It is unfortunate that the environment was not conducive for the international conference to be conducted physically, but I am grateful that the Philippine Political Science Association continued to conduct the event albeit in online platform to discuss these relevant issues in this challenging times. The online series proved to be one of the mediums where political science scholars can present their findings on how several actors in the society play a key role in examining the different manifestations of power at different levels.

Now more than ever, with the onslaught of the global pandemic and its effects to the health and economy of the nation and its people, coupled with natural calamities wreaking havoc in the country, Filipino people demand the government to provide necessary interventions in the provision of public goods and services. Civil society is indeed essential in filling the gap and amplifying voices of those who are relegated to the margins and bringing them into the spotlight. These discussions are important especially when welfare of Filipinos is put into risk.

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung extends its appreciation to Dr. Rosalie Hall, President of the Philippine Political Science Association, members of the PPSA Board of Trustees, and individual authors for their contribution, hard work, and dedication to continue the scholarly tradition amidst these trying times. Last but not least, I thank the persons behind this publication, to Ms. Febrey Bless Esclares, from PPSA, and to Mr. Jerome Jogno, from KAS Philippines for their tireless support since the conceptualization of this endeavor.



**PROF. DR. STEFAN JOST**

Country Director

*Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Philippines Office*



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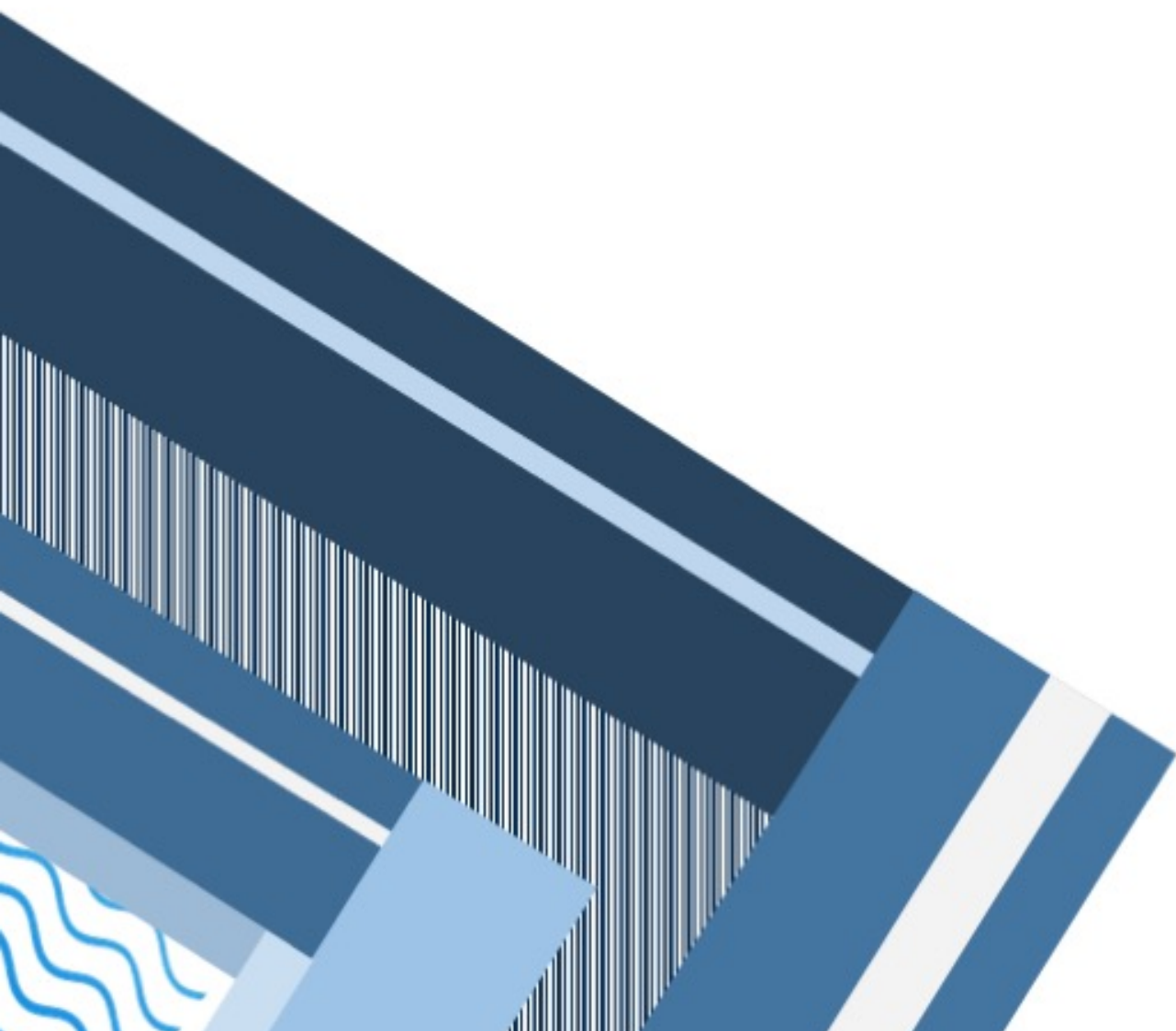
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# **WP SERIES 6**

## **UNPACKING THE PEACE AND ORDER COUNCIL IN SELECT AREAS IN MINDANAO: AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS**





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## Of Hybridity, Fragility and Fragmentation: Interrogating the Local Turn and the Indigenous in Local Peace and Security Mechanisms in Post Conflict BARMM

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### Introduction

This paper seeks to re-examine the local turn in peacebuilding, applied to local peace mechanisms in Mindanao, Philippines. Local peace mechanisms, also known by other names as local peace councils, peace committees, or district advisory peace committees, are common devices used by communities to resolve or manage disputes. They advance the strategies for peace and development initiatives supported by international actors. Seen as essential in addressing local conflict dynamics, they are also assumed to embody the local turn peacebuilding precepts of local ownership and to provide endogenous solutions to conflicts, injustice and insecurity.

The peace settlement between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2014 exemplified the trend of local turn in peacebuilding. The Bangsamoro political settlement was a product of negotiation, compromise and collaboration between the two principal actors in the conflict, the Philippine government and the MILF. Although international actors had been involved in the peace process, these were limited to brokering negotiations and monitoring the implementation of the peace accord.

The Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), the foundational legal charter of the new Bangsamoro political entity, has been the subject of consultation and contestation among peace stakeholders and political actors, locally and nationally. The Mamasapano



massacre in 2015, where 44 policemen were killed in an operation to catch a terror suspect, is said to have caused the non-passage of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL). The BBL was the precursor of the BOL that was crafted during the term of President Benigno Aquino Jr. after the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). Some provisions of the BBL caused contentions between the national and local politicians and among local politicians in Mindanao. Controversial issues in the draft organic law pertained to territory, power-sharing, and resource generation between the central government and regional government. Other disputed provisions included the administration of the justice system as well as the protection of the rights and participation of minorities in the region, particularly the Indigenous peoples.

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) was created after the ratification of the BOL in 2019. The Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) would be the transitory government in the BARMM until 2022 when the first elections would be held to usher the new set of elected leaders of BARMM. The BARMM has been constituted not only to fulfill the aspirations of Muslim Filipinos for self-government but also to represent Indigenous, Christians and settlers living in the region.

International actors are present in BARMM and are involved in a range of peace and development activities. Some scholars argue that despite their affirmations of the 'local turn', international actors still adhere to the notions of liberal peace through active or implicit promotion of democratisation, marketisation and liberal norms, albeit in a coherent and more participatory approach. These new forms of 'interventions' are observed to be either top-down and using locals as brokers or implementors, or pre-designed by experts with very little scope for local innovations. The nature and scope of international development and rehabilitation assistance in the BARMM remains to be tested against the 'local turn' parameters, or examined, if indeed, they still have an impact on local peacebuilding strategies. This is not however part of the current article.



One conflict often glossed over in BARMM is that over land and resources between Indigenous peoples and other more dominant groups in the region. This paper thus asks, how do local peace mechanisms contribute in resolving conflicts involving dominant groups and Indigenous peoples? In a broader perspective, how has the political settlement contributed in resolving issues between Muslim groups and Indigenous peoples in BARMM? Is the purely local solution – using local peace mechanisms, the way to go in resolving their conflicts?

### **Interrogating the local turn in peacebuilding**

The local turn in peacebuilding came out as a critique of liberal peacebuilding and its failures in post-conflict non-Western societies. The critique was particularly directed at international intervention with an agenda towards the construction of Westphalian model of state and institution building in post-conflict societies. The liberal state model has been criticised for ignoring local contexts and for its unintended consequences on human and social outcomes. In the last 25 years, the local turn has been embraced and supported by the United Nations and international actors. This has led to both conceptual and practice shifts in the way peacebuilding is conducted emphasizing local ownership and local capacity building.

The local turn in peacebuilding, despite its emancipatory ambition, has its own pitfalls. The record of local turn peacebuilding has shown mixed results and remains contested. Service delivery has been found to have improved in Timor Leste after a local peacebuilding strategy was developed years after an overwhelming presence of international peace actors. It had the effect however of transferring the burden of state responsibility to local authorities and masked inefficient or illegitimate central authority (Wallis 2017). In certain studies across the globe, the 'local' is deemed too shallow, too centralised and deployed as a rhetorical or instrumental tool. Local peace could fall prey



to the same vice that liberal peacebuilding has been known for – which is to disregard as unimportant or unmanageable local tensions or conflicts. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, for instance, international peacekeepers were unable to handle local violence continuing after the peace agreement. The conflict escalated into more virulent form. In other cases, local hostilities are regarded as mere part of the broader state-insurgency war, thus glossing over localised conflicts on the ground. These include inter-ethnic or intra-ethnic clashes, clan wars, conflicts over land and resources, or competition over economic and political power.

One key issue confronting local peacebuilding is how it manages inter-ethnic relationships and conflicts. Many peace settlements are a victory of a particular group, often belonging to an ethnic group or denomination. This often leaves out other groups in exercising power, imposes 'majority' rules and norms, and requires integration by other groups. Conflicts over land and resources have also ensued, often at the disadvantage of those groups with little part or influence in the new political arrangement. When these are not resolved, new frontiers of conflict may emerge that could threaten the viability of the ongoing peace process.

Power differentials are present everywhere. Power imbalances in post-conflict are trigger points for violent confrontations that could undermine the peace process. Local conflicts are present - and are persisting, in the BARMM in varying degrees and intensities. Asymmetrical relationships, a common feature of BARMM political landscape, exist in various levels. This is seen in class, status, gender, and traditional hierarchical differentiation. The region has the highest concentration of political dynasties (Mendoza) and of warlords with private armies (International Alert). The Indigenous peoples in BARMM remain the most vulnerable as well as the least politically represented group in the region.





In this paper, I adopt a critical view of the local turn in peacebuilding. From a theoretical perspective, I see the 'local' as not local *per se* but as representing interests and ideas from various sources – national or global or transnational. The local is also highly contested: whose local is represented, who represents the local, and how should local ideas be constituted – or privileged. From a practical perspective, how should 'local' be constructed in devising local peace structures that could appropriately respond to a type of conflict? What should be the core function of local peace mechanisms and how should 'capacity building' be deployed to ensure that different local voices are heard from the ground and local agency exercised in seeking solutions to their problems. Power should be front and centre in examining how local peacebuilding could be more attuned to issues on the ground and deployed more responsively.

## Methodology

As part of the project on local peace and security platforms in selected areas in Mindanao, this paper aims to evaluate how local peace councils address peace and conflict issues in the localities they cover. The focus is on how they respond to inter-ethnic conflicts. The paper also compares the functioning of state-sponsored peace and security councils with non-state community-based peace committees. The comparative study is important to show the differences in the composition, function and operations of state-based and community-based peace communities in an area that has a predominant ethnic composition (the lumads or Indigenous peoples in Barangay Kuya) and in one where there is huge diversity in population (the tri-peoples in Kabacan). It is also to demonstrate how 'local' is constituted in different ways and the power relations they embed or express. How are the conflicts dealt with by these different mechanisms and how is 'local turn peacebuilding' operationalised – what/ who does it serve, who are the members, how do they relate to other peace platforms locally and regionally – or perhaps nationally? How are they resourced and with whom do they collaborate?



Two areas have been selected for comparison – Barangay Kuya in South Upi, Maguindanao province and Kabacan in North Cotabato. Barangay Kuya is a rural farming upland community whose inhabitants are predominantly Indigenous, belonging to the Teduray and Lambiangan peoples. Kabacan is a municipality, a centre of agriculture in Southern Mindanao. It is home to tri-peoples (Muslims, Christian and lumads) although seven (7) barangays had elected to be part of BARMM. It is also home to the University of Southern Mindanao, a premier agricultural school in the Philippines, which hosts the satellite office of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI). (During our fieldwork, I discovered that it is also a centre of excellence in research on Philippine carabaos or buffalos.

Data for this article have been generated through document review (mainly newspaper articles, public documents, and social media postings) and qualitative interviews with some members of local peace councils in these two sites. Fieldwork was conducted in these areas in November 2019, thus allowing the author to also observe the general peace and order situation at the time of the visit.

### **Local peacebuilding and local conflicts**

Barangay Kuya and Kabacan are a study in contrast and similarities. Both of them, though outside of the Muslim insurgency narrative, are drawn into the broader web of conflict architecture. By proximity to the core conflict provinces of Maguindanao and Lanao provinces, both localities have experienced violent skirmishes. Kuya is within Maguindanao, the stronghold province of MILF, while Kabacan is part of the province of North Cotabato, a predominantly Christian population and not a part of the BARMM. In the February 2019 plebiscite, 63 barangays of North Cotabato opted to be part of the BARMM. Both areas have supported the peace process in BARMM



Kuya and Kabacan have different conflict dynamics although both have experienced intermittent violent incidents before and prior to the current political settlement.

### **State-sponsored versus community peace committees**

The difference between the two locations – and mechanisms (state-based local peace and order councils) during our fieldwork, was quite significant. Armed confrontations between groups of Indigenous peoples and MILF groups have displaced many Indigenous peoples. They were driven away by armed groups from lands they cultivate and claim as their ancestral domain. The local village council headed by a Teduray leader could not function as the village head was also a target and part of the conflict. Mediation failed, and the military did not intervene. When fighting continued and caused further displacement, the military intervened and the conflict is now being mediated.

On the other hand, Kabacan was all ‘peace and quiet’ at that time. Interviews reveal the multi-sectoral composition of the municipal council that includes the USM, a key stakeholder in the maintenance of peace and security in the area. Compared to Kuya, the Kabacan council is well-resourced in procuring transportation and gadgets for personnel and volunteers. Serious violent conflicts however have flared up in Kabacan in the past several months. There have been armed clashes between rival MNLF and MILF groups, displacing hundreds of people. In August 2020, nine farmers were summarily executed in a highway close to the USM. Both Catholic and Muslim groups have publicly denounced the killings and sought impartial investigation.

### **Conclusion**

At the ground level, the hybrid and local turn in peacebuilding could be seen in the creation of mechanisms to deal with local peace and security. In this paper I examine the functioning of various local peace and order councils in selected BARMM areas in dealing with local peace and security issues. These local mechanisms have varied in their



capacities and operations. While there have been some successes in some areas, local mechanisms are generally used in addressing domestic and other small community issues. In most parts however, they have in general remained underutilised, un-used or ineffective in addressing more serious and often complex issues. Local peace and security platforms could play a more effective role in securing the peace and fostering stability. I argue that the limited capacities of most of this local innovation manifest the continuing contestation and tension between national and local and local and indigenous. Asymmetrical relationships at various levels continue to hamper effective engagement and participation of community-based organizations and the ability to engage the broader community. At the operational level, there are no clear set of rules and guidelines on composition and selection of community-based organizations and the nature of their participation. There is also lack of adequate resourcing of these councils. As preliminary conclusion, I could say that the limited function of local peace councils in these areas are reflective of continuing structural issues: one in the concentration or primacy of central powers – the national military in dealing with peace and security in BARMM, without adequate connection to these local peace structures.

While the establishment of the BARMM has been hailed as a landmark in paving the way for Bangsamoro self-governance, more concrete policies are needed to fully operationalise the local turn in safeguarding local peace and security.

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## Unpacking the Peace and Order Council Mechanism in Select Mindanao Areas Using a Peace Psychology Framework

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To address the problem of insecurity in the Philippines, the government has set up a law establishing peace and order councils from the barangay up to the national level. The main function of the council is to ensure peace and order and public safety, addressing both direct and structural violence in the process. It is particularly tasked to address the problem of insurgency and to take decisive actions in emergency situations.

In response to this mandate, Peace and Order Councils in various parts of the country have been organized. Not all of these Peace and Order Councils, however, are effective and not all of them follow the law in toto. This is because some contexts call for an alternative way of addressing peace and order and public safety, given their more complex state of affairs (Hall, 2017). Example of this is the Bangsamoro region and some of its neighboring communities, which are a hotbed of territorial conflict and fraught with horizontal hostilities (Paredes, 2015; Hall, 2017; Rood, 2005). Their situation causes security within the areas to be volatile (Hall, 2015).

This being the current security landscape, I deem it best to investigate the Peace and Order Council mechanisms in select areas in Mindanao using a framework that integrates episodes and structures of violence and peace. In what follows, I first give a brief overview of peace and violence and then I outline how I use the aforementioned framework to unpack the mechanisms utilized to counteract violence and promote peace and order.



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## Peace and Violence: A Brief Overview

Peace, as a construct, is contested (Gawerc, 2006). As such Galtung (1969) proposes a clear-cut differentiation between negative and positive peace. He defines the former as absence of personal or direct violence and the latter as absence of structural violence or presence of social justice. Christie and colleagues, (2008), on the other hand, describe negative peace as attempts to lessen violent episodes and positive peace as the advancing of social arrangements that mitigate all forms of injustices — social, racial, gender, economic, and ecological — and forge social order that satisfies people’s basic needs and rights and corrects structural inequalities.

Violence ranges from physical and psychological harm, varieties of crime, sociopolitical discrimination (Imbusch, 2003), to social domination, political oppression, and economic exploitation (Christie, et al., 2001). It is referred to as that act of harming another in one’s quest for his/her own gain, insulting in the process basic human interests in sustaining oneself, one’s well-being, and one’s sense of meaning (Kent, 2010).

## A Conceptual Framework to Understanding Peace and Violence

Following Galtung, Christie (2006) and colleagues (Christie, et al., 2001) constructed a framework that weaves together episodes and structures of violence and peace. This model differentiates between episodic or direct violence and structural violence as well as distinguishes between peacemaking and peacebuilding. Together, peacemaking and peacebuilding set up a system of peace.

Direct violence, also referred to as episodic violence, is the act of inflicting physical violence or direct injury against another person (Gibson, 2012). It is intermittent and normally harms or kills people swiftly and dramatically. It is also oftentimes deliberate, a means to an end, personal, and at times politically motivated. It happens in a particular



time-bound event, with identifiable victim and perpetrator (Christie, et al., 2008). As such, there is also an actual physical damage, especially to the human body (Kent, 2010).

Structural violence, on the other hand, refers to the suffering indirectly inflicted on some people through the social system (Kent, 2010). For Christie and colleagues (2008), structural violence is affliction meted out to people in a slow but steady process via systems that are built into the framework of political, economic, and cultural structures. It denies people the satisfaction of their basic needs and it is the outcome of the way social institutions are constructed, privileging some people while disadvantaging others. Galtung (1969) points to structural violence as social injustice.

Direct violence, thus, is an event, while structural violence is a process (Galtung, 1990). They are, however, clearly linked such that structural violence can be manifested through direct violence, and direct violence, likewise, can eventually bring about structural violence (Opatow, 2001). Prevention and mitigation of these forms of violence lead us back to negative peace or absence of direct violence and positive peace or absence of structural violence. Christie (2006) and colleagues (Christie, et al., 2001) refer to these as peacemaking and peacebuilding in their framework.

Peacemaking is a set of behaviors designed to lessen the possibility, the rate of occurrence, and the force of violent incidents. It tends to be reactive as it addresses actual act or threat of violence, but it stresses nonviolent means. It is time, space, and context-specific, contingent on the issues raised by the parties involved and normally supports the status quo (Christie, et al., 2001). When effectively carried out, peacemaking may reduce direct violence and draw conflicting parties together into a more positive and productive relationship (Christie, 2006). Peacemaking, which advances negative peace, is also sometimes referred to as “episodic peacebuilding”.

Peacebuilding is intended to lessen structural violence (Christie, et al., 2001). Hence, it is marked by extensive social justice movements that pursue fair and equitable social arrangements and sustainable satisfaction of human needs. It also works towards reconstructing oppressive cultural narratives that legitimize superiority of one group over another, repressive political structures that prevent equal chances for representation and voice, and economic systems that rob people of means to grow and develop (Christie, 2006). Peacebuilding, which promotes positive peace, is also referred to as “structural peacebuilding”.

Collectively, peacemaking or episodic peacebuilding and peacebuilding or structural peacebuilding work together to set up a system that addresses peaceful means and just ends (Christie, 2006). Here we see that sustainable peace calls for peacemaking endeavors that push toward long term and large scale social change and that promotes more equitable social systems (Christie, et al., 2001). Figure 1 below shows the relationships of direct/episodic and structural violence as well as peacemaking or episodic peacebuilding and peacebuilding or structural peacebuilding.

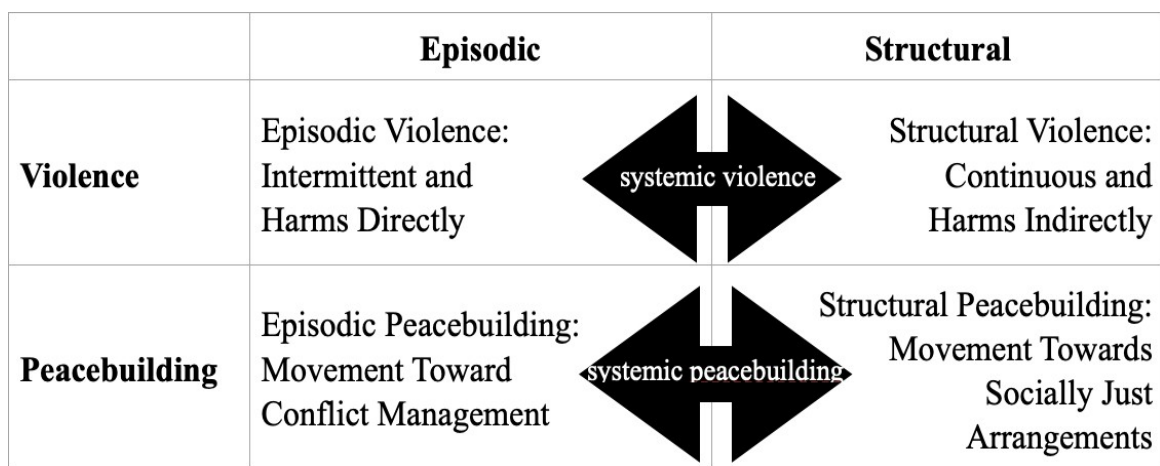


Figure 1. Systems Perspective on Violence and Peacebuilding (Christie, 2006)



## Research Objectives

Employing the four-way model of peace and violence outlined above, this study captures the direct and structural episodes of violence that are prevalent in select areas in Mindanao. It also looks into the peacemaking and peacebuilding mechanisms employed by the Peace and Order Councils of these areas.

## Method

Qualitative approach to conducting investigations was employed to carry off the objectives of this study. This section describes the participants, data gathering procedure, and data analysis utilized to answer the study's research questions.

## *Participants*

I conducted 15 interviews with members of the Peace and Order Councils of four select local government units in Mindanao — Cotabato City, Marawi City, Datu Salibo, Maguindanao, and Kabacan, Cotabato. These local government units are part of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), except for Kabacan, Cotabato. Kabacan is geographically located near some parts of the Bangsamoro area and seven of its 24 barangays are officially part of the Bangsamoro autonomous region. This is after residents of this barangay voted in favor of joining the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region through a plebiscite. The participants of the study represent various sectors in the community and local government offices. I had four interviews with the military, one with the police, one with the academe, two with the civil society, one with the human rights commission, and six with the local government units, with representatives from local executive office, local legislative office, public safety office, the local civil registry, the disaster risk reduction management office, and the environment and natural resources office.

### ***Data Gathering Procedure and Data Analysis***

Following proper protocol, I first sought permission from each of the local executive officers of the local government units where I gathered data before I proceeded to secure an interview with the council members. I audio-recorded all interviews only after I obtained the consent of the participants. The interviews revolved around the participants' description of their Peace and Order Council in terms of its nature, form, task, membership, funding mechanism, functionality, accountability, and security platforms; the dynamic between the local government unit and the military and police in the council; how this dynamic affects the counter-insurgency and anti-terror operations in the area as well as the deployment of forces for humanitarian operations; and the implications of the declaration of Martial Law of Philippine President, Rodrigo Duterte, on the operations of their Peace and Order Council.

I analyzed the interview transcripts guided by the study's framework. As such, I focused on the data that pertained to direct and structural violence, peacemaking or episodic peacebuilding, as well as peacebuilding or structural peacebuilding. Another qualitative researcher also analyzed the data to ensure validity of findings and rigor in the conduct of qualitative research. We found that we have similar findings and that we have interpretation agreement across data.

### **Results**

Findings of the study show direct and structural episodes of violence that are taking place in the study areas as well as various peacemaking and peacebuilding initiatives employed by the various Peace and Order Councils. Following the study's framework, I first present here the episodes of violence and follow it with the peacemaking and peacebuilding mechanisms.

### ***Direct Violence***

The participants of the study enumerated several episodes of direct violent acts that, according to them, are occurring in their place. These are acts of terrorism, killings, and criminal activities.

The acts of terrorism, such as bombing or threats of bombing, are, according to the participants, carried out by such groups as the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, the Abu Sayyaf Group, and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or ISIS. Most bombing attacks happen in urban centers. One interviewee shared an incident involving an improvised explosive device in one of the malls in Cotabato City. He said, however, that the persons involved were caught right away. They were, according to him, a group who pledged allegiance to the Islamic State.

Killings may be a consequence of rido, or clan conflict. Here, conflicting clans or families, may show their hostilities against each other through a succession of retaliatory violent acts. These happen when a clan exacts retribution for a perceived injustice that is done to one's family or clan. Killings also happen during armed encounters between the military and rebel groups. Sometimes these armed encounters cause damage to local people's properties.

Direct violence, according to the participants of the study, also occur via criminal activities, such as kidnapping for ransom, drug trafficking, carnapping, robbery, thievery, extortion, firefights, and murder, amongst others. There are also cases of traffic violation and illegal logging in the area.

### ***Structural Violence***

Human rights violation is the leading structural violence that is occurring in the areas being studied. This happens when the military carries out operations that aim to eliminate





threats of violence, but in the process impinge on people's human rights. Human rights violations are manifested through episodes of direct violence in the form of enforced disappearance, torture, killing, maiming, and illegal arrest.

Another form of structural violence that is closely associated with human rights violation is poverty. Because people are poor, they cannot file charges when their human rights are infringed. Linked to this is also the reality that government support, such as legal assistance to cases like this, is very much wanting. The unwieldy procedures in the government bureaucracy even slows down the provision of assistance to these people.

Many people in the Bangsamoro region are not able to easily access and enjoy many social services. According to the participants of the study, education services are inadequate and health services are also very much insufficient. One of them said there are only two public hospitals in the province of Maguindanao and these are not enough to cater to the population of the province.

The Bangsamoro struggle for self-determination has been going on for decades and the many encounters and firefights between the rebel groups and government armed forces that are taking place have become so much a part of the lives of the people that they now see them as "normal." Also, the government has no clear mechanism on how to help those affected by these armed conflicts. For instance, bombings caused by an armed encounter may result to damage in civilian housing and begs the question, "Anong remedy doon?" (what is our remedy?). As one interviewee remarked, "hanggang ngayon wala pa rin sagot ang ...government natin diyan..." (Until now the government does not have an answer).



### *Peacemaking*

The Peace and Order Councils in the Bangsamoro areas and in Kabacan, Cotabato come up with several activities that intend to counter the episodes of direct violence discussed above. For instance, to address terrorism, the peace and order councils intensify their intelligence operations. To tackle criminal pursuits, especially during community activities, they implement stricter security systems. They also carry out ronda or night patrol so as to keep watch over the place at regular intervals.

Besides night patrol, local government units also put up check points, implement curfew, enforce traffic management, deploy police and military in malls and other places where there are public activities, stand guard over waterways, impose penalty among traffic violators, require business establishments to put up CCTV, and enjoin people to go through bag inspection, amongst others. For the interviewees, conduct of these activities promptly intercept bombing attacks or contraband drugs as well as help maintain peace and order in the area.

The participants of the study believe that the implementation of martial law has helped address and contain criminality, insurgency, and terrorism in the locality. According to them, with the imposition of martial law, they are able to feel the presence of the military and the police, as well as, see them do their jobs especially in times of emergency.

For the participants, the peace and order council is one way that various groups in the community are able to work together as a team to address criminality, terrorism, and insurgency, as well as, ensure harmony marked by lack of violence and conflict. As the council has representations from various sectors in the community, it would now be easy for the military to coordinate with the barangay officials, tap the help of traditional leaders, Muslim religious leaders, priests, and pastors, and work hand in glove with various civil society organizations. Through the council also, the various sectors are also



able to share their views regarding peace and order and their thoughts on how criminality, terrorism, and insurgency may be addressed.

### *Peacebuilding*

One important peacebuilding initiative that is undertaken in the study areas is the representation of various sectors in the Peace and Order Council from the municipal/city level up to provincial and regional levels. There are representations from barangays, civil service organizations, Christians, Muslims, indigenous peoples, the academe, and business sectors besides the local chief executive office, local legislation office, military, police, fire department, and various offices in the local government.

Another valuable peacebuilding measure is the enactment of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, through which the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region has been established. The law allows the Bangsamoro people to self-govern within the framework of the Philippine constitution. Human rights protection is also incorporated in the law.

Some local government units have also created certain offices to help address violence and promote peace and order in the area. These offices enhance the effort of the Peace and Order Council in addressing security issues and other social problems. Examples of these are Cotabato City's Public Safety Office which works hand in hand with the military and police in maintaining peace and order in the city as well as its City Anti-Drug Abuse Council or CADAC, which addresses problems on illegal drugs.

A unique and significant way that the people in the areas being studied manage conflict, and thus, lessen violence is their traditional process of addressing rido or clan conflict and the extra-judicial use of force that seeks revenge. Here, the military or police may be seen as working together with the Muslim leaders or clan leaders to mediate, negotiate, or even intervene if there is a need to, so as to prevent the escalation of hostilities to a critical point that may already affect the community.



The military and police have also reframed the way they look at "rebel groups" in the area, and thus, now label them as peace-inclined groups. There is also the ongoing institutionalization of army transformation roadmap, which aims to transfigure the military into an organization that Filipinos can be proud of: credible, efficient, reliant, and responsive. And lastly, the local government units continue to ensure development in their respective localities via construction of roads and building of hospitals, amongst others, so as to make certain that people are able to access available social services.

## **Discussion**

Results of the study surface direct and structural violent episodes as well as peacemaking and peacebuilding strategies. I illustrate in this section how I make sense of these findings by elaborating on their theoretical and practical implications. I also elaborate on the limitations of the study and possible future directions.

### ***Theoretical Implications***

The results of the study point to the potency of the four-way peace psychology framework in elucidating on the concepts of peace and violence. Using the framework helps for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of these complex and intricately entwined phenomena. The model also contributes to a better appreciation of hazards that seriously threaten human security and prompts us to take on behaviors and practices that foster human welfare, safety, and survival (Christie, et al., 2008).

The findings provide support to the framework used in the study. Using such framework one can easily distinguish between episodic and structural forms of peace and violence (Christie, 2006; Christie, et al., 2001). The framework illustrates that violent episodes (e.g., killings, illegal arrests) are manifestations of systemic factors (e.g., human rights violations), rooted in structure-based inequalities (e.g., military as given more power



through the declaration of Martial Law). As such, prevention and mitigation of violence and promotion of sustainable peace require systemic peacebuilding efforts (e.g., Bangsamoro Organic Law) that transform systems of violence (e.g., poverty) into more equitable and cooperative interpersonal and social arrangements (Christie, 2006).

Findings of the study attest to how pursuers of peace may also be perpetrators of violence at the same time, whether advertently or inadvertently. For instance, the military and the police are tasked to ensure peace and order and they are also active members of the Peace and Order Council. However, these groups may also be the very ones to cause direct violence to the people, albeit indirectly, by for example, damaging people's properties in their armed encounters with rebel groups. Even though their primary purpose may be to ensure negative peace, but as they also use force in their line of work, they may incidentally prevent the cultivation of positive peace.

### ***Practical Implications***

Results of the study indicate that the peace and order council is putting more effort to peacemaking or addressing episodic violence and lesser effort to peacebuilding or addressing structural violence. This tells us that there is a need for the council to realize that violent episodes are manifestations of systemic factors, rooted in structure-based inequalities and destructive cultural narratives that are situated and operated in a particular context. Sharing our findings with them may help the peace and order council appreciate this and come up with and implement policies and programs that are tailored not only to manage episodes of violence, but also to advance non-oppressive systems that bring about social justice.



### *Limitations and Future Directions*

This study only focuses on the standpoints of the members of the peace and order council. Future studies may also look into the views and positions of other members of the community regarding the council's efforts to ensure peace and address violence in their locality. It would also be interesting to unpack how the various groups in the community socially construct peace and violence, especially in the context of the current Bangsamoro transition.

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## Peace and Order Council as Local Security Platforms in Philippine Urban Spaces: Their Effect on Civil-military Relations

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Faced with serious internal security problems, the Philippine government introduced Peace and Order Councils (POCs) in 1987 as a dialog platform for government agencies, the security forces (military and police), and civil society groups on local peace and security concerns. By 2009, POCs have become mandatory formations for local government units with deployed military units as regular members. Further reforms in 2015 institutionalized the auditing of POC performance, tied to the use of local government intelligence funds. The POC mandate broadened to include the monitoring of national government livelihood and infrastructure projects within their area; providing a convergence mechanism for the national government's integration program for rebel returnees; and monitoring the establishment and deployment of paramilitary outfits within their jurisdiction. From a platform largely ignored by field commanders, the POC's importance grew as commanders are able to tap local government resources to support operations. With Martial Law in effect in Mindanao (2017-2019), the military's role within the POCs and engagements with local chief executives become more nuanced. The military commanders were tasked to monitor the physical presence of local chief executives at their post and the delivery of basic services to their constituents. While considered a temporary deputation, the military's domestic mobilization in response to the COVID-19 pandemic further increased their footprint in key cities.

This paper examines the nature and involvement of the military in the POCs and other civil-military engagement platforms in select cities in Mindanao (Marawi, Cotabato, and Kabacan). These areas are chosen because they have experienced serious security





challenges in the past (IED explosions, siege by a rebel group) or given their importance as regional economic hubs and proximity to areas of conflict are likely to be used as logistics nodes for groups that challenge state authority. These cities host large student populations from which violent extremist groups can recruit, have financial institutions (banks, money remittance outlets) through which groups can move money with little suspicion, and visible targets (e.g., churches, markets). Kabacan, for instance, is home to University of Southern Philippines with a student population of 6,000 while Cotabato is the ARMM Regional Center and commercial hub for the Maguindanao Province. Marawi, despite the 2017 siege, remains the commercial center for Lanao del Sur Province. While military operations or clan wars (*rido*) may not transpire in the city premises, they are magnets for those displaced from nearby areas where there is active fighting. Kabacan's proximity to Liguasan marsh, for example, makes it susceptible to attacks by the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and the evacuation destination for those affected by the *rido*. Marawi (103rd Brigade), Cotabato (6th Infantry Division), and Kabacan (7th Infantry Battalion) hosting large military installations and garrisons also create imperatives for civil-military engagement as heavy military footprint impinges upon the daily lives of urban residents. POC-sanctioned security measures such as checkpoints, and patrols and the establishment of paramilitary detachments generate social dynamics and challenges (e.g., traffic) which require some coordination and platform for problem-solving.

The paper compares nuances in the POC set-up and how these structure the relationship between the military and local civilian government. How the presence of military-initiated alternate security platforms affect POC functionality is also explored. The paper derives from the results of field interviews of military and LGU officials in the said cities conducted in 2018-2019, as part of a study funded by the Australian National University (ANU) Philippines Project Collaborative Grant.



## Civil-Military Engagement Platforms: Some Conceptual Anchors

The large-scale deployment of US and NATO troops in the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan in the last two decades engendered a doctrinal renaissance on the need to engage civilians for successful military operations. A diverse universe of civilian actors—UN agents, humanitarian organizations, local authorities, and local populations—share the space where security challenges (a military purview) must be met alongside rehabilitation and development (civilian goals). The North Atlantic Treaty CIMIC (civil-military cooperation) doctrine and the civil-military relations concept under the US Army's Counterinsurgency Field Manual 3-24 anchor these new understandings. The doctrine considers local civilian authorities as key because good governance and development, tasks which the former could accomplish, are crucial to military mission accomplishment (Kilcullen 2006, 29). In this formulation, the military's task is to enable civilian authorities and the private sector to do their job. Military counterinsurgency operations are to provide a stable political environment from which humanitarian aid delivery can proceed (Oliker 2004, 14) and to allow space for antagonists to negotiate rather than resort to violence (Matei 2013, 32). The military's task is clearly to provide a modicum of security and credible ability to protect the local population (Felter 2017, 130). The military must also actively cooperate with local authorities to gather information necessary for successful combat operations (Knight 2009, 16). In a low-threat security environment, civilian authorities provide the resources and expertise (Lacquement 2010, 22). The Responsibility to protect (R2P), another view, frames engagements by military actors and civilians in international operations in terms of the overall aim protecting local populations and individuals working in humanitarian settings (Lacquement 2010, 26). The military neither supplements nor duplicates what civilian actors are doing; it does not engage in direct service delivery or humanitarian provisioning but shares unclassified information with civilian actors so that the latter can do their job well (Egnell 2013, 252; Felter 2017, 155). Clearly, the nature of civil-military interactions varies depending on the type of

military missions, i.e., stability operations, traditional peacekeeping, and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief.

How exactly is this civil-military engagement supposed to happen? Kilcullen (2006, 30-31) refers to inter-agency operations between the co-located military unit and local indigenous actors whom the former cannot control but are necessary for their unit success. These include the government, militia, clans, community leaders, and NGOs. A key mechanism is the politico-cultural adviser, well-versed on the local language, with personal links to the aforementioned actors and people skills who act as the point person at the military unit. Lacquement (2010, 29) mentions the need for coordination and liaison to share information among various groups. Ruffa and Venesson (2014) distinguish between two types of civil-military engagements: coordination and cooperation. Coordination done mainly through liaison roles, task force teams, or nodes reduces the need to process information and deconflict civilian and military missions (Holshek 2013, 276 & 283). Coordination could be ad hoc or formal, encompassing the sharing of the operational footprint and information between the two organizations as was observed in the Afghanistan theater (Savage 2009, 108). Cooperation, by contrast, goes beyond the mere exchange of information but also includes joint planning and organizing of activities around an agreed division of tasks (Ruffa and Venesson 2014, 587). The NATO CIMIC doctrine covers both coordination and cooperation, but its implementation on the ground as was the case of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan was compromised by the different cultures and values between military and civilian officials (McNerney 2009, 173; Savage 2009, 113). For cooperation to materialize, there is a need for field level inter-agency jointness (McNerney 2009, 194).

Engagements between military and civilian agents come with problems. The military is observed directly working on development projects and using social science concepts (i.e., ethnographic methods) to manage difficult populations (Price 2014; Egnell 2013;



Franke 2006; Ankersen 2013). These point to “bleeding boundaries,” a blurring of the conceptual understanding of what makes the military distinct from civilians as a social entity (Rosen 2009, 508; Angstrom 2013, 230; Roberts 2010). A second line of criticism concerns the military-driven governance platform in the conflict zones. The deployment of Peace and Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan and later Focused District Development (FDD) were seen as essentially military-designed frameworks for joint work and shared space with civilian actors who have the same goals as the military. Dubbed convergence or whole-of-government approach, the strategy is argued to make the efforts of the deploying state (using civilian and military apparatus) more effective and efficient. This arrangement is problematic, according to some authors. On one hand, it leads to militarization, where the reference point of whatever the military does is its ability to deliver force, e.g., humanitarianism as a means to combat success (Rosen 2009, 611) or NGOs as a force multiplier for combat teams (Price 2014, 96). Other authors point to civilianization, where the military becomes embedded in civilian sectors and state operations (Ratuva et al., 2019).

Facing serious internal security threats from communist insurgents, Muslim separatists, and terror groups, the Philippine military is deployed domestically and carry a heavy footprint in municipalities and cities either as operational headquarters, garrisons, or training camps. The police deployed in smaller numbers mainly based in town centers are further supplemented by constabulary units (Public Safety, Special Forces) and by volunteer-based paramilitary outfits. Peace and Order Councils are formal civil-military coordination bodies premised upon the imperative for police and military units operating within the administrative jurisdiction of local government units to share security information, which then feeds into the decision making of the LGU and the military as to the proper course of action. They mainly operate as a way for the local authorities to keep abreast of the security threats, from which it could devise strategies to address those threats. POCs “supervise” but have no operational control over paramilitary outfits within



their locality; they decide on the formation of, and supplemental funding for, paramilitary units, the Citizen Armed Forces Geographic Units, both regular and special, to aid in the Army's counterinsurgency operations, as well as the Barangay Police Auxiliary Teams (BPAT) for police operations. The POC is also the military's choice platform for suggesting to local government additional security measures, e.g., putting up of checkpoints, curfews, or patrols, which can complement whatever the military is doing. Because the deployed military units' main mission is anti-insurgency or anti-terrorism, often they do not have sufficient manpower to cover the daily security needs of the host community. In terms of membership, POCs are presumably inclusive because of the requirement for a civil society representative, although it clearly is LGU-led with the Chairmanship given to the local chief executive.

The POCs are not the only civil-military relations platform available. Often local government units form inter-agency Task Forces to deal with crisis situations, also involving the same state security agents plus the Bureau of Fire and Coast Guard where needed. POCs are seen as static formations that meet regularly for routine matters. The formation of the Crisis Management Committee, which is also provided by the Local Government Code, capitalizes on the urgent need to make decisions and to act, which the POC is not equipped for. Unlike the Task Force which clearly is more oriented towards security matters, the Crisis Management Committee tends more to address humanitarian service provisioning, i.e., gathering and distributing relief goods and services, and running evacuation centers. The military, meanwhile, has its own platform, the Multi-Sector Advisory Board (MSAB) from Brigade level and up, with similar coordinative functions as the POC but military-led. The MSAB is a bridge between the military and civil society and is supposed to anchor the units' civil-military operations (CMO) activities in-theater. The military employs a different platform for humanitarian operations, the CMO Coordinating Council (CMOCC). More geared towards logistics and aid delivery, engagements through CMOCC tend to be pragmatic, non-iterative, and short-run.



Scholars have pointed out that the Philippine military exercises a considerable influence in internal security decision making. Civilian control in this area is argued to be low as there are no solid oversight and critique from other societal actors on how the military undertakes these operations (Wangge 2017, 145). Civil-military relations depict a continued imbalance owing to the military's continued prominence in areas of policymaking, particularly internal security (Croissant et. al. 2012; Chambers, 2012: 156). The slow pace in the military's shift to territorial defense from an internal security role and subsequent turnover of lead functions to the police is largely due to civilian authorities acquiescing to military assessments about progress made (or not) in dealing with inertial security problems (Heiduk, 2011: 212). Given this, local authorities also tend to be more differential to military priorities in conjunction with their operations. As was illustrated in the cases of the Zamboanga siege and the Marawi crisis, local authorities could only address evacuation, search and rescue, and the needs of the displaced, as collaterals of kinetic military actions (Medina 2016, 21; Hall and Deinla 2020 forthcoming). Once the military decides to operate, what the local authorities are left with is to mitigate the ill-effects, i.e., civilian casualty and destruction of property, of such kinetic actions.

The Philippine military recognizes the premium of "whole-of-government approach" in addressing internal security problems. At the field level, this takes on an added importance as its operational success relies on contributions coming from the local government authorities and other civilian stakeholders. But bringing civilians on board is not an easy feat, given the complex political ecology of this part of Mindanao. The military has to deal with communities immersed in the culture of strong-man rule, a *datu* (traditional leader) based patronage system where the bearing of arms is a matter of survival. The Peace and Order Councils exist and function within the limits imposed by this context, and the military's role as well as views regarding these LGU-led platforms informed by their own notions of how to deal with political players.



## POCs: Institutionalization and Norming

Peace and Order Councils (POC) have evolved over the years in terms their composition and mandates. First introduced under Executive Order 309 (1987), POCs exist at the national, provincial, city, and municipal governments and include three representatives from the private sector. This representation was later amended to include civil society organizations.<sup>1</sup> Under Executive Order 366 (1996), *barangay* POCs were also organized as implementing bodies of City and Municipal POCs. The DILG Omnibus Guidelines 2015-128 sets POC mandate as follows: formulate plans, recommend measures, and monitor the implementation of government programs projects and the operation of Civil Voluntary Organizations (CVOs).<sup>2</sup> It has to conduct a periodic assessment of the prevailing peace and order situation and come up with guidelines for the preparation of a three-year community or integrated area public safety plan to be implemented by local Philippine National Police stations. Under Executive Order 773 (2009), the creation of POCs became required for LGUs. The Local Chief Executives' deputation could be suspended or withdrawn by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) for non-compliance with the provision regarding the establishment of POCs and the requirement for a Peace and Order Public Safety Plan (POPs) within 100 days after assuming office. Non-compliance is also a ground for the non-approval of additional Confidential Funds. The Confidential Fund is an ordinance-based allocation to cover expenses related to surveillance activities by civilian government agencies, including LGUs. It is separate from the peace and order program budget but capped at 30% of the aforementioned budget. Under the DILG circular 2017-134, POCs are tasked to

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<sup>1</sup> There is an option for the mayor to have more than 3 civil society organization representatives in the POC. In 2019, DILG also came up with guidelines on the accreditation of CSOs and selection of representatives to local selection bodies, which include POCs. POCs to be accredited by LGUs must acquire security clearance from the police or the military.

<sup>2</sup> Under Executive Order 546 (2006), CVOs were abolished and replaced by Barangay Protection Auxiliary Teams (BPAT), which are supervised by Municipal POCs and used as augmentation for local police operations.



coordinate with the co-located AFP and PNP units to extend the necessary and appropriate assistance to these state security forces in their area as they pursue non-combat or non-police work such as the purchase of supplies and a routine logistics run. The same DILG Circular tasks the POC to establish a mechanism to work with the AFP/PNP assigned in the area.

The DILG Omnibus Guidelines for POC (2019-143) set quarterly meetings for which other government agencies, e.g., intelligence communities, may be invited. The POC is structured as a forum for interdisciplinary dialogue and deliberation. It recommends strategic actions or activities including anti-insurgency measures and measures to converge and orchestrate internal security operations or efforts by civil authorities, agencies, military and police. It also formulates and adopts mechanisms for coordination, cooperation, and consultation involving local chief executives, citizens, and law enforcement agencies. It is also tasked to monitor the provision of livelihood and infrastructure development programs and projects in remote rural and indigenous populations to isolate them from insurgent networks. Along this line, POCs are to serve as a convergence mechanism to support the implementation of the Comprehensive Local Integration Program (CLIP). The AFP is the lead for the POC sub-committee in preventing and countering violent extremism while the PNP is the lead for criminality. The POC performance, i.e., the quarterly submission of POC accomplishment report and POC situation report, is audited by the DILG.

The POCs evolved into a more robust civilian platform for addressing local security as they took on the major task of establishing and monitoring auxiliary forces— CAFGU, CVO now BPAT. Their link with the local police was also strengthened with the requirement for the creation of a community/integrated public order and safety plan to be implemented by the police. Following rules linking the POC existence and performance to the LCE deputation and fiscal access, e.g., confidential fund, the POCs





have become tools to benchmark good governance at the local level. They are also identified as convergence platforms for all government initiatives, especially development and livelihood projects. Under Executive Order 733 (2019) section 3 (d), POCs are allowed to apply moral suasion or recommend sanctions against Local Chief Executives (LCE) giving material and political support to communist rebels.

With respect to the security forces, POC threat assessments have been instrumental in decisions by military units whether or not to form paramilitaries or to turn over the internal security task to the police (Salvador 2014). The recent DILG guidelines put this linkage into firmer footing as POCs now have to work with the co-located military and police units for non-combat operations. Under Executive Order 773 (2009) the AFP's involvement in POCs have become more formal. They are part of the security cluster and given the lead role in fighting violent extremism. At the Regional POCs, the Division Commander is a named member and the Brigade Commander for Provincial POC. In the municipal/city POC, the battalion commanders are not specified but the common understanding (and AFP directive) is for them to attend as representative of the Department of National Defense. This formal membership is premised on the military footprint. In areas where they are not present, except for CAFGUs, they may be invited by the POC but have no formal membership. Executive Order 733 also names the Division Commander as Coordinating Officer for the Regional Internal Security Operations Coordinating Center, which is under the Regional POC.

There had been few studies examining the functionality of POCs in areas where there is a localized conflict. In an earlier survey study made by Hall (2006, 25) on frontline units in the southern Iloilo province, the military did not participate in municipal POC meetings and place little to no importance on municipal POCs for their operations, except for seeking logistical support to CAFGUs. In a follow-up survey study, Hall (2012, 12), found an overwhelming majority of military respondents both from frontline units and the civil



relations unit (undertaking civil-military operations) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “POCs are useful avenues in responding to the insurgency problem.” The military discounted the importance of POCs as a framework for discussing solutions to the insurgency problem. There had been, however, successful POCs in other theaters. The Bohol Province POC under Governor Aumentado, for instance, has been lauded as a critical lynchpin in defining and crafting a localized solution to the insurgency problem, focusing less on combat operations and more on socio-economic and service delivery initiatives by the local governments (Hall 2017, 56). Examining the Zamboanga City case, Russel (2013, 126) observed the reinvigoration of POCs as platforms of civilian-military discussion on peace and order concerns leading to the redesign of the army CMO. However, looking at experiences in Central Mindanao, Hall (2016, 11) argues that POCs remain little utilized for convergence between kinetic operations by the military and projects of civilian agencies at the field level.

Zeroing in on the Bangsamoro theater, Hall (2017,4) found hybrid forms of POCs (with local religious and traditional leaders as members; structured as inter-municipality platform) in Maguindanao crafted to deal with clan wars (*rido*), which is a more virulent security issue in these areas. Other authors found the standard POCs to be ill-suited to the Bangsamoro theater given their anti-communist insurgency framing (Adam and Verbrugge 2014, 67); and ineffective for mediation given that POC members are also involved in the *rido* conflict (Adriano and Parks 2013, 66). Military officers who were interviewed opined that there were only a few functional MPOCs in Maguindanao; most mayors in the area are absentees and do not hold regular POC meetings (Hall 2017, 76). In the same study, NGOs claim that while the Basilan Province POC provides a platform for NGO-military dialogs, they deem the PPOC falling short because the security forces do not answer to queries regarding arrests related to anti-terrorism activities.



## POCs and How They Structure Civil-Military Engagements

This section draws from the interview of four military commanders who are members of the provincial/city/municipal POCs within their area of operations. As their appointments coincided with the declaration of Martial Law in Mindanao (2017-2019), their observations regarding the nature and functionality of POCs are framed within this new legal order. The commanders, having been deployed in other parts of Mindanao (pre-Martial Law) and in Luzon island, lend comparative insights as to how POCs operate. Because military deployments are threat-based, their security concerns are generally oriented towards the problems of terrorism and *rido* (clan wars), rather than traditional conflict lines (communist or Moro separatists). The military commanders also view threats and responses to them in operational terms— that it could originate from within or outside the administrative jurisdiction of a particular LGU. The unique political ecology of the POCs, e.g., strong-man rule, dominance of political clans, and prominent *datu*/traditional leader-based patronage culture, and weak governance structures, also surfaced in their observations.

The commanders provide security reports/briefs during the regular POC meetings, which are attended widely by civil society organizations, and media and government officials. Cotabato and Kabacan POCs, for instance, are attended by representatives from various universities/colleges, religious leaders, NGOs, and *barangay* captains (who are tasked to implement POC resolutions) (Col de los Reyes, personal communications, 13 November 2019). On the military side, the brigade and Battalion commanders both attend the North Cotabato POC while the Battalion and Company Commander attend the Kabacan City POC. In Cotabato, the military has a Joint Task Force formation, from which military representation into the city POC is drawn. JTF Kutawato was formed many years ago; its commander automatically represents the 6th Infantry Division in the City POC. Other major Mindanao cities have parallel JTFs, including Zamboanga, Cagayan de Oro, and Davao, which hosts the Infantry Division headquarters. Thus in Cotabato, the POC vice



chairman is given to the City Chief of Police and the JTF commander, indicative of the seriousness of the security portfolio given by the City LGU.

The range of POC-approved tasks given to the military is similar across the locales: (1) check points or control points at major ingress/egress; (2) patrols; (3) CAFGU detachments; and (4) security posts at universities, markets, and other key economic locations. In Cotabato, for instance, the Joint Task Force runs control points with Special CAFGU personnel which it recruits and whose small allowance is shouldered by the City government. The Cotabato City police has roving patrols inside the City as enforcement of curfew measures; there is also a separate civilian group that also conducts patrols. In Cotabato and Kabacan, the military does patrols only from time to time. In Kabacan, the military deploys personnel inside the University of Southern Mindanao campus and in Christian churches, upon request by the POCs (LTC Roldan, personal communications, 13 November 2019).

The foremost utility of POCs from the point of view of commanders is that they provide avenues for burden sharing. For instance, in Cotabato, following the military's assessment of the seriousness of a terrorist threat, it was able to convince the POC to require the *barangay* captains to produce and submit monthly situation reports and to arrange the communications flow for this vital information to be shared with the military and police. In North Cotabato Province, a PPOC resolution requesting for the establishment of CAFGU detachments is used by military commanders to leverage requests at the higher command (BGEN Rosario, personal communications, 15 November 2019). POCs can authorize the deployment of Barangay Protection Auxiliary Teams as augmentation force to static security operations, e.g., during local festivals. The POC is also a source of supplemental funds for the CAFGU and Special CAFGU, e.g., rice subsidy allowance for volunteers (Cotabato and Kabacan city has regular appropriation), and



maintenance/operating expenses for running detachments (as in the case of Maguindanao Province).

The military commanders find the POCs useful as information dissemination platforms. Through their security briefings, they are able to surface issues and provide explanation to the wider public about why certain security measures are undertaken. For the military, this engagement is important because it elevates security concerns in the public eye. It helps them build good relationships with LGU officials and other security stakeholders. However, the military commanders are mindful that sensitive information, i.e., those pertaining to military operations, are not meant to be shared in a POC meeting. There are too many members of POCs, and being an open public event, they are wary about information being leaked. The commanders never discuss operational matters such as arrests or raids before the POC (BGEN Rosario, personal communications, 15 November 2019). As such, there often is a separate closed-door meeting between the mayor, police chief, and military commander for these sensitive matters.

There are informal channels and networks that also address security, paralleling the POCs. In the context of Central Mindanao, these channels and network are often the preferred platform rather than the more formal POCs. The military commanders acknowledge that clan wars (*rido*), although taken up at the POC as a matter of reporting (incidences and such), is better addressed using mediation services by the *datu*, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) commanders and other traditional leaders (LTC Roldan, personal communications, 13 November 2019). The AFP typically do their own conflict resolution efforts for *rido* within their area of operations. There remains a disconnect between the POC and actual military kinetic operations, especially on incidents triggered by local land disputes and *rido*. On the latter, the military uses informal channels [*kausapin*, literally talk to the parties directly or through a mediator], and if such fails, they threaten the parties



with artillery power to get them to stop. Kinetic operations of this sort are reported after the fact but POC approval has never been sought prior.

The POC, given its diverse and large composition, is adjudged slow and unwieldy when it comes to decision making. Thus, there is a tendency for military commanders to resort to personal dealing with the local chief executives to get things done. LCEs have access to confidential (intelligence funds), which can be spent at their discretion. In North Cotabato Province, the governor had given “rewards” to units able to get high value targets from his/her intel funds. Outside of the POCs, the commanders cultivate good personal relationships with local chief executives through visits, “*kumustahan*” (periodic checking on their status through phone calls or text messages). For example, when the Brigade Commander assigned in North Cotabato planned to meet loose firearms collection targets, he first sought the approval of the Governor and consulted with her as to which municipalities/cities should go first (model). Only until the governor and the target mayors have been brought on board was the formal POC resolution sought (BGEN Rosario, personal communications, 15 November 2019).

The dynamics between the military and local chief executives (who are also members of the POC) have qualitatively changed as a result of Martial Law in Mindanao. Previously, commanders approach LCEs in Central Mindanao with more caution, cognizant as they are that many of them are lazy, inattentive, and prone to shirking. Commanders tended to “sort” LCEs into two: functioning and non-functioning. Commanders tended to distance themselves from the latter LCE types, unless there’s an operational imperative. With Martial Law, commanders are emboldened as they are tasked under Letters of Instruction numbers 1 and 2 to: (1) check the physical presence of LCEs at their post; and (2) check their performance in service delivery. The commanders reveal that they are able to put more pressure on erring mayors because of deputized powers from the interior and local government department. The commanders compile reports about LCEs, send



them off to their Divisions, which then submit such to the DILG Secretary. The commanders can also publicly “call out” mayors who do not attend POC meetings or who do not deliver on agreed security measures. The Brigade Commander in Lanao del Sur, for instance, demanded that absentee mayors provide written explanations for their absence and conveyed to them unequivocally that they must be present (and not late) for POC meetings (BGEN Romeo Brawner Jr., personal communications, 22 April 2019). Another Brigade commander said he no longer “invites” LCEs to the headquarters but asks them to “report”—the latter indicating that it is not a voluntary act. Notwithstanding the shift in tone, the commanders see their role vis-a-vis the LCEs as a bridge, guiding them towards correct actions in a diplomatic fashion (BGEN Rosario, personal communications, 15 November 2019).

## Conclusion

The institutionalization of POCs has brought the needed structure and predictability in civil-military engagements at the field level. Clearly local government-led, POCs provide a clear link between local security objectives, measures taken, and results attained. As a dialogue platform, it provides an inclusive venue (as its membership also includes civil society representatives and lower level local government units tasked to implement measures) and a tool for a security agenda setting. On the local government side, POCs anchor the commitment to the seriousness of local peace and security concerns, subject to a performance audit by the national government. On the military side, its importance lies in the military’s access to logistical support, especially for paramilitary formation and maintenance. POCs marginally influence military unit behavior, but do not quite function as an accountability mechanism for the military’s kinetic operations. From the findings, the POCs provide the military with a venue to report on their achievements and civilian gaps or wrongdoings, e.g., local chief executives unable to deliver on recommended



security measures. However, the POC is not the platform for which local government criticize the military for their wrongdoing nor hold them to account.

Because POCs are tied with access to fiscal resources, they are useful tools in incentivizing local military commanders to work with local governments on security measures (rather than adopting them unilaterally). They reduce transaction costs and provide concrete benefits to the military and to the local government as parties. The POCs supplement, but do not supplant, informal channels and networks, e.g., personal links with local chief executives, with traditional leaders, with MILF commanders, which local military commanders prefer to use in addressing clan wars (*rido*). In many ways, the POC is largely a formality, with agreements between the military and individual local chief executives, arrived at using back door channels for key security measures.

The imposition of Martial Law in Mindanao from 2017 to 2019 was a boon for the military because it allowed them to exercise more leverage vis-a-vis local chief executives considered non-performing. Where the military used to thread delicately with respect to these warlord-politician mayors and governors, Martial Law gave them the legal ammunition to be more public about performance demands and reprimanding those who err or fall short. This strong-elbowing, while couched in the language of diplomacy that military commanders are schooled at (a civil-military operations must), is strongly felt and understood by local government officials in Mindanao. The POCs as a consequence have become more robust as local chief executives are prodded to convene or attend meetings. In places like Lanao del Sur where none of these governance structures were previously functional, Martial Law made it happen.





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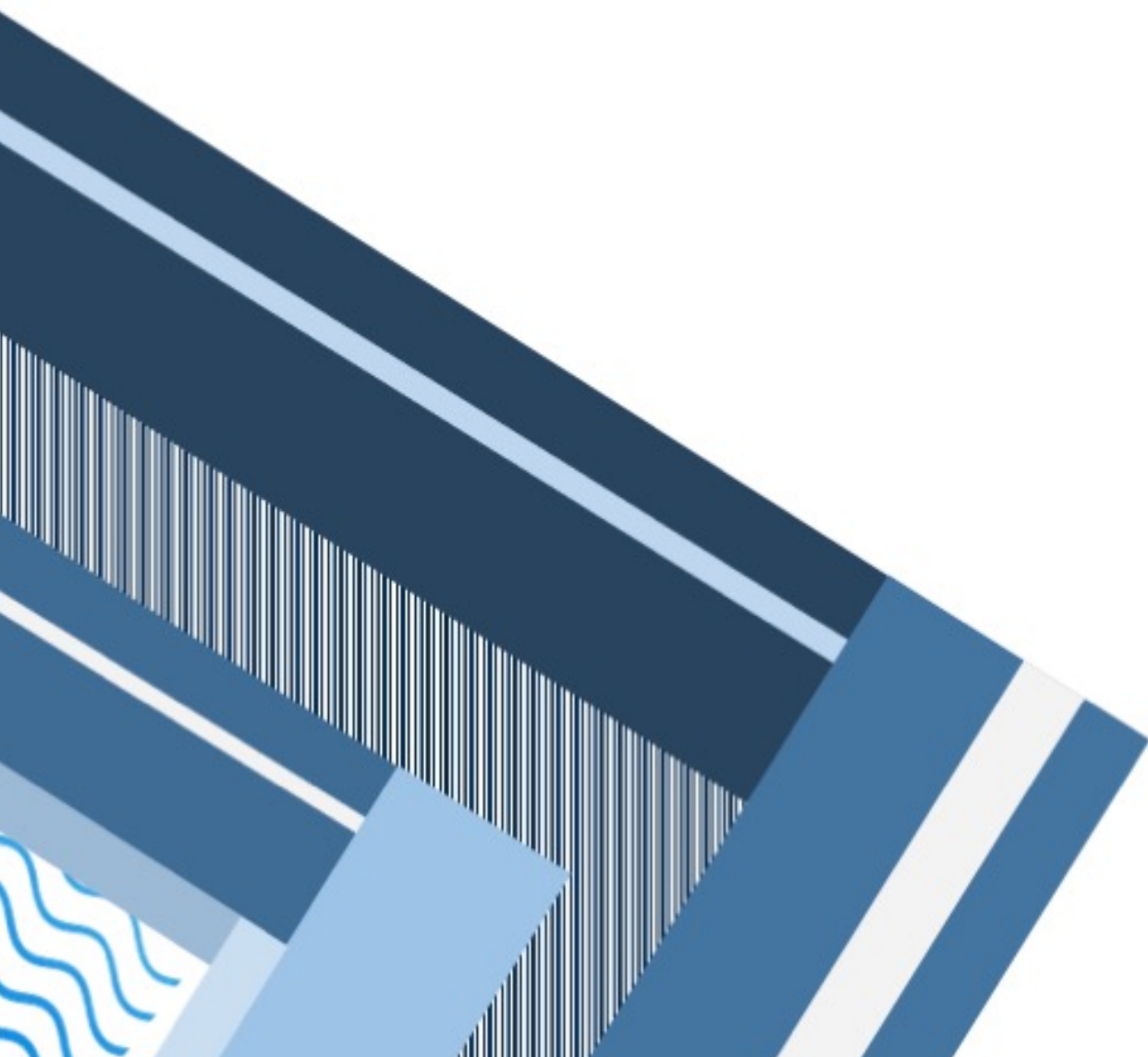


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# **WP SERIES 7**

## **VIOLENCE, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND DEMOCRACY IN THE PHILIPPINES**





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## Trends of Drug-Related Killings During the Aquino and Duterte Administrations

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Five months into the world's longest and strictest government-imposed lockdown in the Philippines, to supposedly address the COVID-19 crisis, the government continually failed in preventing the spread of the virus across the country. The Department of Health (DOH) reports on July 26, 2020, a total of 82,558 positive cases with 1,932 deaths caused by the deadly virus. Yet, the war on drugs has continued to haunt the lives of individuals. Philippine National Police chief Gen. Archie Gamboa ordered the police to intensify its operations and focus on high-value drug personalities amid the COVID-19 pandemic (Gonzales 2020a). However, data suggest that low-level drug pushers were still targeted even when the majority of the cities were under strict community quarantine. In an article published by *VeraFiles*, a media nonprofit organization that probes Philippine issues and fact-checks false and misleading claims, Gacoscosim & Noriega reported that there was "no let-up in 'Tokhang' even during lockdown" (2020, May 18). They tracked down news reports on the drug-related killings in the first three months of community quarantine with a total of 53 drug-related killings, where 39 of the victims were linked to illegal drugs. The community quarantine was eventually eased, but the number of drug-related deaths continued to rise.

The rise in drug-related killings in the country can be traced back to 2016, when Rodrigo Duterte, a 'strong man' from Davao City was elected as the president of the Philippines. His popularity came along with his hostility against drug suspects and because of the perceived threat that illegal drug suspects pose on the members of the society, the war on drugs was pursued. Seen by the government as perpetrators of crimes, drug suspects



needed to be controlled. Thus, Duterte promised to get rid of the drug problem in the country. Within three to six months upon his inauguration on June 30, 2016, at around 4 p.m., just four hours after Duterte took his oath, two drug suspects, Karlvin Chavez Licong, an alleged drug lord and his unidentified cohort, were killed in a police operation in Tagbilaran City, Bohol. Since then, reports of summary executions, murders, and police operations resulting in the deaths of drug suspects dominated the news. Thus, four years after he made his promise, the drug problem had not been solved, with thousands of individuals reportedly killed in the drug war.

### Background and Purpose

As of July 2019, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, reported that human rights organizations estimated about 27,000 victims of police operations in the Philippines called “tokhang” which involves officers going from house to house hunting drug suspects (Human Rights Watch, 2020). However, the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) insisted that this was an exaggeration and that their own data better represented the scale of the success of the drug war. In their Facebook page, *RealNumbersPH*, PDEA claimed that 5,810 persons died in 173,348 official police operations from July 1, 2016 to July 31, 2020. Despite the claim that they possessed the real data, there were inconsistencies in the reported number of deaths related to the drug war. The police earlier reported a total of 6,600 casualties only to contradict themselves with a 5,526 figure in a subsequent report in 2019 (Regencia, 2019). The inconsistencies in the report of deaths reflect a bigger issue on how the counting was done and what counts as a drug war casualty.

The police were not the only actors seen behind the deaths in the drug war. Vigilantes often disguised in masks, and motorcycle riding gunmen also took into their own hands the war on drugs and mercilessly killed drug suspects in their own indiscriminate way.



These incidents were often seen in the news where bodies of unidentified individuals were dumped on the streets bearing placards stating that they were involved in illegal drugs. There were no reports that the deaths of these individuals allegedly killed in the war on drugs were investigated.

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights provides that every individual has a right to live, and to live with dignity. It is the responsibility of the State to make sure that a safe space is provided for its citizens, and that they enjoy these rights. Following these mandates, the State must take responsible measures to address conditions that endanger these rights and protect the life of each person under their jurisdiction by law. However, incidences of violence continue to increase in different parts of the world including the Philippines. Thousands of people are killed without proper investigation about their deaths. Thus, the fundamental rights of the citizens are threatened as impunity continues. Human rights violations worsen despite the existence of the declaration of rights, and the guidelines for the investigation of unlawful deaths.

Over the years, the promotion of peace has been in the plans of the international law and policy-making bodies. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are incorporated in the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022, included in its 17-point agenda, the goal to promote peace, justice, and strong institutions. By 2030, the 17 SDG goals are expected to be achieved. Goal number 16 underscores its first indicator to “significantly reduce all forms of violence and related deaths everywhere,” (United Nations, 2017). The Voluntary National Review submitted by the Philippines for the SDG updates in 2019, stated that the reported cases of violence decreased in terms of number of homicides and murders from 12,992 in 2015 to 9,458 in 2018. The count was not broken down to specific categories of assailants, and the contexts behind the deaths were not specified. Despite the unified goal to reduce the number of incidences of violence



around the world, the Philippines under the Duterte administration, with its policies on war on drugs, seemed to have created a climate of violence directed towards drug suspects. On the 41<sup>st</sup> session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, the Philippines was placed under scrutiny because of the reports on incidences of abuses and extrajudicial killings in the past years (Robertson, 2020). The report was sourced from studies and investigations made by the United Nations on the human rights situation in the country. It included the figures on the number of deaths that occurred during the Duterte administration.

### ***Purpose***

In order to make sense of the continuing drug-related deaths in the Philippines, the UP Third World Studies Center (TWSC) and the Department of Conflict and Development Studies (DCDS) of Ghent University spearheaded an initiative to count the number of drug-related deaths from the Aquino administration to the Duterte administration. Limpin and Siringan (2019) initially published in *Kasarinlan* a report which focused on the development of the database. Now, this paper aims to give an update on the initial results of the database which covered the last two years under the former president, Benigno Simeon Aquino III (2014-2016) up to the first two years of the current president, Rodrigo Roa Duterte (2016-2018). It aims to backtrack further on the count from the Aquino administration, starting from 2011, continuing through 2020, or the first half of the Duterte administration.

While drug-related killings also occurred during the Aquino administration, it did not make strong pronouncements against drug suspects in the country. The Duterte administration, on the other hand, made numerous pronouncements about ending the drug problem in the country, after which deaths of thousands of drug suspects occurred, as revealed by the official data released by PDEA in their Facebook page





*RealNumbersPH*. This paper does not expect to provide an exact number of drug-related killings, but it seeks to present the observed increase and the continuing trends on violent killings in relation to drugs during two administrations based on media reports.

Counting the dead is an important factor in determining the necessary action to reduce violence and promote peace policies that will benefit the people. It is hoped that this update on the number of drug-related killings in the Philippines will provide help in determining the necessary procedures in investigating the continuous killings and to further push for proper inquiry on the drug-related violence happening in the country. Subsequently, it will provide basis to hold the perpetrators accountable for their actions. The succeeding sections of the paper will discuss the existing literature on counting the dead and its importance. It is followed by the methodology used in the study, which includes a brief summary of the methodology used in the database upon which this paper is based. A discussion of findings will follow with an in-depth analysis of the results and trends derived from the monitoring of drug-related deaths during the two administrations. The conclusion will sum up the whole paper.

### ***Counting the Dead and Making the Dead Count***

Counting the dead serves a specific purpose to those who are seeking to quantify the dead and those who seek meaning behind the dead count. Fischhoff, Atran, and Fischhoff (2007) said that there are two purposes of counting the dead: one that is essential, and one that is instrumental. The essential purpose qualifies the inherent value of the dead, while the instrumental purpose serves as the quantitative analysis of the number of deaths. If counting the dead serves its purpose of solely quantifying the number of deaths, the individual stories of the victims of extrajudicial killings in the country will remain confined within the numbers. This kind of counting the dead without much attention to the details will be useless in the attempt to use the deaths in question



as evidence. This was done by the Marcos administration with the lists of claimants during the Martial Law era where numbers were highlighted but details on each case were not given much attention (Reyes, n.d.).

Fischhoff, et al, also noted that “[simply] counting bodies undermines victims’ dignity, by reducing them to numbers... it denies those individuals the dignity of recognizing their sacrifice,” (2007, p. 3). Hence, to counter this possibility of reducing the dead to numbers, independent organizations monitor and count the number of deaths with the details that identify each of the cases of death. An example is the effort made by civilians to account for the number of deaths during the war on drugs in Mexico.

*Menos Dias Aqui (Fewer Days Here)* is a collective effort of the civilian Mexicans to count, memorialize, and honor the dead in the war on drugs in their country. It used surveys in looking into the circumstances behind the individual cases. The individuals behind the counting were interviewed and they expressed that counting the dead enhanced the feeling of empathy from the counters (Leigh-Ruse 2016). This observation on being involved in counting the dead implies that simply counting the victims of violence may stir an argument into creating a safer place for the people of Mexico.

This is also present in the context of the war on drugs in the Philippines where thousands of people were killed and continuously, more are being killed within the guise of an attempt to get rid of illegal drugs across the country. Similar to the campaign launched in Mexico, *Ang Pangako (The Promise)*, and *Paalam.org (Farewell)* both started as campaigns to disseminate the accounts of the dead and make each of the casualties count. *Paalam.org* features individual stories of the victims of the war on drugs and does not include a total number of the dead they feature, to direct the focus on the individual stories of the victims. While *Ang Pangako* became a website where families and friends



of the casualties and other victims of the war on drugs may consult and ask for help to find services and solutions. The Ateneo School of Government on the other hand, made use of the online resources and devised their own counting of drug-related killings to fill the gaps in the publicly available data on the killings under the Duterte administration (David, et al. 2018). Based on media reports, they have recorded a total of 5,021 individuals killed during the war on drugs campaign from May 10, 2016 to September 29, 2017. And while this also may not be an accurate count of the total number of the dead, it still stands on the argument that there was a spread of incidences of drug-related killings on the first year of the Duterte administration.

Obtaining an accurate count of the dead is difficult because of various reasons. Political biases of those who count the dead manifests on who are being counted, as well as why and how the counting is done. Aronson, Fischhoff, and Seybolt (2013) discussed the challenges faced by the institutions in counting the dead based on their own points of view. In the case of monitoring the dead in the Philippines, most of the news reports of drug-related killings are sourced from police reports often without the input of the families of the victims. In response to this, the Philippine Human Rights Information Center (PhilRights) also documented extrajudicial and drug-related killings during the Duterte administration from August 15, 2017 to July 31, 2019. They examined the victims of alleged extrajudicial killings and documented 118 victims. They concluded that the government's war on drugs is a war against human rights (PhilRights, 2019). Their data came from personal interviews with survivors, friends and families of victims, and community partners in Manila, Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela, and the provinces of Bulacan, and Rizal. All of their data were then checked through media and police reports, death certificates and other sources of information. Verifying these data through witnesses and other actors added rigor to the documentation of specific cases.



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However, following this approach of interviewing all the witnesses to the crimes against war on drugs take a long time.

Aronson, Fischhoff, and Seybolt (2013) believe that creating an international convention on recording civilian casualties, partnered by a systematic and standardized casualty counting will result in the proper honoring of those who died, and in the proper assessment and analysis of conflict. Seeing the same problem, Kleinfeld (2017) suggested that there should be a systematic global approach on how to count the dead.

Aronson, Fischhoff, and Seybolt (2013) also stated that obtaining accurate data on civilian casualties in conflict and non-conflict situations is important in influencing public policy debates. Krause (2013), on the other hand opined that better data on the conflict and non-conflict deaths will bring about better policies and effective solutions in preventing the occurrence of violence. This intention can also be seen in the case of counting drug-related deaths in the Philippines. Most of the institutions that monitor the number of deaths seek to call for accountability of the government for state-sponsored violence, and for encouraging and tolerating it. The initiatives of counting the dead can then be used to influence public policies on violence and to stir the discussion on how to address the campaign against illegal drugs in the country.

The surge in the number of alleged drug-related deaths at the start of the Duterte administration prompted many media, non-government institutions, and human rights organizations to count the number of dead in the course of war on drugs. The current project of the UP Third World Studies Center, however, expanded the counting and backtracked to the Benigno Aquino III administration up to the Rodrigo Duterte administration. The goal of the database is to count the number of drug-related deaths based on media reports, specifically, from the Philippine Daily Inquirer's online portal. It



should be noted that backtracking starts from 2011 because the previous counting and encoding stopped in March 2011 due to lack of news articles posted on the Philippine Daily Inquirer's online portal. This paper, being an update, will cover the latest data recorded in the database.

## Methodology

This section will discuss the methodology used in this paper in relation to the methodology developed in the paper previously published in *Kasarinlan*.

This paper includes drug-related killings in the last 5 years of the Aquino administration (March 2011- June 2016) and the whole term of the Duterte administration (July 2016 to July 18, 2020) based on the data collected in the database. The entries qualify the parameters set to identify if (1) the reports are drug-related, and (2) the incident involved a killing of a suspect or any individual. A killing is considered as drug-related if the victim was reported to be involved in drug trade, was killed in a buy-bust operation, was said to have drugs and drug paraphernalia in his/her possession at the time of the killing, and if the body of the victim was found with placard that links them to drugs. Otherwise, the entry is removed from the database.

Specific information about the victims were included in the database to properly record the details that will identify each of the cases. The data used in this paper is based on the results of counting drug-related deaths compiled and encoded by a group of research associates, student assistants, and interns of the UP Third World Studies Center. The count in the database does not represent the whole of the reports on drug-related deaths nor the total count of the dead during the two administrations. However, the count is seen as an exhaustive version where details of the incidents were recorded to identify the trends on the drug-related killings in the country from the Aquino to the Duterte



administration. The database is solely based on the reports under the national and regional sections of the *Inquirer.net* which is the news website of the Inquirer Group of Companies (IGC) that includes Philippine Daily Inquirer, Hinge Inquirer Publications, Cebu Daily News, Inquirer LIBRE, Bandera, INQUIRER.net, Inquirer Mobile, Print Town, DZIQ 990 AM Radyo Inquirer, Deliver Access Group, and Inquirer Digital Outdoor Media.

The whole process and comprehensive walkthrough on developing the database is discussed by Siringan and Limpin in their paper titled *Developing a Method for Recording Drug-Related Killings* (2019). The results and the materials used in building the database were also uploaded and can be accessed through the project's website, [dahas.upd.edu.ph](http://dahas.upd.edu.ph).

The entries to the database revolves around the (1) status of the subject, whether they were killed, injured, arrested, escaped, detained, tortured, or raped; (2) subject demographics such as their names, residence, gender, age, and occupation; (3) assailant information, whether the killing was done by state forces such as the police and the military, vigilantes, or identified private individuals; (4) their drug involvement and how they were linked to drugs; (5) drug possession; (6) other items found with the body including drug paraphernalia, placards, arms, and ammunition; (7) the incident information including the data, time, and location of the killing, (8) the number of deaths involved within the incident; and (9) the administration when the killing occurred. These variables are broken down in the database to yield specific entries to easily identify and record the incidents in a systematic manner. Each of the variables in the database corresponds to the need for counting the dead to immortalize their deaths and not reduce them to mere numbers. As Tate argues, it is not enough to count the dead, but to make each dead count (2007).



Counting drug-related deaths between the two administrations provides a larger context towards understanding the importance of keeping record of deaths in order to properly address violence and human rights situations in the Philippines. This paper will first discuss the total number of drug-related deaths recorded in the database including other outcomes of the operations between the two administrations. This will be followed by a discussion on the victim's information including the age bracket of those who were killed, their occupations, and their residence. Their specific assailants will then be discussed followed by how the victims were linked to drugs, whether they were reported to be users, pushers, or high-profile characters. Lastly, the incident information will be discussed thoroughly to identify the trends in drug-related incidents in the country. The data to be discussed is an update to the previously published article in *Kasarinlan* which included drug-related death data from 2014-2018. This paper will cover drug related deaths from March 1, 2011- July 18, 2020.

## Findings and Discussion

After winning the presidency, Duterte expressed his desire to end the drug problem in the country. In a speech after his inauguration, he encouraged people to kill drug addicts as "getting their parents to do it would be too painful" (The Guardian, 2016). After these bold pronouncements made by the president, thousands of individuals were killed during his first four years. The number of drug-related killings during the Duterte administration is 645% higher than the cases recorded during the Aquino administration as of July 18, 2020. This surge in the number of reported drug-related killings during the Duterte administration is primarily linked to the war against illegal drugs campaign in the country. His bold pronouncements to allow and tolerate the killing drug suspect in the country gave the go signal for the police and vigilantes to openly hunt drug suspects (Human Rights Watch 2017).



### *The Continuing Trends of Drug-Related Deaths in the Philippines*

The difference between the number of drug-related killings during the Aquino administration and that of the Duterte administration is clear. Moreover, the context of the patterns that preceded the year 2016 differ from the context of the succeeding years. Nevertheless, in the attempt to account for the number of drug-related killings that occurred during the Aquino and the Duterte administrations, reports indicated that trends present in the Aquino administration (before 2016) are also seen in the succeeding administration, but on a larger scale, considering that the number of drug-related killings in the Philippines have increased dramatically during the Duterte administration.

From March 1, 2011 of the Benigno Aquino administration to July 18, 2020 of the Duterte administration or 3,428 days, a total of 3,559 deaths were recorded from 2,136 news articles. Four hundred thirty-two deaths were recorded from March 1, 2011 to June 30, 2016 during the last five years of the Aquino administration while 3,127 deaths were recorded from July 1, 2016 to July 18, 2020 during the first four years of the Duterte administration.

The following specific variables that were recorded in the database will be discussed: (1) victim information including their names, occupation, gender and residence; (2) the assailant information; (3) their drug involvement; (4) and the incident information.

#### ***Victim Information***

This section discusses the specific information of the victims that were recorded in the database whether they were identified by their names or not, their gender, occupation, and residence.



**Identification of victims.** Table 1 presents the number of identified and unidentified victims during the two administrations: Aquino Administration (March 1, 2011 to June 30, 2016) and the Duterte Administration (July 1, 2016 to July 18, 2020).

**Table 1**

*Number of Identified and Unidentified Victims of Drug-Related Killings in the Two Administrations from March 1, 2011 to July 18, 2020*

	Aquino Administration	Duterte Administration
Identified	379	2680
Unidentified	53	447
Total	432	3127

Most of the victims were identified in the reports either by their names or aliases. In other cases, the unidentified victims were body dumps or simply unidentified in the reports. For example, on September 3, 2015, a body of an unidentified woman with a gunshot to the head was found dumped near a garbage pile in Malabon City. The officials found with her body three sachets of alleged “shabu” or methamphetamine hydrochloride. This type of killing became a recurring scene during the Duterte administration. On July 3, 2016 at about 3:20 a.m., eight drug suspects were found dead in Quiapo, Manila. Two of these were unidentified men, their faces covered with duct tape

**Gender distribution.** Table 2 presents the gender distribution of victims of drug-related killings in both administrations during the period March 1, 2011- July 18, 2019.

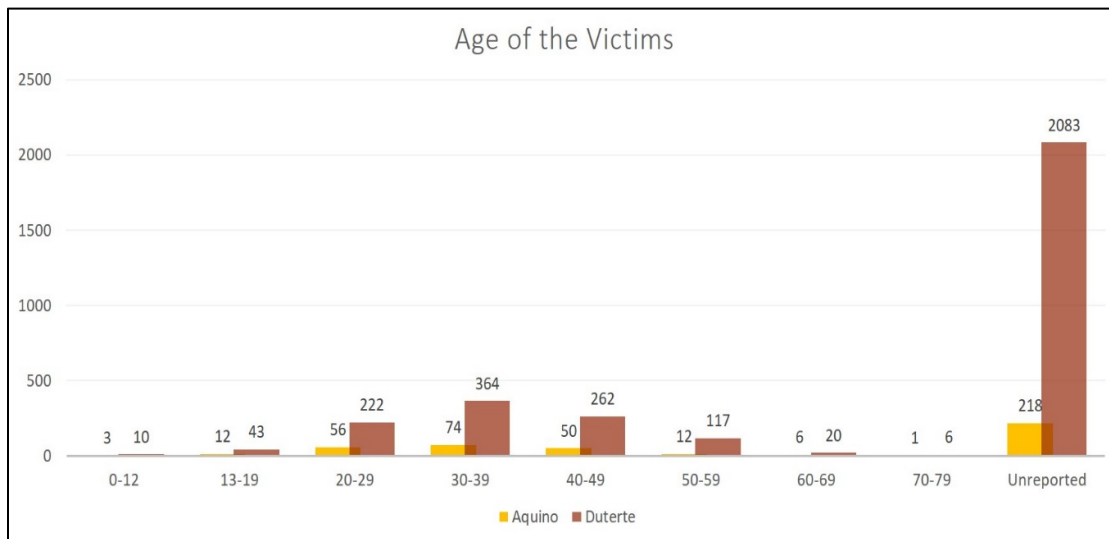
**Table 2**

*Gender Distribution of the Victims of Drug-Related Killings in the Two Administrations from March 1, 2011 to July 18, 2019*

Gender	Aquino Administration	Duterte Administration
Female	34	115
Male	360	2575
Transgender	0	1
Unreported	38	436
Total	432	3127

As shown, majority of the gender of the victims from both administrations were reported. The gender of 86.68 % of the total number of recorded deaths were reported, Of the overall victims, 4.28 % were female, while 82.23 % were male. The remaining 13.32% were unreported.

**Age distribution.** With regard to age distribution, most of the victims fall within the 20s, 30s, and 40s age brackets. Based on the observed trends between the two administrations, most of the victims were adults who had jobs, and they were also the breadwinners of their families, leaving a strong impact on the families. Despite the goal to eradicate the drug problems in the country. The targeted drug suspects were not the only victims of the operations. Figure 1 shows the age distribution of the victims.



**Figure 1.** Age Brackets of the Victims of Drug-Related Killings in the two Administrations from March 1, 2011 to July 18, 2020

The youngest of the reported victims in the Aquino administration was a 1-month old baby who was killed when his father was chased and killed by unidentified assailants in January of 2016 in Malabon City. The baby was among the three children killed during the Aquino administration. The Duterte administration recorded more, with 10 children killed. On June 30, 2019, a 3-year-old child was killed in a legitimate anti-drug operation in Rodriguez Rizal. Kateleen Myka Ulpina was categorized as collateral damage as she was allegedly used by his father, a drug suspect, as a human shield. However, her mother denied the allegation. Human rights defenders demanded accountability from the police who were involved in the killings. The recent report of the World Organization Against Torture (*Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture*; OMCT) and the Children’s Legal Rights and Development Center, indicated deaths of children in the war against drugs campaign (Gavilan 2020). From July 2016 to December 31, 2019, the OMCT documented at least 122 children killed during the course of the war on drugs (2020). Only one case which was closely investigated resulted in the conviction of the killers. A

CCTV footage was available to support the investigation. The rest of the cases were left unresolved because of fear of possible retaliation from the perpetrators (OMCT, 2020).

**Occupation of victims.** Majority of the reports did not include the occupation of the victims. Eighty-one percent of the victims' occupation was unreported while most of the reported occupations of the victims fall within the low-income occupations that are non-drug related, such as drivers, construction workers, vendors, and so on. The same trend occurred in the two administrations.

Other victims who were involved in the drug trade were former members of the law enforcement agencies. Three current police officers and three former police officers were killed in buy-bust operations during the Aquino administration, while thirty-seven police officers and forty-one former police officers were killed during the Duterte administration. All of them were said to be involved in the illegal drug trade.

Even Barangay officials were not spared in the purge of suspected drug users and peddlers. Eight barangay officials were killed during the Aquino administration while seventy-eight barangay officials were killed during the Duterte administration. Table 3 presents the breakdown of occupations of victims in both administrations.

**Table 3**

*Breakdown of Victims' Occupation in the Two Administrations from March 1, 2011 to July 18, 2020*

Occupation of the Victims	Aquino Administration	Duterte Administration
Law Enforcement Agents (Former and current)	38	168
Barangay Officials	8	78



Occupation of the Victims	Aquino Administration	Duterte Administration
Other Local government Officials	3	18
Others (possible drug-related)	12	67
Media Personnel	3	2
Religious Personalities	1	2
Others (non-drug related)	49	195
Unemployed	0	21
Student	0	18
Not applicable	6	2
Unreported	312	2556
Total	432	3127

**Geographical location of residence.** The geographical location or place of residence of the victims were also rarely included in the reports. Only 32.74 % of the victims were reported with indicated residences. Twelve percent of the reported victims from both administrations were residents of the National Capital Region (NCR). Table 4 shows the breakdown of the top five geographical locations of residences of the victims.

**Table 4**

*Count of Residence of the Victims of Drug-Related Killings in Two Administrations from March 1, 2011 to July 18, 2020*

Aquino Administration	No.	Duterte Administration	No.
National Capital Region (NCR)	50	National Capital Region (NCR)	382
Cebu (Prov)	36	Laguna (Prov)	76
Rizal (Prov)	9	Nueva Ecija (Prov)	58
Bohol (Prov)	8	Cebu (Prov)	52
Bulacan (Prov)	5	Quezon (Prov)	48
South Cotabato (Prov)	5		

### *Victim Categories*

The reports of drug-related killings exhibited patterns of circumstances of killing of the victims. Developers of the database saw the necessity to categorize these patterns depending on the narratives of the reports. While these categories are helpful in determining the type of victims in each of the operations, these categories may overlap. Some victims may fit in more than one of these categories, and thus might be encoded in each of the categories they fit.

Table 5 presents the victim categories and definition of terms from the earlier published article of Limpin and Siringan (2019).

**Table 5**

#### *Victim Categories and Definition of Terms*

Victim Category	Definition
Armed accomplice	The subject (1) was killed during a drug-related law enforcement-led operation, (2) is not reportedly involved in the drug trade or the drug war in any capacity, (3) allegedly engaged-- usually via a "shootout" -- or fought back against state agents during the operation.
Body dump	The subject (1) was abducted by (known assailant), killed, and then dumped in the street or in a secluded place; or (2) was killed somewhere with no witnesses (by an unknown assailant), with the exception of his/her residence, and left at the scene of the crime.
Collateral damage	The subject (1) was killed during a drug-related operation, encounter between private individuals, or vigilante assault but (2) is not reportedly involved in the drug trade or the drug war in any capacity. This usually includes passersby or individuals associated with targeted drug suspects (e.g., kin, employees, neighbors).

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Victim Category	Definition
Contested account	Oposing narratives are being presented by the different actors involved in the incident -- typically between the police and witnesses or the victim's kin.
Highly publicized case	The case received considerable media attention, perhaps due to or leading to national or international uproar.
Mistaken identity	The subject was killed reportedly because he/she was believed to be involved, erroneously or without sufficient evidence, in the drug trade or the drug war in any capacity.
Officer killed in action	The subject (1) is a law enforcer who (2) was killed during a law enforcement-led operation, drug-related or otherwise.
Victims of drug suspects	The victim (1) was killed by a drug suspect but (2) is not reportedly involved in the drug trade or the drug war in any capacity.

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One example is the case of Althea Fhem Barbon, a four-year-old child, who was killed on August 30, 2016 during a police operation in Guihulngan, Negros Oriental. The police claimed that she was used as a human shield by her father who was allegedly listed on the drug watchlist of Guihulngan. Althea and her father were aboard a motorcycle and Althea was sitting in front when the policemen shot her father on the back with which the bullet penetrated and hit her on the spine. Her family sought justice for her by filing a complaint against the police at the Commission on Human Rights. Her case became highly publicized and the perpetrators were relieved and transferred to the Negros Oriental Provincial Police Office. Her case was thus categorized as collateral damage, highly publicized case, and contested account.

**Distribution of victims per category.** Table 6 presents the distribution of victims per category for each to the two administrations from March 2011-July 18, 2020.

**Table 6***Count of Victims Per Category from Two Administrations from March 201 to July 18, 2020*

Victim Category	Aquino Administration	Duterte Administration
Armed accomplice	3	21
Body dump	45	118
Collateral damage	13	74
Contested Account	1	139
Highly publicized case	5	85
Mistaken identity	1	13
Officer killed in action	12	28
Victims of drug suspects	46	52

**Armed accomplice.** The first category listed in Table 5 is *Armed accomplice* or one who was killed in a police operation after the alleged engagement in a shootout. Most of the victims under this category were bodyguards of drug suspects. While they were killed in anti-drug operations, they may not be involved in illegal drug activities. Recorded armed accomplice victims during the Aquino administration comprise 0.69% of the total number of drug-related deaths during his term, while 0.67% were recorded during the Duterte administration.

One of the armed accomplices killed during the Aquino administration was Paul Vincent Igloria, a 26-year old bodyguard and driver of Jeffrey “Jaguar” Diaz – a high profile target and top drug personality in Central Visayas. Igloria was killed with Diaz in an alleged shootout in Las Piñas City on June 17, 2016, five days after Diaz expressed in a radio interview that he was willing to surrender to, at that time, the president-elect Duterte. Twenty-one other armed accomplices were recorded killed during the Duterte





administration. Six of them were killed on August 3, 2016. They were bodyguards of Mayor Rolando Espinosa Sr. – a high-profile drug suspect who surrendered to the police after the incident and was later killed after he allegedly resisted arrest while he was detained in Baybay, Leyte Sub-Provincial Jail on November 5, 2016.

**Body dump.** Of the 3,127 drug-related deaths, 3.77% were categorized as *Body Dump* or those victims who were killed by unidentified assailants and dumped in a public place without witnesses. This killing scheme is not unique to the current administration. During Aquino's term, 10.42% of the total drug-related deaths were body dump victims. On December 14, 2012, a dead body was found outside his own house in Cebu City. The incident was said to be illegal drugs-related as the police recovered drug paraphernalia inside the home of the victim. Along with the bodies found dumped on the streets were placards that indicated the involvement of the slain victims in illegal drug trade.

Two of the forty-five recorded body dumps during the Aquino administration were found with placards lying beside their bodies on March 13, 2014 and June 2, 2016. This scheme continued on to the Duterte administration, and 118 body dump victims were recorded. Sixty-three of the bodies were immediately linked to drugs because of the placards found with them. However, two of the cases were contested by their families. These accounts, aside from being categorized as *Body dump*, were also put under the *Contested account* category. Rowena Tiamson and Jason Boclatan were both found with placards claiming that they were pushers. Rowena was found with her head wrapped in packaging tape, and both their families expressed that the two victims were not involved in the drug activity in any capacity.

The placards placed beside the bodies of the victims were used to pin down the victims in their alleged involvement in drugs. Moreover, these were used by the assailants to



scare and create a climate of fear among individuals around the dangers of engaging into illegal drugs.

**Collateral damage.** Both administrations recorded cases of *Collateral damage* or those who were killed in an encounter but were not the intended target of the operation. Thirteen individuals were killed and categorized as collateral damage victims during the Aquino administration. One of them was killed in an anti-drug operation in Davao City on February 21, 2014 when Duterte was then mayor of the city. Seven were killed in the operation including a fourteen-year-old boy who was shot during the gunfight. Duterte defended the police involved in the operation and expressed that they were only doing their job in protecting the city from the menace of the illegal drugs. He promised to exercise his power in getting rid of the drug problem in Davao City. Several years later, after he won the presidency, he also promised to do the same in the entire country.

On June 30, 2019, Myca Ulpina, a three-year-old kid was killed in a crossfire between the police and drug suspects inside her home in Rodriguez, Rizal. The police claimed that Myca was used by her father as a human shield which was denied by her mother. It was later found out that the bullet that killed the child was from the gun of a police officer. The incident brought criticisms on the anomalies among the *tokhang* operations and Senator Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa, former PNP chief blurted out that these things happen (Rey 2019). Seventy-three other individuals with no connection to the drug trade, suffered the same fate. They were killed in the crossfires in legitimate operations and vigilante-style killings during the Duterte administration.

**Contested account.** Reports concerning drug-related killings in the country reveal particular bias in the two administrations. As stated earlier, most of media reports were based on police reports and rarely includes statements from the family and friends of the

victims. During the Aquino administration, 0.23% or only one case of the drug-related deaths was included under *Contested Account*. John Jason Montes was killed on May 28, 2016 along with other two drug suspects in Bohol. The police reported that he was involved in drugs but his family insisted that he was never involved in the drug trade. Of the total number of drug-related killings under the Duterte administration, 4.45% were recorded under contested account category.

***Highly publicized case.*** This category includes the cases that the media often gave considerable attention because of the circumstances behind the killings. Most victims under this category are also included in other categories such as *Armed accomplice*, *Collateral damage*, and *Body dump*. The Aquino administration recorded a 1.16% of the total victims under *Highly publicized case* while the Duterte administration recorded 2.72%. One prominent example of this case was Kian Delos Santos, a 17-year-old student who was killed by Caloocan Police on August 15, 2017. He was killed after he allegedly had a shootout with the police in a buy-bust operation, but his family denied the allegation. A CCTV footage of the incident belying the police's allegation was brought forward and used as an evidence. It led to the conviction of the police involved in the killings on November 29, 2018 (Bartolome 2018). This case became known in the whole country and internationally but unfortunately, of all the thousands of drug-related cases recorded, this was the only case where the perpetrators were convicted (UN 2020).

***Mistaken identity.*** Victims who were mistakenly believed to be either involved in the illegal drug trade or the operations behind the drug war but without sufficient and valid evidence were also killed in both administrations. These victims were mistakenly identified and killed by the perpetrators whether state actors or non-state actors including motorcycle-riding gunmen. Of the total deaths during the Aquino administration, 0.23% was reported as cases of mistaken identity, while there were 0.42% reported in the



Duterte administration. Six victims believed to be cases of mistaken identity victims were killed in Kabasalan, Zamboanga on February 9, 2017 by unidentified motorcycle-riding gunmen who mistook them as police officers active in anti-drug operations in the town.

***Officers killed in Action.*** In a statement that explains the situation, PNP Chief Camilo Cascolan said. "It is not only the criminals who are being killed here. There are a lot of PNP officers who already died..." (Luna 2020). This statement refers to the police officers killed during anti-drug operations during a firefight between the suspects. His statement can be considered valid, as the database recorded police officers killed while on duty in both administrations. The number of police officers killed during the Aquino administration was 2.78% of the total killings during the term. During the Duterte administration, 0.90% of the total killings consisted of police officers on duty.

***Victims of Drug suspects.*** As stated above, the threat that the drug suspects and the drug trade itself pose to the country had been the reason why the Duterte administration had been so eager to get rid of the drug problem in the country. To somehow answer this argument of drug suspects being a threat to the lives of the Filipinos, the database that was created included in the count the reported victims of drug suspects.

During the Aquino administration, 10.65% of the total number of drug-related killings were perpetrated by drug suspects themselves, while the Duterte administration recorded 1.66%. These figures are included for they were also lost lives. However, comparing the total number of drug suspects killed during the war on drugs, it raises a question who and what are the real threats that the country faces.



These categories may only be a small percentage of the total number of killings between the two administrations, but they help in determining what specific type of victims were killed during anti-drug operations in the country.

### ***Assailant Information***

The war on drugs has been the highlight of the Duterte administration which mobilized government institutions in promoting the campaign against the war on drugs, specifically the police. On the ground, its brutality and the encouragement from the president himself seemed to embolden the vigilantes to take the laws into their hands and carry out the war on drugs leaving more people dead on the streets without proper investigation on their deaths. Reports indicate that Duterte himself repeatedly asked the public through his speeches to “kill drug addicts” inciting vigilante violence (The Guardian 2016, Rappler 2017).

These calls were met by reports of increased incidences of vigilante-style killings and body dumps on the streets with placards pinning the victims to the illegal drugs. These were carried out by unidentified individuals, making it utterly difficult to pin down and investigate the perpetrators. Furthermore, these cases, although considered to be drug-related in the database because of their reported involvement in drugs, were not included in the official reports of casualties of the war on drugs. However, Human Rights Watch (2017) reported that vigilante style killings involving drugs may have a link to the Philippine National Police (PNP).

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights is looking into the investigation of the deaths of thousands of drug suspects killed in the Philippines during the Duterte administration. Their data revealed that the legitimacy of the police operations carried out can be questioned (UN 2020). Less than half or only 42.13% of the recoded killings

under the Aquino administration were led by the state. Meanwhile, majority or 71.61% of the recorded drug-related killings during the Duterte administration were carried out by state agents. Most of the victims killed under state-led operations were reportedly involved in illegal drugs, but as victim categories suggests, there were victims who were killed even without clear evidence on their involvement in drugs.

According to the database, 8.56% of the drug-related killings during the Aquino administration were killed by non-state agents, while only 1.70% of drug-related killings under Duterte were perpetrated by non-state individuals. On the other hand, unidentified assailants were also recorded comprising the 35.65% of killings under Aquino and 22.24% of killings under Duterte. 147 or 78.02% of the 182 victims of state killings were killed during legitimate and planned operations by the state during the Aquino administration while 1950 or 87.25% of the 2235 victims of the state were killed in planned operations during the Duterte administration. Meaning that there were unplanned operations which resulted in the killings of individuals on both administrations.

**Table 7**

*Number of General Assailants of Victims from the Aquino and Duterte Administrations from March 1, 2011-July 18, 2020*

Assailants	Aquino Administration	Duterte Administration
State Agent	182	2086
Non-state Agent	37	53
Unidentified	154	694
Unknown	59	139
Total	432	3127

Looking at the reports, victims of drug suspects were also recorded in the database in an attempt to compare the results with the victims of war against drugs. However, as discussed in the previous section, the number of victims of drug suspects does not compare to the total count of victims of drug war.

Majority of the state-agents involved in the killings on both administrations are members of the Philippine National Police with 157 or 86.26 % of those who were killed by state during the Aquino administration while a whopping 2,086 or 93.08 % of the state-led killings were carried out by police during the Duterte administration.

Identifying and understanding the patterns on the assailants of the victims of drug-related killings between the two administrations are essential in seeking accountability and implementing compelling policies on maintaining peace. On this monitoring, the data suggests that there were more state-led killings linked to anti-drug operations on both administrations. However, the scale is larger during the Duterte administration considering the thousands of drug-related deaths recorded.

### ***Drug Involvement***

The Duterte administration heralded the success of the drug war with drug suspects being killed every day (Talabong 2018). The Palace and the police claim that the war on drugs initiated by the Duterte government is a success (Mariano 2019). Meanwhile, the number of drug-related killings in the country continued to increase. It was said that 93.25% of the recorded individuals killed during the first four years of the Duterte administration were too involved in the drug trade. While 81.48% of the recorded dead individuals during the Aquino administration were involved in drugs. The involvement of the victims to drugs are specified in Table 8.

**Table 8**

*Specific Drug Involvement of Victims of Drug-Related Killings from Two Administrations from March 1, 2011-July 18, 2020*

Drug Involvement	Aquino Administration	Duterte Administration
User	14	162
Pusher	144	1640
High Profile Target	12	184
Unreported	182	930
Not reportedly involved	80	211
Total	432	3127

In March 2020, during the start of the enhanced community quarantine, NCRPO announced that *Oplan Tokhang* would be temporarily suspended in Metro Manila due to the threat of the pandemic (Bajo 2020). However, data suggest otherwise as instances of drug-related killings were reported even when Metro Manila was under the Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ). Two months later, former PNP Chief and incumbent Senator Ronald “Bato” Dela Rosa said that the war on drugs would continue and would not be slowed down by the COVID-19 pandemic (Magsino 2020). It seems that nothing can stop the police from performing the war on drugs even in a global health crisis.

Earlier in 2020, PNP officer-in-charge Lt. Gen. Archie Gamboa said that the police will focus on the intensification of the campaign against illegal drugs by targeting high-value targets (Gonzales 2020b). However, despite this shift in focus, many drug low-level drug suspects were reported killed. As seen in Table 8, the number of drug pushers killed is more than 891% higher than the number of high-profile targets killed in operations. This, of course is not to say that more high-profile targets should be killed than pushers and



users, but focusing the war on drugs to high-profile targets should reflect in the decline in the number of pushers and users being killed under the war on drugs. In the first half of 2020, there were 99 pushers in the target list, while nine high-profile targets were killed, proving that there was no letup on gunning down low-level drug suspects. Victims with unreported links to illegal drugs indicate that they were ambiguously linked to illegal drugs.

The attempt to cut the root of the drug problem in the country led to the killing of drug lords and pushers. A small number of the victims were drug lords and the larger figure consisted of small-time pushers. According to the reports, police often find small sachets of shabu with the bodies of the victims proving their involvement in drugs. Table 9 presents the drug possessions of the victims of drug-related killings from March 1, 2011 to July 18, 2020.

**Table 9**

*Drug Possessions of the Victims of Drug-Related Killings from March 1, 2011-July 18, 2020 in Two Administrations*

Drug possession	Aquino Administration	Duterte Administration
Reportedly in possession	172	1655
Not reportedly in possession	260	1472
Total	432	3127

Aside from drugs, some of the victims were found with other items such as ammunition, drug paraphernalia, money, placards, and arms. Most of the victims were found with .38 caliber guns especially those victims who were reported to be killed because they “fought back” (*nanlaban*) (Yap 2018). The *nanlaban* narrative became overused in police reports making human rights organizations question its validity. The Commission on Human

Rights called the government to probe the *nanlaban* cases after a murder case was filed against a police officer who killed an epileptic man and used the *nanlaban* narrative to justify his actions (Aguilar 2019).

Despite the press release that the government and the police were only targeting drug suspects, data has shown that there were victims who were not associated with the illegal drug trade in any capacity. During the Aquino administration, 80 out of 432 individuals killed or 18.52% were not reportedly involved in drugs. On the other hand, 211 or 6.75% of the 3,127 killed during the first three years of the Duterte administration were not reportedly involved in drugs. This includes collateral damage, mistaken identities, and officers killed in action. Figure 2 presents a timeline of drug-related killings from March 1, 2011 to July 18, 2020 in both Aquino and Duterte administrations.

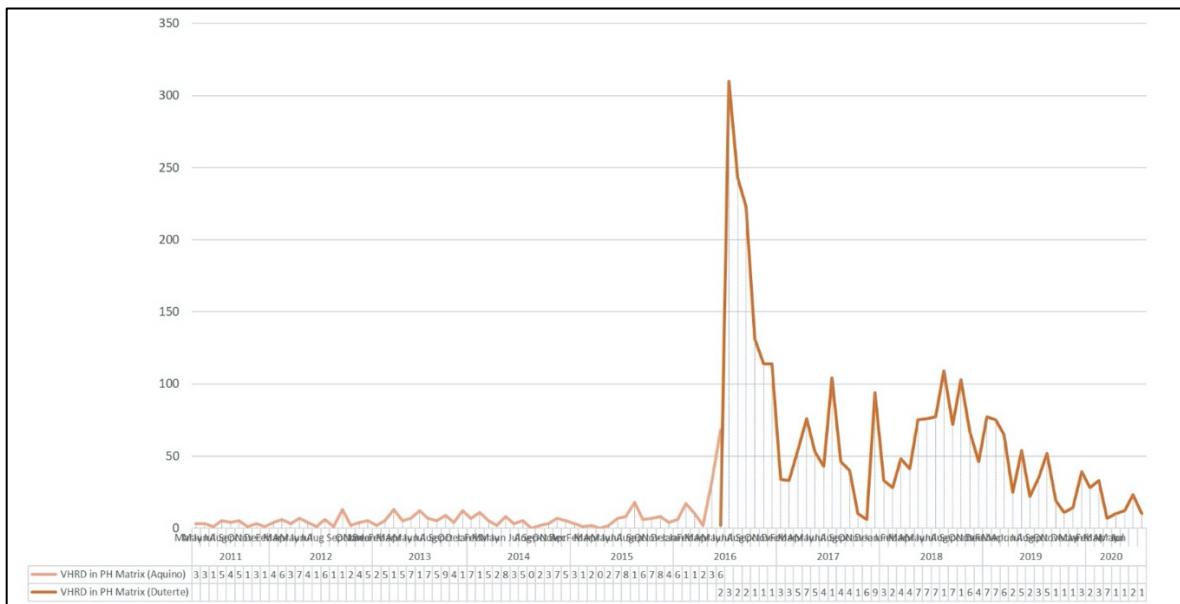


Figure 2. Timeline of Drug-Related Killings from March 1, 2011 to July 18, 2020

**Incident Information**

The first month of the Duterte administration was greeted with the rise of the reported drug-related killings. The highest recorded data was in July 2016 with a total of 310 drug-



related deaths while the killings recorded during the Aquino administration each month did not exceed the count of 100. In fact, the highest record of the Aquino administration with eighty-two drug-related deaths was in June 2016, a month before Duterte officially stepped into presidency. Reports of drug-related killings published in *Inquirer.net* in 2019 to the first half of 2020 were less than the reports in 2016-2018. But one clear thing is that the killings of drug suspects never stopped.

The killings happened mostly in the middle of the week and during nighttime. In the Aquino administration, 43.06% of the incidents transpired from 6:00 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.. Similarly, while 60.98% of the incidents occurred victims during the same time span in the Duterte administration.. The same observation was made by the *PhilRights* when they documented the killings in NCR during the Duterte administration from August 15, 2017 to July 31, 2019 where 69 (58.47 percent) of their data were killed between 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. (Philippine Human Rights Information Center 2018). Most of the reports of the killings done by vigilantes were done at night when the victim had gone to bed or was about to go to bed with their families. The police were ordered to limit *tokhang* operations during working hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) on weekdays (ABS-CBN News 2018). However, killings continued to happen at night.

Most of the killings reported for both administrations happened in the National Capital Region (NCR) where the density of the population is higher than the rest of the regions in the country. Other provinces that exhibited the large number of drug-related killings in the country, especially during the Duterte administration were close to Metro Manila. These provinces were Bulacan, Laguna, Quezon, and Nueva Ecija. Warburg and Jensen (2018) saw the correlation between the urban space and the police in promoting the war on drugs. Individuals who were killed during buy-bust operations often live in urban poor communities. *Amnesty International* proved in their investigation report that the war on



drugs is directed towards poor people (2018). These threats of abuse and violence add to the vulnerabilities of the poor people. Targeting them under the war on drugs instead of providing solutions will not properly address the drug problem and could possibly trigger another problem.

Figure 3 presents a heatmap of drug-related killings of two administrations from March 1, 2011 to July 1, 2020

### ***Accountability and Peace through Numbers***

On March 2019, the Philippines officially withdrew from the International Criminal Court (ICC) which was actively inquiring on the human rights and crimes against humanity in the country (Gutierrez 2019). Human rights defenders say that this withdrawal endangers the Philippines on the continuing extrajudicial killings, impunity and crimes against humanity. But the ruling takes effect only after twelve months of the withdrawal making the perpetrators still liable for the crimes committed during the time when the country is still affiliated with the ICC.

The continuing extrajudicial killings pose grave threats and violations of the civil, social, economic, cultural, and political rights of the communities affected by the war on drugs (PhilRights 2019). The war on drugs leads to the erosion of the relationships in the community and diminishes the rights of the people. It is disguised as the war against the dangers of illegal drugs in the country, but it manifests as a war against human rights on the ground.

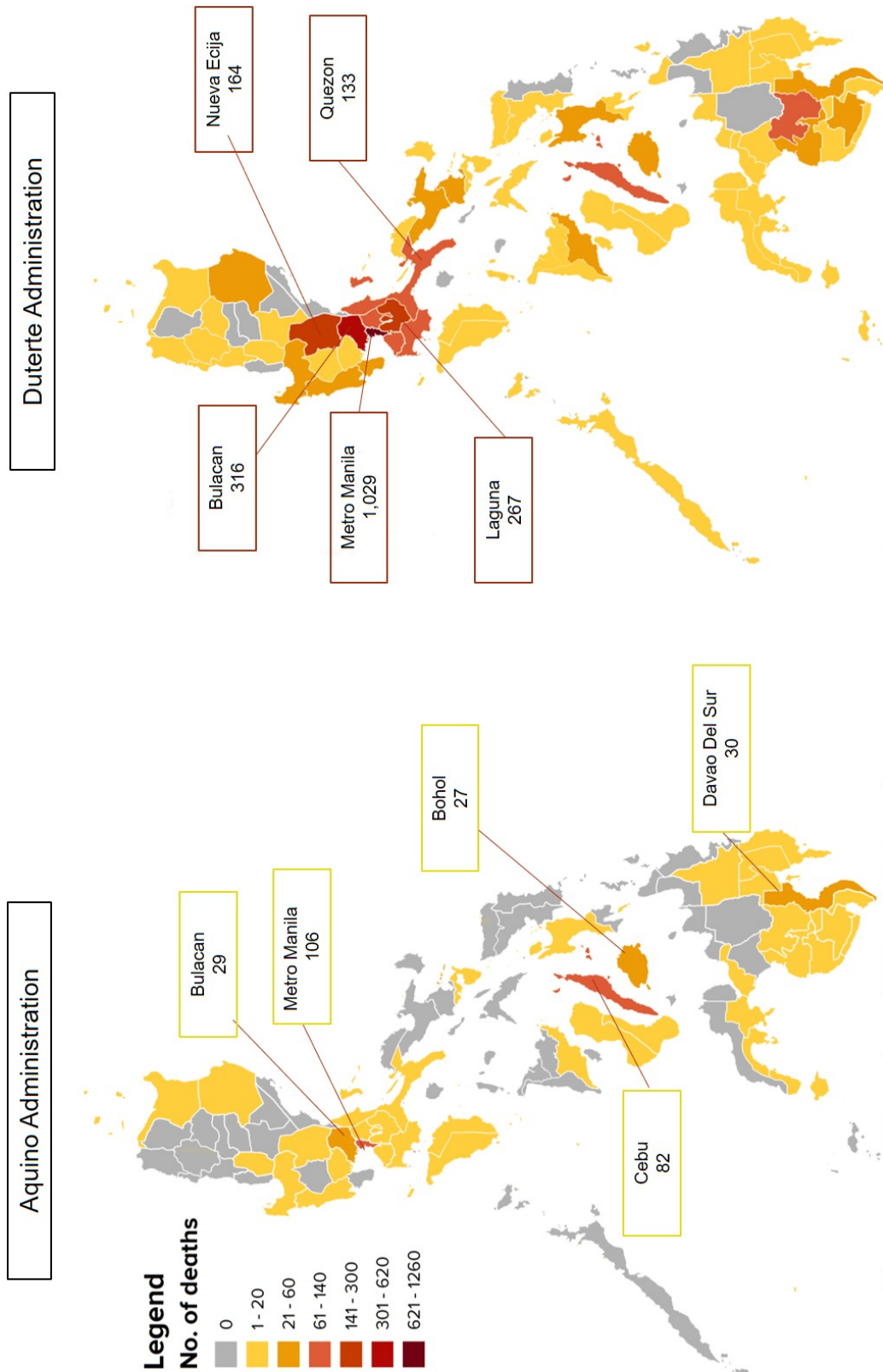


Figure 3. Heatmap of Drug-Related Killings Between Two Administrations from March 1, 2011 to July 1, 2020.



According to GReVD, an organization dedicated to measuring and monitoring violent deaths around the world, there is no reliable global picture of violent deaths, which makes it harder to assess the overall progress of reducing violence. However, taking a step in counting violent deaths, including state-sponsored and vigilante-style killings will map out the trends that are present in every country in the world. Counting the dead during war times accounts for the severity of the crimes committed in those times. The high number of dead counts during the war on drugs in the Philippines does not equate to the victory of the war against illegal drugs. It represents the intensified number of violence and murder cases during the implementation of war on drugs. Data is power, anyone who controls the data has the power to control the image of the state. That is why civilian-based counting of the dead is essential in building peace and seeking accountability.

The government, with its responsibility to protect the fundamental rights of its citizens should provide the necessary data to conduct proper inquiry on the killings in the country. In order to achieve effective policies on human rights in the Philippines, the government must address the problem of transparency and release the actual data on the killings that transpired during the war on drugs in the country (The Drug Archive 2018). The count of the dead during times of war is used by officials and international law-making bodies to make a difference on how to govern the human rights situation in every country in the world. Different governments also bank on the data to assess the success or failure of the war. In these cases where acquisition of accurate data on violent deaths remain elusive, it is important to keep track of the data in order to promote effective and lasting peace and accountability towards the perpetrators of the violent deaths.



## Conclusion

The war on drugs of the Duterte administration created a climate of violence and fear among the Filipinos, whether they are involved in the illegal drug trade or not. The rise in collateral damage cases and innocent individuals killed during legitimate police operations makes the war on drugs a threat to ordinary individuals. Despite this rise in violence in the country, the popularity of Duterte remained high as drug-related deaths in everyday news seemed to be normalized.

Counting the dead is a step closer in providing answers in the assessment of human rights situation and incidence of violence in the country. The increase in the drug-related deaths during the first years of the Duterte administration was overwhelming. Human rights and nongovernment organizations immediately saw the need for this kind of violence to stop, and started monitoring the ruthless war on drugs while calling for accountability for the crimes.

The initiatives on counting and documenting the killings provided basis and proof for international human rights organizations and law implementing bodies to look into the human rights situation and the possible violations in the country. The data discussed above is just a part of a larger and deeper discourse on the politics of counting the dead. But focusing into the details behind the total count of drug-related deaths allows for the deeper understanding of the background of each of the victims. It also gives a closer look on the circumstances behind the drug-related killings committed by state agents, non-state agents, or vigilantes. It is to be noted that most of the articles recorded in the database are sourced by the news agencies from police reports, thus, the perspective is mostly from the eyes of the implementer of the war on drugs. That is why careful understanding and analysis of the circumstances behind the killings is necessary to come up with better solutions for preventing violence from occurring.



The data shown above proves that there was indeed an exponential increase in the drug-related deaths in the Philippines when Duterte became president. However, aside from proving the exponential increase, the data from the Aquino administration was presented alongside data on Duterte's war on drugs to look at the continuing trends that occur in both administrations. It is also to look at how killings are embedded in the campaign against the illegal. The trends in the drug-related killings on both administrations continue to occur and as long as these trends on cold-blooded killings under the guise of war against drugs progress, counting and recording the dead shall continue. Continuing the count of the dead will not only help that the victims be remembered and their accounts be recorded. Keeping the data will help the whole nation in seeking accountability of the perpetrators of the drug-related killings that have claimed the lives of thousands of Filipinos.

The world is currently facing a global pandemic which endangers the lives of the people. Governments around the world and health institutions are keeping the dead count that are caused by the deadly coronavirus. While this count is important in assessing the current health condition and the response of each country to this pandemic, there is also a compelling need to keep track of the number of drug-related killings in the country which could be used to assess the human rights situation. For as long as there are killings to count, the fight for justice and accountability for the victims goes on.





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## Tracing Violence in Philippine Social Science Scholarship: A Scoping Review

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### Introduction

To study violence is to recognize the existence of violence. This alone testifies to the weight this particular research area bears given the possible ramifications of the conclusions it asserts. Especially in the social sciences where violence is often conceived as a problem and viewed from the perspective of power (Dwyer, 2017), studying violence entails recognizing that damage was done to a disempowered victim. Scholars therefore hold an important share of the task of eliminating all forms of violence in society through constantly deepening and advancing our understanding of the subject towards this endeavor.

Just a few months after the puzzling rise of a Rodrigo Duterte to presidency, there came a surge in scholarship seeking to make sense of the baffling phenomenon; a new scholarly attention that has been criticized as “hint[ing] at a fetishism” due to a tendency of this budding literature to fixate its eyes to the phenomenon that is Duterte, treating him as the sole cause of the chaos, and thereby situating him and his “eccentricities” outside of the contours of Philippine history (Adam, Ariate, and Cruz, 2019, p. 2). Among his many pronouncements that made him (in)famous to an audience, including scholars, reaching far beyond national borders was his unrelenting call for violence and its subsequent deployment to rid the country of illegal drugs. Upon assuming office, President Duterte immediately materialized this key campaign platform by launching an all out “war on drugs” with the Philippine National Police (PNP) at the frontlines.



President Duterte and his “war on drugs” spawned scholarship, and various commentaries and analysis published in popular media intended to shed light on violence in the Philippines. However, these generally fall prey to that propensity of failing to acknowledge that “[t]he political opportunities that this government has seized or crafted to govern through violence are deeply rooted in Philippine history” (Adam, Ariate, and Cruz, 2019, p. 2).<sup>1</sup> As underscored by Coronel (2019) in writing about police violence under Duterte and his drug war:

*Duterte is not the first president of the republic to wield the police as a blunt instrument. His bloody purge of drug offenders was possible only because the PNP was a ready, willing, and able killing machine. A template for police killings already existed. For decades, policemen as well as vigilantes, death squads, and contract killers linked to the police have murdered criminals, journalists, lawyers, and activists. It’s therefore not surprising that the modes of killing employed in the anti-drug campaign - shooting by hooded gunmen riding on motorcycles or strangulation by cords or wires - are reminiscent of executions past. (Coronel, 2019, p. 169)*

Scholars and analysts who took up the task of examining Duterte must be wary of this fact if they were to produce knowledge on violence; a research agenda whose pursuits may be laden with normative ideals that view violence as antithetical to the advancement of democracy and human rights in the country. Viewing the present spate of killings as caused by this single man may be counterproductive to this effort if ending a long-

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance Danilo Andres Reyes’ “The Spectacle of Violence in Duterte’s ‘War on Drugs’” and Mark R. Thompson’s *Bloodied Democracy: Duterte and the Death of Liberal Reformism in the Philippines*,” both published in a 2016 issue of *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* titled “The Early Duterte Presidency in the Philippines.”



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standing cycle of violence is the end-goal. Charting knowledge production on violence is one step towards historicizing violence as it manifests in the Philippines.

The current study is positioned against this backdrop. To maximize the scientific gains of a renewed energy directed to understand violence in the Philippines, there is a need to build a systematic field of knowledge on violence in the Philippines that may function as a reference to scholars within the field. This is so that they may reach better informed and contextualized conclusions that take into account the current state of the literature and contribute to its development. In this light, the current study asks: how has violence registered in Philippine social science scholarship? By answering this question, it brings to the fore how Philippine Social Science scholarship has accounted for, variably and partially given attention to, or neglected violence as a social science inquiry, and what form these articulations, utterances, and silences have taken shape. The study reveals that there is necessarily no dearth of research related to violence in Philippine Social Science scholarship. There is, however, in research that anchor their study of violence or violent incidents to theoretical underpinnings. Of the very few that do, they generally follow the trend in the wider social science literature on violence in terms of its strategy in defining “violence,” and its theoretical approach of understanding its structural causes.

The succeeding parts of the paper will be structured as follows. First, the literature and methodology of scoping studies are reviewed followed by how this method is adopted for the purposes and limitations of this study. The next section discusses the results of the scoping exercise which is divided into two: (1) the descriptive numerical analysis; and (2) the qualitative thematic analysis. The last section concludes with a summary of the findings, and an attempt to provide some tentative answers as to why the literature is in its current state and how scholars might proceed given so. It ends with the contributions of this scoping review and some recommendations for future research. This is but a





preliminary step with modest goals towards building this field of knowledge due to its scope and limitations. It is hoped that this will be the first step to many.

### Scoping studies

With this broad research question that encompasses a large body of literature, undertaking a scoping study of violence in Philippine Social Science scholarship is deemed fitting. Widely cited in the scoping study literature is Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) work in devising a methodological framework for conducting scoping studies. They define *scoping studies* as a kind of literature review that "aims to map rapidly the key concepts underpinning a research area and the main sources and types of evidence available and can be undertaken as stand-alone projects in their own right. Especially where an area is complex or has not been reviewed comprehensively before" (Mays, Roberts, & Popay, 2001, p. 94 cited in Arksey and O'Malley, 2005, p. 21). A scoping study can be distinguished with systematic reviews, another popular way to review a body of work, along two dimensions. First, in terms of the questions these answer, systematic reviews answer narrow questions that prioritize a single research design while scoping studies are suited for broadly defined questions that can accommodate different study designs. Second, with respect to the scope of studies included, systematic reviews usually cover significantly a smaller number of studies as a consequence of the narrow parameters of its questions (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005). Four purposes were identified by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) on why a scoping study should be carried out which are as follows:

1. To examine the extent, range and nature of research activity;
2. To determine the value of undertaking a full systematic review;
3. To summarize and disseminate research findings; and
4. To identify research gaps in the existing literature. (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005, p. 21)



Of main concern to this study is the first and fourth purpose. In their pioneering article, Arksey and O'Malley outlined five stages, plus an optional sixth which is the 'consultation exercise' in undertaking a scoping study. Below is a brief summary of each stage. Also included are the recommendations made by authors who joined in the efforts to advance the framework based on their own experiences of conducting a scoping study. For these, the works of Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien (2010) and Daudt, van Mossel, and Scott (2013) who are oft cited in the literature are referenced.

The starting point is identifying a research question that will guide the subsequent stages of the review. According to Arksey and O'Malley, the question must both be broad and have clearly defined parameters. Suggestions by Levac Colquhoun, and O'Brien (2010) and Daudt, van Mossel, and Scott (2013) specify that it should be the concepts in the question that must be clearly articulated. This is followed by identifying the relevant studies which involves devising a search strategy that states where and how the studies will be found (e.g. searching electronic databases, manually searching key journals), and what qualifies as a relevant study. Both Levac's and Daudt's teams suggest that a group of people must be assembled to accomplish this step, owing to the intense labor it necessitates in the quest for breadth. However, they still recognize that aiming for full comprehensiveness may not be feasible at times, hence, a fine balance must be struck between the need for breadth and the time constraints of the study (Daudt, van Mossel, and Scott, 2013), as long as these deliberate decisions to limit the scope is thoroughly justified and acknowledged (Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien, 2010).

After a set of studies have been pooled, the study selection stage involves screening these studies based on inclusion and exclusion criteria established post hoc. Despite conducting their studies independently, Levac's and Daudt's teams came up with very similar recommendations for the process that focuses on how a team should go about



this step. Essentially, they propose a two-stage screening process: first at the title and abstract level, then to the full-text level. At each level, two groups or researchers are to apply the criteria independently to all the text, and whenever disagreements are found, they discuss upon themselves the eligibility of the text in question or have a third reviewer decide on its final inclusion.

Once a final set of studies to be reviewed have been determined, the fourth step is charting the data which involves developing a standardized data-charting form to organize the desired data from the studies. Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien (2010) recommend that the development of this form must be done collectively, and that the charting form should not be fixed but rather continually updated throughout this phase. Both suggest that a pilot charting step must be conducted to test the consistency of its application and its aptness to answer the research question. Similar to the previous step, Daudt's team recommends that reviewers independently chart the data, and compare their results. If disagreements arise, they discuss among themselves or with a third reviewer to resolve it.

The supposed final step in the framework involves collating, summarizing, and reporting the results. Based on the data from the charting exercise, an overview of the literature is presented in a clear manner. This may be done through a numerical analysis demonstrating the extent of the literature, followed by a thematic analysis. Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien (2010) recommends breaking this stage into three parts:

- a. Analysis (including descriptive numerical analysis and qualitative thematic analysis);
- b. Reporting the results and producing the outcome that refers to the overall purpose or research question;

- c. Consider the meaning of the findings as they relate to the overall study or purpose; discuss implications for future research, practice and policy. (p. 4)

Lastly, the optional consultation stage whose purpose is to gather possible additional references and insights from stakeholders, should, for both Daudt's and Levac's team, be a necessary part of the framework. They further add that the method surrounding this stage (i.e., who are the purposely chosen stakeholders, how is the data collected and analyzed) must be clearly described.

The use of scoping studies in the social sciences to examine the extent of a literature is quite scant as this kind of literature review is primarily done within the fields of health and medicine. In their scoping review of scoping reviews published from 1999 to 2012, Pham et al. (2014) recorded and found that three-quarters of the reviews were focused on topics related to health. The method's popularity in the health sector came with the demand for evidence-based practices that required collating the expanse of evidence available about a medical intervention. As an example, the Arksey and O'Malley framework emerged from their experience of scoping the literature on support care services for mental health patients. Furthermore, even within the body of scoping studies related to the social sciences, existing studies often insist on tackling health-related topics (see Davis et al., 2014; Norman and Pauly, 2013; Sepulchre, 2013).

Despite its gravitation towards health and medicine, the objectives of the framework and its methodology were open enough to be employed by other disciplines. From 1999 to 2012, Pham et al. (2014) also found, albeit comparably few, scoping reviews done in the social sciences, business, agriculture, education, and software engineering among others. Specific topics in the social sciences cover terrorism (Campana and Lapointe, 2012), sexual violence (Raine, 2019), governance (Dowling, Leopkey, and Smith, 2018), age

(Kwan and Walsh, 2018), and gender relations (Okeke-Ihejirika, Salami, and Karimi 2016). Immediately, upon a survey of these works, the prominence of the Arksey and O'Malley framework is evident and is perhaps demonstrative of its feasibility to examine the extent of a research area in the social sciences. Locally, scoping reviews in the Philippines are geared toward providing policy recommendations rather than serving academic purposes. Instead of scoping academic literature, although sometimes this may be included, the main material to be scoped are policy-related documents, and even key informant interviews (see Dadios et al., 2018; Manalili et al., 2017). These studies, moreover, are not informed by established scoping review frameworks. Hence, this review contributes to the increasing use of the scoping framework in the social sciences while also being a step forward for scoping reviews done in the Philippines.

## Methodology

### *Research Question*

To gauge how violence has registered in selected scholarships and to examine its extent, the research asks (1) what has been studied about violence in Philippine Social Science scholarship, and (2) how has violence been defined in Philippine Social Science scholarship. Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien (2010) call attention to the importance of defining the parameters of the research question to facilitate the succeeding steps of devising a search strategy and an inclusion criteria. In this case, what might be considered as constituting violence. As part of the Violence, Human Rights, and Democracy Project<sup>2</sup>, the study follows its stand that, while acknowledging the concept's complexity, defines violence as constituting "direct physical violence against humans and the multiple threats

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<sup>2</sup> The "Violence, Human Rights, and Democracy project is a joint research and advocacy project by the Third World Studies Center of the University of the Philippines Diliman and the Department of Conflict and Development Studies of Ghent University that aims to produce evidence-based research on violence and tendencies towards authoritarianism in the Philippines. It's ongoing efforts can be accessed at [dahas.upd.edu.ph](http://dahas.upd.edu.ph).



and intimidations to inflict this physical violence” which covers “the rhetoric and performative quality of violence, discourses of violence, violence against women, threats and intimidations in cyberspace, etc.” (Third World Studies Center, 2020). Nonetheless, studies that proposed other interpretations of violence will still be considered in this review. The definition will only serve to guide the next step of identifying relevant studies. In addition, this study will not restrict itself to violence committed or received by any specific actor nor under a particular context only. This choice ensures that the resulting search strategy will be exhaustive and will generate the breadth necessary for a scoping review.

### ***Identifying Relevant Studies***

Next, regarding the search strategy for studies to be included in the review, a combination of searching electronic databases/indices and hand-searching key journals was usually done in scoping reviews to ensure that they capture the full-breadth of knowledge produced on a certain topic. Primacy is evidently given to the former for the obvious reasons of ease and efficiency; the latter, along with scanning the reference list of selected studies, being merely supplemental. To maximize their use of these indices, search terms were meticulously devised to exhaust all relevant literature of interest. The current effort seeks to look into academic journals that may not necessarily be indexed in prestigious indices, such as Scopus or Thomson Reuters. Hence, diverging from the convention in scoping reviews, manual searching will be the main strategy for gathering relevant literature.

Criticizing the mere supplementary role given to manual search strategies and responding to the lack of rigor in the way it has been done in scoping reviews, Teare and Taks (2019) advocate manual searching as a stand-alone search strategy that is complementary to database searching. They proposed a three-step guide towards a



more systematic and rigorous manual searching that involves: (1) selecting top-field specific journals; (2) identifying relevant literature based on an inclusion criteria; and, (3) scanning the references of the relevant articles to find other potential journals that may be hand-searched. Following this method, in tracing how violence has been studied in Philippine Social Science scholarship, the study looked into the University of the Philippines' (UP) — the country's premiere state university— main library holdings, which houses historical, archival materials including social science journals that covered the intended scope. Outside of UP, it also looked into Ateneo de Manila University's social science journal holdings, given its strong social science tradition. Six journals were selected that span the pre-war period to the present: (1) during the pre-war period: the *Philippine Social Sciences Review*, founded in 1929, is the official bi-annual journal of the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy of the UP Diliman; (2) during the post-war period: originally *Philippine Studies*, the *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*, founded in 1953, is an international quarterly journal of the Ateneo de Manila University; and (3) *Asian Studies: Journal of Critical Perspectives on Asia*, founded in 1963, is published by the Asian Center of the UP Diliman; (4) during the martial law period, *Agham-Tao*, founded in 1978, is the official publication of the Anthropological Association of the Philippines; (5) originally *Filipinas*; the *Pilipinas: Journal of Philippine Studies*, founded in 1980, is the official publication of the Philippine Studies Group of the Association of Asian Studies; and (6) during the post-martial law period: *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*, founded in 1985, is the official bi-annual journal of the Third World Studies Center also of the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy of the UP Diliman.

In addition, therefore, to prioritizing manual searching, limiting the scope to locally produced knowledge is introduced as another novel intervention in conducting scoping reviews. For a method with a disposition to map the literature on medical interventions,



a field whose subject is more or less universal, this has yet to be done even in other disciplines. This approach finds utility in the social sciences because of the continuing effort to capture possible variations in the scholarship across different contexts; locality being one of the most common. In line with this, the study will consider works written in Filipino. This steers away from the widespread practice of excluding works written in languages other than English, thereby adding a unique layer to this review's breadth. Emphasis is thus directed towards a nuanced understanding of violence as it manifests locally in the Philippines. This encompasses the forms violence has taken in the Philippines (e.g. extrajudicial killings, murder, torture, militarization, headhunting), the range of local actors who possess the capacity to dispense violence (e.g. Philippine National Police, Armed Forces of the Philippines, New People's Army, Moro Islamic Liberation Front, warlords), and the contexts violence has taken place (e.g. colonial warfare, revolutions, martial law).

### ***Building the index***

In lieu of simply scanning the titles of the selected journals, as how manual hand-searching strategy has been done (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005), the study builds an index from scratch whose contents can serve different research aims, particularly those requiring searching scholarly works in the Philippines. This step has not been introduced to scoping reviews since most have well-established indices such as Scopus at their disposal. Although the resulting index will be nowhere near as sophisticated, it will nonetheless facilitate the manual search strategy in the chosen journals which may not be indexed in prestigious indices.

For each written work in a journal, the journal name, year, volume and issue number, author name, document type, and title were listed then categorized per politico-historical period in the Philippines on an electronic spreadsheet. These information were obtained





primarily from the journals' online archives. For journal issues that were not available online, these details were gathered from the hard copies held by the aforementioned libraries. Afterwards, keywords were devised from the titles of written works in each period. This step is devised because not all written works contain keywords. Titles, on the other hand, can be perceived as building blocks of knowledge where they purportedly encapsulate the crux of the author's key arguments. The list of keywords were based on their frequency count or the number of titles the word appears in.

To accomplish this step, a corpus linguistics research software called *AntConc* is used to process the list of titles and obtain word frequencies. The index will serve as a database whose contents can serve different research aims. For the purposes of the study, the index served as the starting point of the search strategy for selecting an initial pool of written works on violence from which relevant studies may be extracted. The list of keywords were scanned for the word "violence" and other related words that pertain to direct exercise of physical violence (e.g. killings, murder, rape), conditions which may be precursors to the exercise of violence (e.g. war, rebellion, dictatorship, authoritarianism), and actors that dispense, or have the capacity to dispense, violence including their specific manifestations in the Philippines (e.g. warlords, army, terrorist, AFP, NPA, MNLF). The index was then searched for titles containing these terms, which were compiled and checked for duplicates to constitute the initial pool of relevant studies. The search strategy rendered a total of 480 written works.

More than simply being used to locate relevant materials, introducing the use of an index serves an analytical purpose which conventional scoping reviews tend to overlook. Because scoping reviews are normally fixated only on the relevant materials, they fail to draw valuable insights from seeing the bigger picture of scholarly publications. The index, which lists the keywords and frequencies of the journal contents, provides a glimpse into



the research agenda in a given time period. Hence, this permits a macro perspective analysis on the registry of violence in the scholarship by placing it in the context of other academic works published alongside it.

### ***Study selection***

Although the index covers articles published from 1929 to 2019, the scope of this review is limited to works published from 1986 to 2019 in consideration of time and availability of resources. This is especially the case in scoping reviews where in pursuit of breadth, reviewers run the risk of being overwhelmed by the number of articles included in the review. Moreover, in the selected journals, it was within this period where most of the contents were readily available online. Other than concerns for feasibility, it is also reasonable to speculate a growing academic interest in violence within this period due to it being the aftermath of a dictatorial regime characterized, among others, by rampant and brutal violence. Written works which were not journal articles were excluded. Articles are the key material because they most often contain full reports of original research that sought to contribute and advance an area of study. The step immediately narrowed down the list to 238 articles. These articles were then explored to determine if they could be made part of the contours of a knowledge domain on violence.

Each work was subjected to a two-level screening process. This process was heavily guided by Eisner's (2009, p. 47 in Chitrali, Sanauddin, and Owais, 2015) categories and types of violence listed in Table 1.

**Table 1***Manifestations of Violence Covered by a General Theory of Violence*

Category of violence	Type(s) of Violence(s)
Childhood aggression	(1) bullying; (2) fights
Violence in non-state societies	(1) ritualized fights; (2) revenge killings, feuds; (3) violent self-help; (4) raids; (5) battles; (6) massacres; (7) rape; (8) assassination of visitors; (9) infanticide, suicide; (10) torture; (11) human sacrifice
Interpersonal and criminal violence	(1) assault; (2) rape; (3) robbery; (4) homicide; (5) infanticide; (6) child abuse; (7) domestic violence
Punishments	(1) parental corporal punishment; (2) state capital punishment; (3) flogging, stoning
Organized and private violence	(1) hitting, beating, raping, killing subordinate and dependents; (2) organized piracy and robbery; (3) assassinations; (4) private warlords; (5) gang wars
Legitimate and illegitimate state violence	(1) assassination; (2) torture; (3) wars; (4) massacres; (5) concentration camps; (6) executions; (7) genocide; (8) police use of force
Organized and political violence	(1) assassinations; (2) civil war; (3) extortion of protection rents; (4) terrorism; (5) resistance/liberation wars; (6) revolutionary violence; (7) riots; (8) lynching; (9) vigilante violence; (10) extremist and hate violence

Note. Adapted from "Violence Explained? A review of theoretical explanations of violent behavior" J.A. Chitrani, N. Sanauddin, & S. Owais, 2015, *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*, 7(4), p. 4.

The first-level screening concerns the title and abstracts of the works. But if needed, such as in cases where there is no abstract, the entire work was read. At this level, an article is included if it mentions "violence" directly or mentions the categories or types of violence listed in the table, or a variation thereof. After the first screening, 216 articles remained.

excluded in this list were works whose full paper were unavailable online (7) or had missing pages (1).

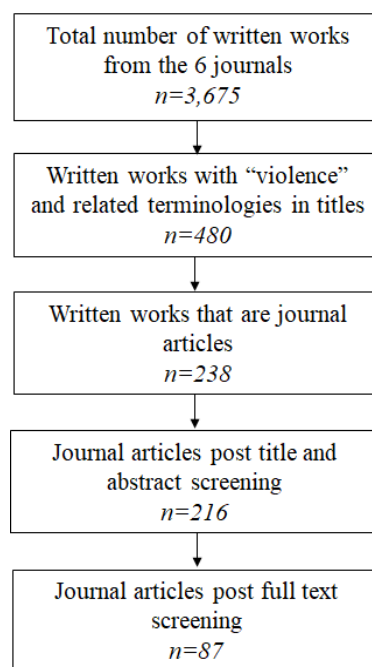
For the second-level screening, the resulting list of articles were read in full to determine inclusion in the final pool of studies to be reviewed. For articles found under the keyword “violence,” inclusion is afforded if violence played a central role as a concept or object in the study. Inclusion is also afforded if the types of violence listed in the table or their variations was a central or significant concern of the paper. Since proxies for “violence” such as “resistance,” “conflict,” and “abuse,” where violence may simply be one facet of the concept, were also considered, articles containing and using these words must refer to their violent aspect before being assessed for the centrality of violence in the article. Take for example an article primarily concerned with “abuse.” If the material explicitly qualifies it as “violent abuse” or uses the word to refer to direct physical harm of any form, then the article is further considered. Following Arksey and O’Malley’s (2005) suggestion and Levac, Colquhoun, and O’Brien’s (2010) emphasis of the iterative nature of this stage, these criteria may be refined post hoc after gaining familiarity with the contents of the literature. After reading through 216 articles, only 87 articles were able to meet the criteria. Figure 1 summarizes the process of appraising the literature.

### ***Data charting***

This stage involves extracting relevant information from the selected texts based on key issues and themes (Arksey and O’Malley, 2005). Similar to the previous step, the recommendation of Levac, Colquhoun, and O’Brien to consider this as an iterative process is followed, meaning that the set of variables extracted from the texts will develop along with an increasing grasp of the literature’s content. Aside from the article’s author, year of publication, journal title, and volume and issue numbers, a preliminary review of a few articles that satisfied the screening process provided an initial idea as to

what other data can be charted from the studies. Critical to the research question posed is knowing what manifestations or operationalizations of violence have registered in the local scholarship. To this end, the review charted what the act of violence was, the main actor/s involved, and the context surrounding violence in each article.

If applicable, data was charted on how articles defined, understood, or theorized “violence.” This data renders insights into how violence has been studied in the Philippine Social Science scholarship. Simultaneously, this allows for an assessment of how the local literature on violence has progressed since theoretical engagement, whether by verifying, or challenging existing theories, would indicate a strong uptake as it demonstrates an effort to contribute to our logical understanding of the subject. Additionally, short summaries of each article were charted to aid in the thematic analysis.



**Figure 1.** Summary of literature appraisal process



### *Limitations*

The current study has, as much as a single reviewer is able to, incorporated the recommendations by authors who developed the framework, especially as they underscore the importance of executing the study in a team, particularly in the study selection stage. Proceeding with this step alone runs the risk of losing the findings' reliability. As an alternative way to resolve this without a team to participate in the arduous reading and screening of all the texts, this study sought the help of researchers from the aforementioned project whose involvement were kept at most at the level of consultancy. Hence, in the inclusion/exclusion criteria, the primary researcher developed the indicators before submitting it for review by the consultants. Likewise, in the application of these criteria to screen the articles, only the primary researcher reviews the abstracts and the full texts. Whenever uncertainties and ambiguities arise, these are raised and discussed with the consultants to determine their final inclusion.

Pham et al. (2014) found that the most oft cited limitation of scoping studies was the possibility of overlooking some relevant studies due to "database selection (i.e., searching other databases may have identified additional relevant studies), exclusion of the gray literature from the search, time constraints, or the exclusion of studies published in language other than English" (p. 379). Other challenges and limitations posed by scoping studies include the difficulty of producing a comprehensive synthesis and analysis due to the sheer amount of literature and the time constraints. Given the premium placed on breadth, scoping reviewers run the risk of being inundated by the amount of relevant literature that they may come across with. This possibility raises concerns regarding the feasibility of conducting this kind of study in consideration of one's time and resources. Taking stock of their experience with such problem, Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien (2010), and Daudt, van Mossel, and Scott (2013) recommended that a team composed of experts must be assembled to decide where to justifiably limit



the scope such that a balance is struck between feasibility and breadth. The last issue concerns the absence of quality assessment when it comes to selecting relevant literature which authors have pointed to hinder the validity of their studies in identifying research gaps and serving as reference for policy and practice. The current study considers these limitations as follows. First, by limiting our scope to specific journals, and with the primary use of an inductive and manual instead of database searching, the possibility of missing relevant studies is mitigated. Given that a focus on local knowledge production requires laborious hand-searching as the primary mode of searching the literature, limiting the scope to just these six journals housed in premiere universities is seen as pragmatic, yet strategic in gauging how violence has been taken up in Philippine Social Science scholarship. Additionally, the review has further limited its scope to works published in the years 1986-2019. By also limiting the scope to peer-reviewed journals, some measure of quality appraisal is in place. Lastly, as pointed previously, the study also included articles published in Filipino.

## Results and Discussion

### *Descriptive numerical analysis: contexts, actors, and acts*

Charting contexts establishes the backdrop surrounding the various manifestations of violence. Simultaneously, it can serve to determine research hotspots by showing the number of articles dealing with each identified context. This information is summarized in Table 2. Evident from the table is the strong preoccupation with violent incidents associated with the colonial experiences of the Philippines. The three-century long Spanish occupation in the islands was characterized by sustained and short-lived episodes of violent outbreaks waged against the Spaniards and allied natives. The colonization by the United States which followed shortly after Spain's was similarly ridden with colonial tensions that intensified into outbreaks of violence. Although articles related to violence during the Japanese occupation in the islands were not as plenty, all these

nonetheless point to the Philippines having undergone a violent history, and a wide concern on this topic within the local literature on violence. Placed side by side with the index built, it coincides with the very high number of articles containing the words 'colony,' 'war,' and 'revolt' and their variations.

**Table 2**

*Summary of contexts and number of articles tackling each*

<b>Contexts</b>	
Spanish colonial period in the Philippines	12
American colonial period in the Philippines	9
Peace and security	9
Muslim separatist movement in the Philippines	7
Internal armed conflict in the Philippines	5
Post-EDSA coups in the Philippines	5
Marcos administration/Martial Law period (Philippines)	4
C. Aquino administration (Philippines)	4
War on Terror	3
Japanese occupation in the Philippines	3
Internal armed conflict (General)	3
Armed communist movement (Philippines)	2
Peasant rebellion	2
Domestic violence among migrant Filipino women	2
Other contexts of violence (Philippines)	13
Other contexts of violence (other countries)	8

Much of the share of contemporary contexts of violence that has registered in the selected literature is largely centered on internal armed conflicts in various countries. Most of these tackle the Philippine case where violent conflict is contextualized by two protracted armed movements being waged in the country; the local armed communist





movement and the Muslim separatist movement. Other than the two, although sparsely, internal armed conflict associated with the Political Right in the Philippines, have also been dealt with in the literature. Elsewhere, articles concerned with internal armed conflicts have also given attention to those waged in other Southeast Asian countries (Pattugalan, 2004), Mexico (Casanova, 1996), Central America (Atack, 1997; Villalobos, 1987) and South Africa (Atack, 1997). Other than the armed challenges launched by forces outside the Philippine state, a fair amount of scholarly attention has also been directed to the violent events during the post-dictatorship, liberal democratic government of Corazon Aquino instigated by forces within it through bloody coups.

A small number of studies have focused on a transnational form of organized violence under the context of the "war on terror" particularly as it manifests in the East- and Southeast Asian countries which includes the Philippines (De Castro, 2003; Kraft, 2003; Baviera, 2003). What has been dubbed as the war on terror refers to the U.S.-led global campaign against terrorism formed in response to the devastating terror attacks of September 11 in the US.

Interest in organized violence, both transnational and internal, came with a corollary interest in peace and security which explores the pathways of resolving violent internal armed conflicts not limited to cases in the Philippines. For instance, Almonte (1989) examines the national security situation in the Philippines and the roots of the armed conflicts. In the more recent works, alternative perspectives of security have been thrust in light of the same conflict which propose placing the "human" or "people" as the focus of security and peace efforts (Gomez, 2011; Banlaoi, 2004). Of the ways resolving the conflict has been carried out, scholarly concern has explored the violent impacts of the Philippine government's counterinsurgency program that emphasizes a



heavy-handed military approach in quelling the local armed communist insurgency (Ocasiones, 2007; Gatmaytan, 2018).

Violence in the context of the authoritarian regime established by Ferdinand E. Marcos formed the backdrop of four of the articles. These articles elaborated on the experiences of violent suppression of dissidence, intensified by the former president's declaration of martial law in the whole country. A more particular context of violence which has been given scholarly interest is on the experiences of domestic violence among Filipino women who migrated to Australia.

Viewing these contexts from a temporal perspective allows tracing how research interest in this area has varied over time. The events succeeding the EDSA Revolution in the Philippines, particularly the government of Corazon Aquino which lasted until 1992, has demonstrably driven the publication of studies concerning topics related to violence. In 1987, articles comprise predominantly of those pertaining to the attempted coups directed at overthrowing Aquino. This set of scholarship was evidently driven by the August 28 coup which has been described as "one of the bloodiest coup attempt" (Magno, 1987). Similarly, in response to another failed coup attempt in December 1989, two articles were published elaborating on its significance and implications (Tadem, 1989; *Kilusan ng mga Nagmamahal ng Bayan*, 1989). It was also in this period between 1987-1992 that held a share of the articles engaging violence as observed within the context of internal armed conflicts which includes both the local armed communist movement and Muslim separatist movement. Although a number of articles mentioned the communist insurgency, only two articles had it as their main theme and they were authored by the same person (Tupaz, 1987; Tupaz, 1992). Only one article was centrally concerned on the muslim movement and was published in the latter part of the period (McKenna, 1992). These two contexts, along with an article on the human rights violations



under the Aquino government (De Guzman, 1987) and those about the coups during the period form the basis of Garcia's (1987) discussion on violence in the context of internal armed conflict in a period of democratic transition. Given this situation during the period, it was not far off to see these instances of violence discussed from a perspective of peace and security (Garcia, 1987; Almonte, 1989). Post-1992, articles on internal armed conflicts in the Philippines have taken a step back. It was only by 2017 that an article was published centered on the armed communist movement, and a study on the coups are yet to be seen. The exception, however, is the Muslim separatist movement which saw some regularity. Articles examining the movement were published in 1993, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2007, and 2009. Although an article was published whose context charted was "internal armed conflicts" in 1997, this however studied the cases in Central America and Southern Africa (Atack, 1997). It was only until 2004 when internal armed conflicts in the Philippines were revisited (Banlaoi, 2004), published alongside two other articles with the same concern of internal armed conflict but examining a much wider scope of countries (Pattugalan, 2004; Serrano and De Mesa, 2004). It is important to note that these three articles also fall under the peace and security context suggesting a strong tie between the two topics. Related to topics of security, another seemingly event-driven set of articles were published in 2003, this time regarding the war on terror which began shortly after the monumental events of 9/11.

Consistent preoccupation with violent incidents and outbreaks under periods of colonialism in the Philippines can be observed throughout the post-EDSA period. This mostly applies to articles about the Spanish colonial period. From 1989 to 2011, 12 articles have been published with no two articles published within the same year. The increments between each publication usually lasted one to three years. The longest time where no article on this topic was published lasted five years which was from 1993 to 1997. Articles on violent incidents that happened during the American colonial period

likewise spanned from 1989 to 2011. Five out of nine of these articles were concentrated in the year 1999 and were under the same journal, issue, and volume. This was *Philippine Social Sciences Review's* special issue titled "Philippine-American War." Based on its foreword, the impetus for releasing such an issue was to commemorate the 100th year since the outbreak of the Philippine-American War (Gealogo, 1999). Articles dealing with violence during the three-year Japanese occupation in the Philippines were published more recently; in 2012, 2015, and 2016. Holding the largest share of these articles on colonial violence is the journal *Philippine Studies* with nine out of the 23; a testament to its orientation towards historiographical studies. This is followed by *Philippine Social Sciences Review* with seven, *Asian Studies* with four, *Kasarinlan* with two, and *Filipinas* with only one.

**Table 3**

*Summary of the number of articles tackling identified acts*

<b>Violent Acts</b>	
Armed struggle (armed revolt, armed rebellion, armed resistance, armed insurrection, armed insurgency)	29
Killings (murder, massacre, headhunting)	20
Wars (anti-colonial revolts, rebellions, resistance)	18
Coup	8
Terrorism	4
Torture	4
Rape	2
Other acts of violence (beating, stoning, firing, wounding, physical abuse, unspecified acts etc.)	15
Non-physical acts of violence (poverty, exclusion, epistemic violence, 'mobilization,' psychological abuse, emotional abuse, social isolation, control of movement, verbal abuse, financial deprivation etc.)	13



Turning to the violent acts which have registered in the literature, it can be seen in Table 3 that violence instantiated as “armed struggle” appeared most frequently in the articles. This includes armed resistance, revolts, wars, rebellions, insurgencies, and uprisings that are internal in nature, meaning within state borders. This is to distinguish it from the act of “war” - third most frequent act charted - wherein the conflict is between nations, nationalities, or actors in colonial relations but may also involve armed uprisings and revolts. Most of the articles dealing with acts of war examined these in the context of the Spanish and American colonial period in the Philippines.

The second most frequent act of violence charted in the literature was “killings”. While implicitly present in other actions such as war and armed struggles, these only include cases of killings, murders, and massacres outside of these labels. Placing all the cases under the banner of “killings” leave behind the intent and context surrounding the killings, hence the need for some elaboration. Within the studies where acts of killings were charted, political or politically motivated killings comprise the majority, committed by state actors or sometimes non-state actors claiming to act on behalf of the state, i.e. right-wing vigilantes. For cases in the Philippines, these kinds of killings have been studied in the context of martial law and the Marcos administration (Brillon, 2019; Scalice, 2018), human rights violations under the Cory Aquino government (De Guzman, 1987), counterinsurgency programs (Gatmaytan, 2018; Ocasiones, 2007), local political feuds in a city in Leyte (Ara, 2012), as a facet of media repression (Jopson, 2013), and populist leaders (McCoy, 2017). If stretched to include colonial governments, one article examined the massacre of Filipino Muslims in Bud Dajo during the American colonial period (Hawkins, 2011). Elsewhere, political killings in Thailand have also been explored (Anderson, 1988) as well as those in the context of the communist purge in Indonesia (Espena, 2017), and martial rule in Aceh (Naval, 2004). It is worth noting particular kinds of killings in the Philippines which have been studied in the literature. One of these is the



culturally imbued act of headhunting practiced by Aetas and Ilongots (Dizon, 2015; Yang, 2011). Another quite particular form which killings have taken fall under the concept of “exocannibalism.” Observed during World War II in the Philippines, it referred to the practice of Japanese soldiers killing enemy allied Filipinos and consuming their flesh afterwards (Esteban, 2016).

Following wars are violent “coup d'etats” defined as the “forcible overthrow of government by a faction in that government” usually from the military because they have the “guns, mechanical behavior, and unquestioning obedience” (Nemenzo, 1987, p. 5-6). This is followed by “terrorism” which refers to the “use of force for political purposes such as to create fear, draw widespread attention to a political grievance and/or provoke draconian or sustainable response from the targeted state” (Kiras, 2002, p. 221 in De Castro, 2003, p. 66).

Equalling the act of terrorism is “torture,” perhaps an offshoot from a pronounced research agenda on the Marcoses and martial law during the scoped period as evidenced by the many articles whose keywords were either ‘Marcos,’ or ‘Martial Law,’ in the index. Acts falling under “other acts of violence” are either unspecified acts of violence, either simply using the word “violence” all throughout, or particular physical acts of violence that were taken up only once. These include acts like beating, causing injuries, gun-firing, bombing, and stoning. Although this review stood by a definition of violence that emphasizes the physicality of the act, some articles have referred to non-physical activities as constituting violence, hence the final category. These non-physical acts of violence include experiences of poverty and exclusion, media censorship, and the whole range of non-corporeal violence considered under domestic violence, namely psychological abuse, control of movement, social isolation, emotional abuse, verbal abuse, and financial deprivation. It was only by 2006 that acts that may not be physical



but are nonetheless damaging to a person were referred to as violence, as seen in the article by Saroca (2006) discussing domestic violence.

Finally, Table 4 displays the result of charting the data on the main actors involved in violence. The sheer number of categories alone tells of the variety of actors behind the aforementioned acts of violence. One may also observe that this assortment of categories operate on varying scales ranging from individual “servants” to collective ethnic groups, organized armed groups, state forces, and even the whole of a political administration. Immediately, if juxtaposed with the acts of violence above, one can see that the tables confirm one another as far as their topmost values are concerned. Armed struggles being the most frequently dealt with topic in this literature is associated with the different non-state armed groups scattered throughout the table. Expectedly, local actors involved in armed struggles are privileged. Namely, these are the “New People’s Army” (NPA), the primary actor in the armed communist movement being waged in the country, and the “Moro rebels” which is used to collectively denote the different groups involved in the local Muslim separatist movement such as the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the splinter groups called the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Abu Sayyaf. Combatants of armed struggles against the Spanish and American colonial masters are a diverse lot owing to the multiple episodes of violence, both short-lived and sustained, spread throughout the country. For those that occurred during the Spanish colonial period, historical accounts have been published about the Tagalog Revolts of 1745 (Palanco, 2010), Diego Silang’s revolt (Palanco, 2002), the Dios-Dios Rebellion (Abejo, 2005), the Cavite Mutiny in 1872 (Schumacher, 2011), the rebellion of the Cofradia de San Jose (Sweet, 2006), Colorum Uprisings (Guerrero, 2007), and the Moro wars (Mallari, 1989; Mallari, 1990). Likewise, under the American colonial period, there were several incidents of armed resistance: the Igorots of Cordillera resisting against the Philippine Constabulary (Florendo, 1999), Lumad armed resistance against Americans

(Rodil, 1999), the Bud Dajo massacre (Hawkins, 2011), insurrection against the United States' Philippine Scouts (Laurie, 1989), and the Bangsamoro armed struggle against the United States (Kamlan, 1999). Scholarly interest has not been limited by national boundaries. Among the armed struggles waged outside the Philippines are by the Farabundo Marti Nacional Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador, the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna in Basque, the Zapatista Army of Chiapas, Mexico, and other unspecified armed groups addressed generally in some articles.

**Table 4**

*Summary of actors and number of articles tackling each*

<b>Actors</b>			
Philippine military/Reform the Armed Forces Movement/Paramilitary	16	Filipino forces	2
Moro rebels/Moro National Liberation Front/Moro Islamic Liberation Front/Abu Sayyaf	12	Moros/Bangsamoros	2
New People's Army	11	Ilongot/Bugkalot	2
Male	4	Other Philippine radical groups	7
Unspecified armed groups	3	Other Philippine actors	6
American military	3	Other Philippine colonial government forces	4
Indonesian government	3	Other foreign state actors	4
Farabundo Marti Nacional Liberation Front	2	Pre-Hispanic Philippine actors	3
Philippine Constabulary	2	Other foreign armed rebel groups	3
Right-wing vigilantes	2	Other Philippine state actors	3
Peasants	2	Other Philippine ethnic groups	2
Islamic Fundamentalists/Islamic militants	2	Foreign ethnic groups	2
Women	2		

Violence perpetrated by state actors was a strong theme based on the charted data. Topping the list is the Philippine military which includes its paramilitary arms, and the rebel faction Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) who was instrumental in the various coups launched during Cory Aquino's term. But other than single sections of the Philippine state, some studies pointed to whole administrations encompassing multiple





agencies as the perpetrators such as Tolentino (2010) on the Estrada administration and Galam (2010) on the Marcos administration. State-related violence has also been seen executed by non-state actors such as private armies who were brokered by local political warlords (Sidel, 1989). What may also be added here are those instances of violence inflicted by actors working under the colonial governments such as the military and the Philippine constabulary during the American colonial period, and the Spanish navy who fought against the Moros in the southern parts of the country.

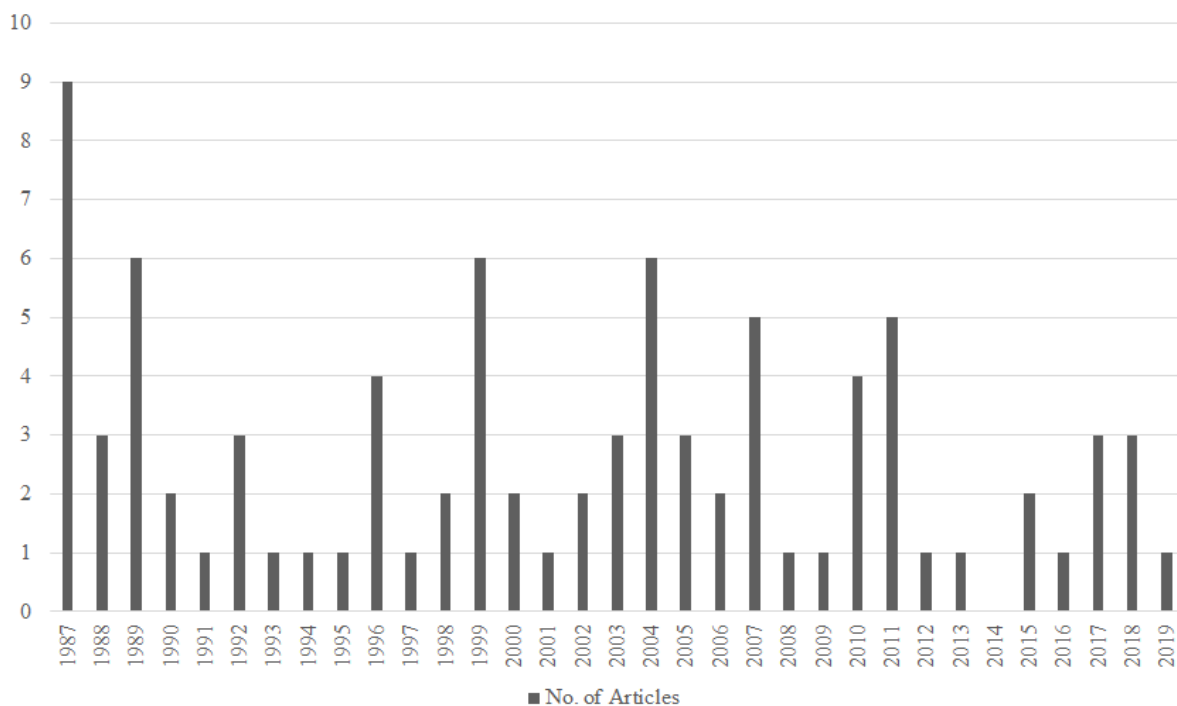
Scholarly attention has also been directed towards violence deployed by other states, one of which is the Indonesian government involved in ethnic violence (Santamaria, 2004; Naval, 2004), and the hallmark anti-communist purge during Suharto's regime (Espena, 2017). Ethnic violence carried out by the Cambodian government and the Burmese military has similarly been examined (Santamaria, 2004). Lastly, politically motivated killings in Thailand under the Sarit Thanarat regime have been the subject in an article by Anderson (1988).

Interest in gender-based violence, usually male-perpetrated, have also shown some development in the selected literature. Two articles specifically tackled the act of rape albeit in vastly different contexts. One looks into rape and other forms of female exploitation during the 19th century Philippines (Bankoff, 1991) while the other examines rape patterns in modern Manila (Candaliza and Zarco, 1995). On the other hand, two other articles by the same author tackle domestic violence between intimate male and female relationships (Saroca, 2006, 2007).

### ***Publication Details***

Before presenting the results of charting the articles' definition of violence, it is worth noting first these minor pieces of information drawn from charting publication details of

the articles. First, of the six, the journal with the greatest number of published articles related to violence was *Kasarinlan* with 37. As a journal that puts a premium on critical perspectives on the Third World and the Philippines, holding the largest share of the works, may suggest that topics related to violence are approached more often from this standpoint. Following *Kasarinlan* is *Philippine Studies* with 18, and whose scope, as the full name of the journal implies, prioritizes materials with historical and ethnographic approaches. *Asian Studies* and *Filipinas/Pilipinas* tie with 12 articles each while *Philippine Social Science Review*, with eight articles, has the least. Due to the said unavailability of articles from *Agham Tao*, none from this journal were included.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of articles based on the year of publication

Figure 2 shows the distribution of these articles based on the year that they were published. Save for 2014, at least one article related to violence has been consistently published each year. Generally, less than a handful are published annually but of interest



are those years which had five or more articles released. These were in 1987, 1989, 1999, 2004, 2007, and 2011. While the rise in the number of articles published in the years 1989, 2007, and 2011 could only be confidently attributed to chance, examining the other three years render interesting insights. For the year 1987, with the events of the EDSA Revolution still fresh, all the articles were published in *Kasarinlan* and more than half dealt with the coups launched against the newly installed democratic government. Whether initiated by the journal and/or academics responding to the sociopolitical environment is unclear but both are more probable explanations than mere coincidence. The other two years suggest clearer explanations. For the year 1999, five of the articles were from the *Philippine Social Sciences Review* and all belong to a special issue entitled "Philippine-American War." Similarly, in the year 2004, four out of the six articles were published under the *Kasarinlan* issue titled "Human Security and Conflict Situations." By being able to initiate thematic issues, the fact that journals can encourage research on a particular topic is incontestable. Additionally, increased research activity can also be attributed to huge social events such as the coups during the 1980s, and the events of 9/11 which saw three articles on the subject published from these journals in 2003. But even without these cues, topics related to violence are given consistent scholarly attention, averaging two to three articles per year. As a final point with regard to the publication details, in the Philippine Social Science scholarship on violence, most of the authors are transient; only nine authors published more than one article in the selected literature. In this small pool of authors, only one published three articles while all others authored only two. There is of course the likelihood that these authors sought to publish elsewhere, hence, that they did not follow up or are not committed to their work in this field is not argued. Rather, if these figures underestimate the number of regular authors, then there is value in exploring other social science journals as there may be a greater chance of finding additional works by all the authors included in this review.



### *Qualitative thematic analysis: defining and approaching violence*

As a way to assess the extent of how “violence” has academically registered in Philippine Social Science scholarship, data was charted on how articles defined or understood violence as this indicates the subject’s development as a distinct field of studies. Strikingly, charting this data was applicable to only a very small number of articles; most did not forward a lens to look at “violence”, much less those with a systematic definition of violence. During the charting process, it was also observed that violence is able to lend itself to broad applications. One of the ways this can be seen in the scholarship is violence forming part of another concept. These few works that this section will elaborate on constitute what may be considered the key studies in the selected literature.

Beginning with definitions of violence, according to Schinkel (2010), the social sciences often employ the following three strategies when defining violence for their study. The first way involves using a case-specific, stipulative empirical definition that identifies the main characteristics of the actions that fall under the concept. The second strategy is to define violence by “sum[ming] up a number of acts that count as a connotation of violence” (p. 34), often used in studies that require nothing more than our everyday understanding of violence. The last strategy, the most dominantly used, is to evade entirely the task of defining the concept. Rather, it simply takes as a given the list of actions that connote violence summed up by the second strategy.

In the reviewed articles, two out of three strategies, the first and third, were deployed. Stipulative definitions have been forwarded primarily by authors preoccupied with state violence. Using the terms ‘literal’ and ‘epistemic’ violence, Tolentino (2010) lays bare the violence inflicted on the masses underlying the politics of former President Estrada. He points to more covert experiences of violence by defining it by the process of “metropolitanization.” This “involves the transformation of bodies, geographies, and



economies in the name of attracting greater capital” such that “[w]ith perceived gentrification, the metropolitanized masses are caught up in a sadomasochistic libidinal economy, experiencing pain and suffering for the promise of middle-class redemption (Tolentino, 2010, p. 88-89). Aside from this, moral masochism was another expression of violence inflicted by Estrada which refers to “corporal pleasure in pain” (Silverman, 1993 p. 36, in Tolentino, 2010).

Violence unleashed by the state for the pursuit of capital is similarly examined by Galam (2010), but with the concept understood by the term “mobilisation” and theories linking state and capital with Lefebvre’s Rhythmanalysis. Mobilisation occurs “when people’s movements and mobility are dictated by the actions of authorities (Galam, 2010, p. 511-12). From this perspective, “routine violence” was used to refer to the daily suffering the urban poor endure as consequence of state policies such as beautification campaigns involving demolitions, forbidding vagrancy, to actual physical violence like torturing urban resistance movements. Covertly experienced state violence oriented towards suppression has also been the central concern of Nancy-Scheper Hughes’ concept of “everyday violence”. This type of violence constitutes “deprivation, inequality, and alienation...which the people readily accept, the state and its instruments actually perpetuate them” (Jopson, 2013, p. 66). Anchoring on this concept, Jopson examined the normalization of media censorship in the Philippines. In her use of trauma to analyze two films aired under martial law, violence was defined by Brillon (2019) to refer to both physical and psychological harm “result[ing] from the brutality on the characters’ physical body or psyche inflicted by authoritarian figures who disrupted their private and public lives” (p. 221).

Outside the state, at an interpersonal level, a stipulative definition of violence has been forwarded by Saroca (2007). In defining domestic violence, she adopts the definition used



by the Women's Coalition Against Family Violence which describes it as "the abuse and control of one or more persons over others and includes physical, psychological, verbal, and sexual abuse, financial deprivation, social isolation, and control of movement" (Women's Coalition Against Family Violence, 1994, p. 1-2 in Saroca, 2007).

Corresponding to Schinkel's (2010) observation that the third strategy is often used in the social sciences, a strategy of non-definition is also mostly used in these key studies. Among these, Gatmaytan's (2018) study shedding light on the violent militarization and killings experienced by an indigenous community stands out for having "violence" as its main object of research but foregoes defining what it constitutes. This has also been the case in Saroca's earlier work on domestic violence published in 2006 where, unlike her succeeding article, the concept was undefined. Most often in these key studies, "violence" appears as a feature of another concept, thereby much more warranted in its decision to deploy this strategy. Notwithstanding, it remains worthwhile to map these concepts to view the areas where violence may be studied.

In "ethnic conflict" (Santamaria, 2004), and "resistance" by indigenous people (Côté and Cliche, 2011), both cite violence in their definitions as one of the ways these may be expressed or may escalate into. Violence has also taken part in concepts regarding peace. In her study of conflict resolution among the Mangyan, Lauser (1999) employs Fabro's definition of peaceful societies which describes communities with little or no involvement in external or internal violence and who hold values that prevent resorting to violent means of conflict resolution. With some parallels in Atack's (1997) article on peace processes and internal armed conflict, violence is contained in the concepts of negative and positive peace. Negative peace refers to ending violence while the latter pertains to generating an environment that is averse to it. In order to do so, the article points out the need to resolve structural violence or, in other words, social injustice. "Violence" has also



been visible in other concepts related to the state or politics in general. As part of the concept of “populism,” or in its more global iteration, McCoy (2017) argues about the critical role of performative violence as a defining feature of populism. In a theoretical paper challenging the patron-client relations approach to Philippine politics, Sidel (1989) instead contends that Philippine post-war politics is better described through the concept of petty or local sultanism where “[t]he threat of violence and the mobilization of private armies or ‘armed patron-client sets’ play an important role in political competition, and predatory incomes obtained through coercion mark the accumulation of wealth” (p. 25).

With respect to the actual formulation of what constitutes violence, although the concept construed as direct physical or corporeal harm is still held, expanded interpretations that push the concept’s boundaries beyond its physicality is being employed. Violent acts at the microlevel are conceived to include verbal and psychological actions, financial deprivation, and constriction of movements by those possessing greater power. Additionally, macro-level violence may take the form of institutions that hurt a section of society despite not laying a single finger on these people. This is a tradition of thinking about violence popularized by Johan Galtung in 1969 in his innovative article redefining how we should think about peace and violence in research. As opposed to narrowing it down to physical harm, he conceives of violence as an “influence” (p.169):

*Violence is here defined as the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is. Violence is that which increases the distance between the potential and the actual, and that which impedes the decrease of this distance. (Galtung, 1969, p. 168)*

Having this established, he proceeds with a careful elaboration of six dimensions of violence. Among these, salient in this analysis are the distinctions made between (1)



physical and psychological violence, and (2) personal and structural violence. Starting with the former, physical violence was used to refer not only to harm directed towards the body, but also impediments to a person's mobility. To illustrate, Galtung cites the situation of being chained or not being able to access transportation (p. 169). On the other hand, the latter consists of what he described as "violence that works on the soul" which includes "lies, brainwashing, indoctrination of various kinds, threats, etc. that serve to decrease mental potentialities" (Galtung, 1969, p. 169). Defined so, this view captures not only corporeal pain and suffering such as killings and torture, it agrees with Galam's (2010) and Saroca's (2007) inclusion of control of movement as violence, done by authorities in the former, and male partners in the latter case. This definition would also qualify financial deprivation as physical violence since it denies the victim of their physiological needs such as food. It also captures traumatizing psychological abuses (Brillon, 2019; Saroca, 2007), and instances such as the suffering felt by masses made to believe that they too will elevate to middle class status (Tolentino, 2010).

The second salient dimension proposed, perhaps the most influential contribution, is the distinction between personal and structural violence which redirects our attention to the actors, or lack thereof, involved. The existence of an actor committing the violence separates direct or personal violence with indirect or structural violence. Expounding on the latter, violence is not directly traceable to any concrete actor. Instead, it "is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances" i.e. social injustice. (Galtung, 1969, p. 171). Through this perspective, it becomes possible, as some of these authors have demonstrated, for violence to be exercised by the state through its various institutions and policies, or for it to be attributed to social and cultural elements such as gender and patriarchy. Although the articles with definitions of violence discussed above only alludes rather than cite directly his ideas, this may only indicate how his formulation of violence has been embedded in social scientific parlance.





Ocasiones (2007), for instance, employs Galtung's concept of 'structural violence' without defining or discussing the concept's origins.

However, the fact remains that these only comprise a handful of works in the selected literature. It is a widely established notion among scholars that definitions serve to increase a concept's theoretical functionality. Perhaps scholars see this as less of the case when it comes to studying violence. As Schinkel (2010) points out regarding this issue, "If no one starts to raise problems about, all will be well, and the social scientific industry of violence-research can operate at full steam" (p. 17). While this may be easily permissible for many other concepts in the social sciences, violence occupies one of those positions where the task of defining the concept carries serious repercussions. That is, demarcating what counts as violence is to inevitably dismiss some expressions as something else entirely; worse it is "to silently condone it, to ratify and legitimize it" (Schinkel, 2010, p. 17). In this regard, albeit few, Philippine Social Science scholarship on violence, in accordance with the tradition set by Galtung, casts the conceptual net very widely and is thereby less prone to committing such 'epistemic violence,' so to speak, since it includes a wide array of violent acts. While it has been criticized for the exact same thing (Dwyer, 2017; Schinkel, 2010), since operationalization of the concept is made more complex, its consideration of the aftermath of violence opens the field to conversations that call attention to the "cultural understandings of remembering and forgetting violence" (Dwyer, 2017, p. 11).

A brief note should be made regarding history's approach to defining and studying violence given that the largest part of the reviewed literature consists of studies under this discipline. These were the articles on wars, armed revolts, and rebellions outlined in the section discussing the contexts of violence above. Although "violence" was not explicitly expressed as one of the main features of their paper, the subject is nonetheless



dealt with indirectly through concepts where it is implicit. Similar to what was once the broader scholarly situation of history and violence, this suggests that despite a long-standing effort to study violent events in history, a separate genre of studies under “violence” has not yet been established (Dwyer, 2017). But having established a separate genre of violence in history does not entail that scholars have settled on a definition. Much like in other social sciences, the utility of defining violence is debated. In the case of this discipline whose objective is to understand violence in the context of its time, putting forward a description of what constitutes violence was argued not to offer much in achieving this end (Dwyer, 2017). Dwyer’s position within this debate is to demarcate the bounds of the concept i.e. to compartmentalize it into typologies of violence such as economic or cultural violence. This can already be seen being done in key articles mentioned above through concepts like ‘everyday violence,’ ‘routine violence,’ and ‘domestic violence.’ This may serve as an initial step for historical studies for a genre of violence to gain grounds in the local social science scholarship.

As for the local literature’s position in terms of its approach vis-a-vis the broader social science literature on violence, research may be first divided into two main camps: those that look into the cause of violence, and those that seek to understand the intrinsic properties of violence (Schinkel, 2010). The prevailing trend in the social sciences is to *explain* violence, that is, to inquire into the causes of such actions (Cavanaugh, 2012; Chitrali, Sanauddin, and Owais, 2015; Schinkel, 2010). Similarly, this trend is reflected in the key studies as evidenced by several efforts to explain violence unleashed by the state. Furthermore, within this camp, major theoretical approaches to violence in the social sciences may be categorized into two. Deriving from the age-old debate between nature vs. nurture, these two are those who trace violence to structural/social antecedents or to intrapsychic factors (Cavanaugh, 2012; Chitrali, Sanauddin, and Owais, 2015). Overwhelmingly, the approach favored by the local literature is to study violence as it is



linked to larger societal structures, from the hegemony of capital and its relationship with the state, to other structures that disproportionately distribute power such as private media industries rather than intrapsychic factors. This approach is captured broadly through the notion of “cathartic violence” which views violent practices as possibly influenced by the shifts in one’s social and political milieu. Applying this concept, Yang (2011) examined the persistence of headhunting among the Bugkalots despite their conversion to Christianity where the practice is actively prohibited. Another trend which these few notable works follow is that of tying violence closely to power, and, in effect, its instrumental nature. This encompasses interpersonal violence such as those between intimate partners, to state violence deployed to enforce and preserve social order.

This distinction, however, between the preoccupation with causes of violence versus violence itself does not capture some aspects of the local literature. Some studies put a premium on examining the experience and impact of violence. For instance, Gatmaytan (2018) and Ocasiones (2007) center on the *experiences* of violence under militarization, rather than its causes. In the former study, his attempt to do so is informed by Neil Whitehead’s “poetics of violence” which underscores the discourse in the deployment of violence that consequently shapes the way it is experienced:

*Violent actions, no less than any other kind of behavioral expression are deeply infused with cultural meaning and are the moment for individual agency within historically embedded patterns of behavior. Individual agency, utilizing extant cultural forms, symbols, and icons, may thus be considered ‘poetic’ for the rule-governed substrate that underlies it, and for how this substrate is deployed, through which new meanings and forms of cultural expression emerge. (2004, p. 9-10 in Gatmaytan, 2018, p. 221).*



Also not captured within this distinction are studies that investigate representations of violence in various media formats and what their implications are. Key here are Saroca's (2006, 2007) articles on the representation of domestic violence in Australian media. The earlier study, grounded on theories describing how other aspects of a woman's social identity mediates their experience of domestic violence, reveals how discourses promulgated by the Australian media affect these women's lives with particular emphasis on their susceptibility to domestic violence. The latter, drawing from the literature on discourses, media representations, and feminism, shows how domestic violence against Filipino migrant women are misrepresented in Australian newspapers due to the structural and cultural contexts media industries operate in. Also included here are Brillon's (2019) analysis of representations of martial law violence in films, and Galam's (2010) article which uncovers the experiences of Manila's urban poor during martial law as represented in Ilokano literature.

Given that these key articles, albeit small, generally follow major trends in the social science of violence, it follows therefore that they suffer from the same shortfalls. For instance, Schinkel (2010) criticizes the social sciences' concentration on explaining violence and its extrinsic factors by calling out this approach's disregard for the violence itself; "violence is not taken to be intrinsically meaningful as such, but rather as being indicative of larger structures" (p. 120). Criticisms like this, however, are much more suited to be raised at more developed bodies of literature; not for cases like this where the scholarship appears to be quite inchoate. The glaring gap in the literature on violence is better pointed to the lack of theoretical engagement as indicated by a deficiency in articles defining and theorizing "violence." The earliest work doing so was published only in 2007. It suggests that, within the scope of this review, violence has not strongly registered yet in the local scholarship. In the pursuit of forming a genre of studies, not drawing from a shared theoretical lineage risks this budding field to remain fragmented.



Furthermore, in the 1,550 written works in the six journals which are articles, those relevant to violence occupy a small share of only 87. Occupying the larger portions of the relevant literature are historical accounts and analyses that, although make use of concepts and related terminologies, do not explicitly anchor the theoretical background from which they are viewing the violent phenomenon. Even within those articles that do, there is a clear dearth of empirical research articles.

## Conclusion

This scoping review of violence in articles published in the six selected journals from 1986-2019 sought to gauge how violence has been studied in Philippine Social Science scholarship. By charting data on violent acts, the main actors behind these acts, and the context surrounding these, the review has mapped the contours of what has been studied regarding violence in the local scholarship. Additionally, by charting each article's data on definitions and perspectives on violence, the review has presented a survey of how violence was examined and understood. The same data has also been able to provide a measure for the degree to which violence, as an academic topic, has developed within the selected literature.

The review reveals that despite there being a considerable interest in topics related to violence, there is little theoretical engagement with "violence" per se. There necessarily is no dearth in studies historicizing the Philippines' violent past, but there is on studies that anchor their analysis on some theoretical background of violence. On the part of historians, this is rather understandable given that the history of violence, as a separate genre of studies, only came about around the 1970s, and that viewing violent events in the past from a theoretical or conceptual standpoint of violence has not been the main concern of historians who were more adapted to contextualize violence at its place in time (Dwyer and Damousi, 2017).



Where theoretical and conceptual discussions of violence are conventionally pursued, and where the responsibility of examining this violent history through a theoretical frame is expected to be taken up is in the social sciences. But as this scoping review suggests, little has been done towards this endeavor. In search for some tentative answer as to why it is so, we turn to the methods privileged in the few empirical articles in the list. Evidently, qualitative research methods were most often used that required entering the field site and conducting ethnographies, and interviews. This, vis-a-vis the topic of violence, brings us back to the “social” in social science (Marsh and Stoker, 2010, p. 45); of the hurdles the social world poses against researchers. Taking as examples the articles by Gatmaytan (2018) and Ocasiones (2007), striking the delicate balance between carefully asking respondents to recall brutal events that could potentially be very hurtful to answer while getting the data needed is a challenge that must skillfully be overcome. Other than that, the security of the researchers who choose to enter the field where violence is an ongoing threat is another challenge. These issues may suggest that conducting research on violence demands a high cost and a very particular positionality that can maneuver around these difficulties.

Besides the challenge of carefully navigating their way towards their informants, there is also the issue of getting an informant itself. In the empirical works that were centrally concerned with violence, the prevailing intention has been to privilege the voices of those who have been at the receiving end of violence, often impoverished and marginalized. But in cases where violence is fatal, the most authoritative informants cannot speak for themselves. Hence, researchers will have to rely on multiple secondhand accounts of witnesses and people close to the victims to reconstruct a reliable narrative of the violent event. Despite this, the literature would say that this need not be the case. We can see that in other empirical works considered in this review, literary texts have been the objects of analysis from where to draw findings about state violence (Galam, 2010; Brillon, 2019).



Additionally, studies may also be quantitative as was done by Candaliza and Zarco (1995) who have analyzed rape cases in Manila using data on police reported rape cases. However, the emphasis in employing qualitative methods may have been brought about by a lack of reliable and authoritative databases of violence in the Philippines. The war on drugs, for instance, saw several contesting efforts from non-government organizations, the media, and state agencies to count its casualties. Initiatives from the academe to produce this data criticized existing counts for not detailing their methodologies, particularly what qualifies as a drug-related killing (Limpin and Siringan, 2019). Hence, another possible step forward for this subject area is developing reliable databases that will feed in quantitative studies in order to produce more generalizable insights. Lastly, researchers may capitalize on innovative source materials in the study of violence such as body cameras and surveillance footage that capture in detail violence as it happens.

Although the scope of this study is very modest such that if it is broadened to include studies as far back as 1929 when the *Philippine Social Science Review* journal first published, it is possible that the subject of violence could have registered more strongly. However, if we believe that scholarship progresses by standing on the shoulders of the giants, this review indicates that the giants may still be growing. A less optimistic interpretation of this finding is that perhaps there is deliberate neglect on the part of scholars, choosing to veer away from this topic. This is not, of course, to accuse them as complicit in erasing a violent history. As have been discussed above, just as the objects of their study are positioned in a social context, so are scholars and their decisions. However, in pursuit of advancing this area of study, researchers are still challenged to theoretically engage the gamut of local manifestations of violence that has amply been accounted for in historical and analytical papers, some of which have been presented in this study. Doing so prevents this scholarship from remaining as a fragmented collection of studies that have no unifying core that links them all. If this violent history is left devoid



of theorizing that links it to contemporary and future phenomena, scholars and other thought leaders run the risk of short-sighted analyses of the current spate of violence. The result, echoing what has been stated in the beginning of this paper, is a failure to properly locate Duterte and his brand of violence within the larger historical backdrop. One danger this poses is the looming threat of feeling trapped (Mills, 2000), unable to account for and overcome the rising number of dead and injured bodies happening even beyond his presidency.

By reviewing the current situation of “violence” in Philippine Social Science scholarship, i.e. mapping what has been studied, relevant theories and concepts, and the multiple ways the subject has been taken up, it is hoped that this will be the first step to many in the effort to build a systematic knowledge of violence in the Philippines. For the scoping studies literature, this review has contributed to demonstrating its utility in disciplines outside of health and medicine. It also offered the method of building an index especially for scoping studies that seek to review literature not indexed in prestigious databases. Future research may consider stretching the scope of this work to encompass articles published in other social science journals in the Philippines and include those published in the years preceding the time period covered in this review. Taking the recommendations of scoping reviewers, it is suggested that this daunting task be accomplished by a team to ensure feasibility and to strengthen the reliability of the findings. Conversely, narrowing the scope may be an equally worthwhile option. Because violence is a highly contextual concept such that, for instance, state violence and domestic violence are distinct research areas on their own, future reviews may consider limiting their scope to a specific kind of violence. This will not only allow greater feasibility but permits a deeper synthesis of the contents and findings of the articles as opposed to tracing only the margins of the literature as this scoping exercise sought to achieve. Lastly, a consultation stage presenting findings to relevant stakeholders, which this review did





not proceed with, would be beneficial not only in validating the findings but to gain insights as to why the literature is in its current state.

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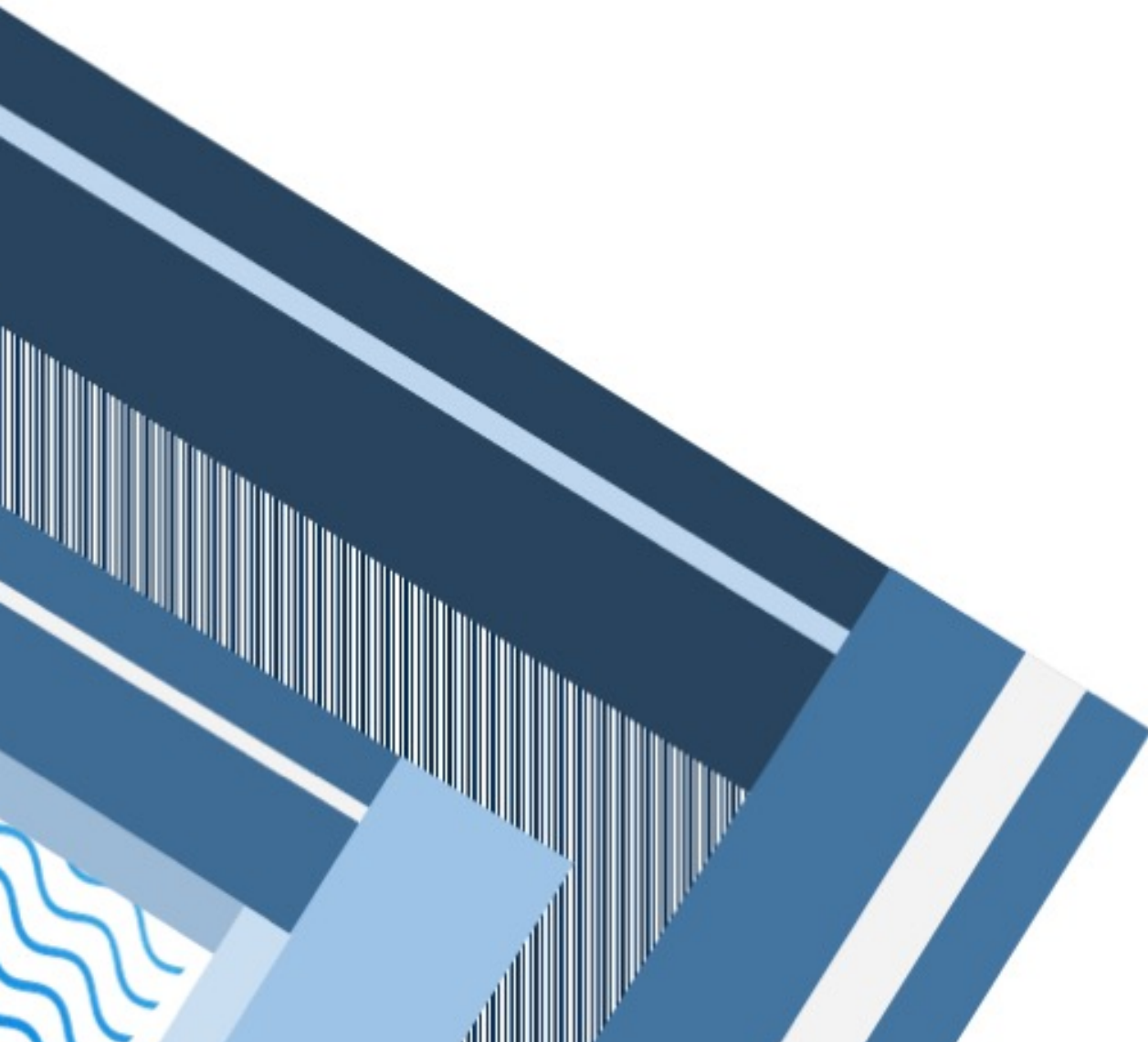
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# **WP SERIES 8**

## **LIFE AT THE MARGINS: REBELS, DISPLACED, WOMEN AND PEACEBUILDERS**





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## Peace Zones and Sustainable Peacebuilding in Southern Philippines: The Case of Mandulog, Iligan City

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### Introduction

Johan Galtung framed peacebuilding (1975) not just simply to refer to the absence of conflicts. This type of peace is categorized as negative peace, a type of peace that is achieved by first dealing with all types of conflicts including the most destructive type such as armed conflict. But the more important aspect of peace building is the establishment of an environment and system conducive to positive and sustainable peace.

Peace Zones are among the post-conflict peacebuilding modalities that are mostly constructed at a local level. This modality Allouche (2019) adds, may have implications for subsequent peacebuilding and are sustained on the ground.

Peace Zones are a type of peace initiatives spearheaded by several countries including the Philippines and are recognized local sanctuaries in the twentieth century. Peace zones in the Philippines according to Garcia (1997) were organized by the grassroots to assist the peace process and as a parallel mode of the peace talks among the people affected by two decades of conflict between the rebel group and the Philippine government. In the Ifugao's case in the Mountain province, the establishment of a peace zone in the area was a form of peace action established in areas or localities that aim to protect people from parties in conflict. While the term peace zone may be generic to these sanctuaries or 'safe havens' such initiatives may also cover peacebuilding efforts labelled as 'zones of



life' 'sanctuaries of peace' 'spaces for peace.' and 'peace and development zone' (PDZ)(Method Finder's Practitioner's Guide, n.d., PDZ: 2018)

Some areas in Southern Philippines are deemed to be wrought with armed conflicts due to the clashes between the Philippine army and rebel armed groups such as the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Among these areas are the Lanao provinces in Mindanao. These provinces bore the brunt of the armed clashes in 2008 and later in 2017 in Marawi City. (UNHCR, 2017) The said clashes directly affected the lives of the people as their houses were destroyed, their livelihood disrupted and thousands of them were displaced.

Barangay Mandulog of Iligan City in the Lanao del Norte province, a community of Christian settlers and Maranaos native to the area, bears the indirect consequences of such armed encounters. They serve as host to displaced families as some of them are also their relatives. This may be one of the premises that this area has been identified by the UNDP in 2008 as a peace and development community (PDC) or a peace zone (PZ). As such this inquiry delves as to why a PDC is established in this community.

On the other hand, Mitchell (2007) posits that peace zones like the PDC in Barangay Mandulog may either be created by the locals as a form of grassroots effort or may be constructed by outsiders such as political organizations like the U.N. or international relief organizations.

Thus, this paper delves into peacebuilding in Barangay Mandulog as a peace and development community (PDC) and its contribution to the on-going peace processes in Mindanao and in the Philippines.



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## Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What was the purpose of the establishment of Mandulog as a Peace and Development Community (PDC)?
2. How was it established in the area/community?
3. How is the peace and development in the community sustained?

## Significance of the Study

Findings from this work will contribute to the growing literature on peace zones in the Philippines and increase awareness on the evolving constructs arising from peace spaces built by local people.

## Research Objective

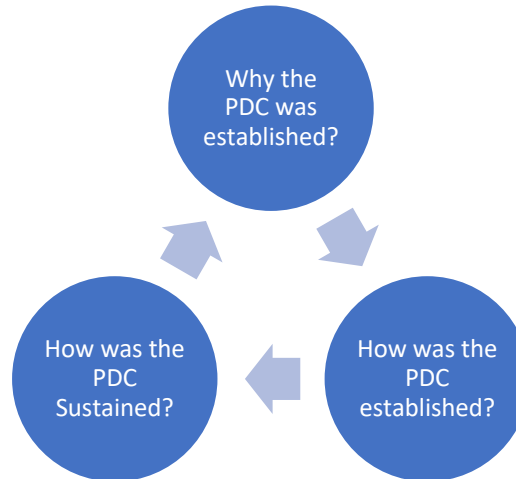
This caveat will delve into peacebuilding at the grassroots levels in communities that serve as hosts to IDPs affected by the Mindanao crisis and whose strength anchors on the local actors as an agency in sustaining positive peace at the grassroots level.

## Limitations of the Study

This inquiry relies on secondary data from printed and online sources and primary data generated through interviews and focus group discussions with the partner community.

## Conceptual Framework

### PEACEBUILDING in Barangay Mandulog



Peacebuilding in a community like Barangay Mandulog may be marked with a peace action. That peace action could be in the form of a process of creating a peace space for all parties or in this study transforming the Barangay to a peace and development community (PDC). The PDC is established in the area to bring the parties together and engage them in activities that will bring about and sustain peace in their area. Such activities may involve peace initiatives that not only ends conflicts but more importantly are needed in the installation and operation of an environment that is conducive to positive peace. (Galtung, 1970; Allouche, 2019)

In the installation of this, PDC may be initiated by an international or external partner, but it is the local actor or organization that functions as the agency in post-conflict processes that sustains the initiative in the area. As local partners, they share the ownership of the peace space. They have an influence in the context of the PDC as they reside in their community and anything that they do and achieve affect their lives.



While the PDC is regarded by the partners as a vehicle to the attainment of sustainable peace in Barangay Mandulog, Hancock believes that it is in the local actors that the power of sustainability lies. (Hancock, 2017)

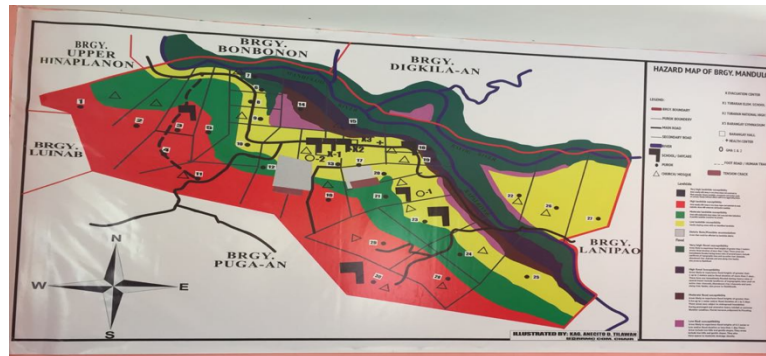
## Methodology

The study employed qualitative research design wherein data was generated through key informant interviews and focus group discussion.

The entry protocol for this study involved a meeting and a submission of a formal request to the barangay chair for the researcher to be allowed to engage the people in a research on Barangay Mandulog as an identified peace and development community (PDC). In view of this, the Barangay Chair - Hon. Abungan P. Cauntongan granted the said request and informed her Secretary to render the needed assistance to the researcher. Before the actual conduct of both the interview and the FGD, each research partner or respondent was properly oriented about the whole research process and was made to sign a consent form to indicate their willingness to be part of this study.

There was a total of eleven (11) respondents for this study. The Key Informant Interviews (KII) with four (4) local leaders was simultaneously conducted with a focused group discussion activity at the Barangay Hall of Mandulog. There were seven (7) participants in the FGD.

## Locale of the Study



Map of Barangay Mandulog: (Source: Barangay Mandulog, 2019)

Barangay Mandulog is one of the 44 barangays of Iligan City located near the banks of the Mandulog River. It has a population of a 3,867 (2015 PSA Census) - 70 percent of which are Christian settlers and 30 per cent are Maranaos who are natives to the area.



The location of the Barangay hall of Mandulog.

## Findings and Analysis

According to an interview respondent (2019) there were impressions from people near Mandulog that the MILF was recruiting some of the residents of Mandulog. The husband of the Barangay Chair who was also a Board member of the Provincial Board consulted



some of the people in the Barangay on this matter. Afterwards, he brought this up in a meeting with the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP). During the meeting, the said Board member suggested to the Board and the UNDP to consider Barangay Mandulog as a beneficiary of their Peace and Development Peace Interventions since it is also one of the sites affected by the Mindanao conflict which qualifies it as conflict-affected area in Mindanao.

However, the earlier claim that the MILF was recruiting in the area was contradicted by most FGD respondents (2019). They only shared that since Barangay Mandulog has a Maranao population of 30%, the locals cannot help but accommodate their relatives who were displaced by the armed conflicts regardless whether they are civilians or rebel combatants. They stated that they usually serve as a host community whenever conflicts occur in other areas in the Lanao provinces and in Mindanao.

Once the Board and the UNDP finalized their list of PDCs in 2009, some UNDP Staff came to Barangay Mandulog to have a meeting with the Barangay Chair and then Barangay Councilor Jalilah Romapa in January 2009. They also called for a meeting and had interviews with the Presidents of the Women's Association told them that they were one of the identified 278 Peace and Development Communities (PDCs) in Mindanao under their community-based peace building program. In the meetings engaged by the UNDP with the community, they found out that the most organized group starting at the Purok level were the women's organization which has an active membership of 200.

The Mandulog Women's Association is comprised of 10 women groups namely:

1. School Site Women's Association
2. Mahogany Women's Association
3. Kasamahan Pangkabuhayan Women's Association





4. Kapit Bisig Women's Association
5. Hawak Kamay Women's Association
6. Women of Sky Village Women's Association
7. Kapiyaan Women's Association
8. Ompongan Women's Association
9. Riverside Women's Association
10. Kapamagugupa Women's Association

The main intervention provided by UNDP was a livelihood program labelled as Bigasang Bayan. In June and July of 2009 the Women's Association of the barangay was given 111 sacks of rice. The rice that the women received became the capital for their livelihood program along with each member's contribution of P 100.00 per month and a small capital of P 5,000.00 for credit from the barangay. The rice and funds raised were equally divided among the 11 associations. It was augmented by the P 60,000.00 donation of the Congressman and 11 half sacks of rice. This again was divided among the 11 associations. They agreed that the rice and the funds can be accessed by the members as a loan at five (5) per cent per month. These loans according to the women helped them in times of emergencies and met the school needs of their children. They agreed to run this program as a community cooperative.

The proceeds of these loans are appropriated to each member every December. The women meet every last Sunday of the month to discuss the progress of their livelihood program. They only have a few members who seem to neglect their obligation to pay the interest. However, they manage to comply despite some delays because of the constant follow up of their respective Purok leaders who are mostly women. On top of the lending program, they also celebrate Women's Day every March 8. Members who fail to attend their monthly meeting is fined P 50.00.



The UN-Act for Peace also brought in Mandulog their program on good governance which focused on organizing peaceful communities in areas affected by conflict. Among the minor conflicts experienced in Mandulog are theft, petty misunderstanding among neighbors and a few cases of Rido. The minor cases are resolved at the Purok level particularly dealt with by the Purok Association while the major ones are handled by the Barangay Chair and the Sultan in the area.

They noted that their community never experienced violent conflicts because of the respect of the people for the organizations and their leaders and the good relationship between Christians and Muslims. They are very much aware and support each other's culture to the extent that intermarriage between cultures is accepted among them. Provided that if one marries to a Muslim family, he or she must be willing to convert to Islam.

Another intervention provided to the community is the Livelihood Program of PAILIG Development Foundation Incorporated. They were equipped with a sari-sari store with a capital of P 20,000.00 and some input for gardening in 2012. PAILIG provided some gardening tools and seeds. Dried fish and rice were sold at the sari-sari store. The PAILIG complimented this intervention with trainings on conflict resolution.

Thus, the community-based peace building intervention of UNDP in Barangay Mandulog as a PDC is mainly to support the livelihood of the people in the area through the program called Bigasan ng Bayan.

The mechanism to resolve conflicts in Mandulog is anchored on the purok association particularly on the women as an organized group and on the Barangay Chair as their



respected leader even before local and international organizations such as UNDP came to the area.

## Conclusion

The peace and development community (PDC) or peace zone was established in Barangay Mandulog because the area is indirectly affected by the armed clashes in Mindanao by functioning as host to displaced families in war torn places in the nearby provinces of Lanao. This supports the formulation of Garcia and Galtung that peace zones serve as peace sanctuaries to affected communities where they are temporarily hosted by their friends and relatives in a peaceful area.

The peace zone in Mandulog was initiated by an external agent, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and supported by another external agent which is the UN-Act for peace and complimented by a local organization – PAILIG. These external and local organizations implemented development interventions that support livelihood – the Bigasan ng bayan and Conflict Resolution trainings. It is however the local agents, the Women’s organizations, the women and community leaders that sustained the initiatives and the peace processes in the community through their mutual respect and diligent support of both the peace activities and their leaders validating Hancock’s contention that the power of sustainability lies in the local actors.

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Interviews in June 13 and June 21, 2019

Respondent A, 2019

Respondent B, 2019

Respondent C, 2019

Respondent D, 2019

## Appendices: Photo Documentation

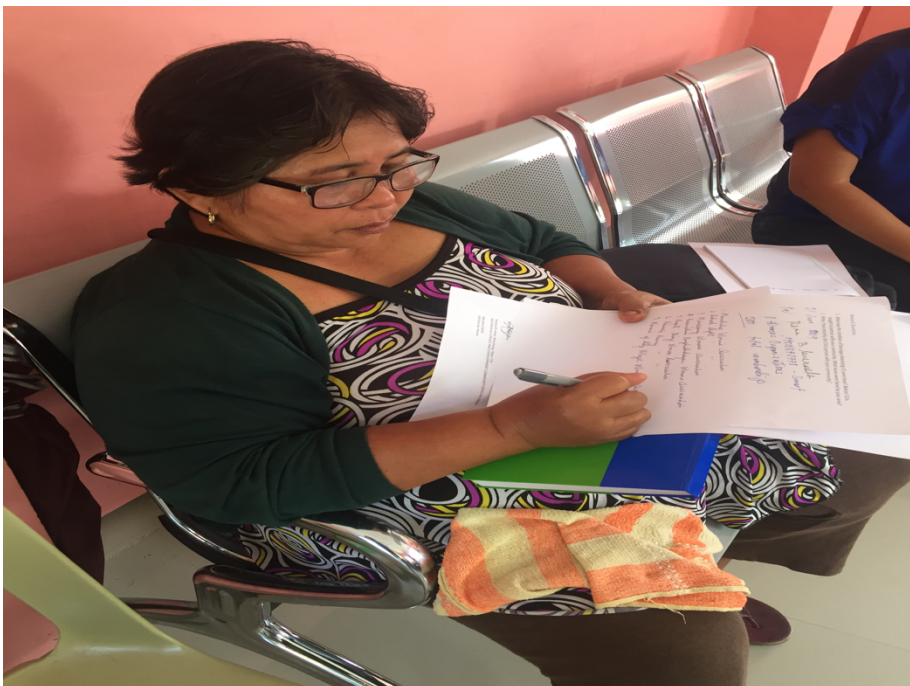
- A. The researcher with the research team, the interview and FGD respondents last June 2019



B. During the Focused Group Discussion at the Mandulog Barangay hall



C. One of the interview respondents





D. During the Interview at the Barangay Hall of Mandulog





## Testimonial Narratives as Counter-History: The Stories of Tausug Survivors During the 1974 Battle of Jolo

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### Introduction

On February 7, 1974, the city of Jolo in the province of Sulu was burned down due to the conflict between the Philippine State and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). This conflict was later known as the Battle of Jolo. The residents of Jolo, whether they were Tausug, Chinese, Christians, or Sama Dilaut left the city and migrated to Malaysia, Zamboanga, and even as far as Manila. Although it was a major battle that worsened the relationship between the Philippine State and the Muslim Filipinos, displacing around 18,000 people (Wikileaks, n.d., it is relatively unknown and forgotten in the annals of history.

Although there are books and articles that deal with the Martial Law period in Mindanao during the 1970s until the mid-1980s, the historiography about the conflict in Mindanao during that time is viewed in a dichotomous sense where the narrative is only limited to the conflict between the opposition (e.g. activists, the NPA<sup>1</sup> or the MNLF<sup>2</sup>) and the Philippine State. Most importantly, despite there being records from the archives of a government-controlled newspaper (from the perspective of the Philippine government)

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<sup>1</sup> Works on the life underground during Martial Law include *Tibak Rising: Activism in the Days of Martial Law* (2012) ed. by Ferdinand Llanes, and *Subversive Lives: A Family Memoir of the Marcos Years* (2012) by Susan F. Quimpo

<sup>2</sup> Some works of literature that tackle Martial Law in Mindanao include *Under the Crescent Moon: Rebellion in Mindanao* by Martes Danugilan Vitug and Glenda M. Gloria (2000), *Internationalization of the Bangsamoro Struggle* by Samuel Tan (1993), *The Day we Nearly Lost Mindanao* by Fortunato U. Abat (1999), *The Moro Reader History and Contemporary Struggles of the Bangsamoro People* ed. by Bobby Tuazon (2008), among others. All these literatures cited above have not tackled the perspective of the civilians who were directly affected by the conflict between the Philippine State and the MNLF.





or from secondary sources such as a thesis<sup>3</sup> or an autobiography<sup>4</sup>, the personal experiences of the civilians who directly witnessed the conflict remained silent and displaced in the narrative.<sup>5</sup>

As a consequence, the dominant historiography of Martial Law during the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos remained monochromatic and polarizing where the stories of the civilians who were caught in the conflict were silenced at the same time that mainstream narratives disregarded the 'gray areas' in the complex relationship between different actors in the narrative such as the civilians, Philippine State forces and the opposition (i.e. Moro rebels).

In the case of the 1974 Battle of Jolo, mainstream history<sup>6</sup> has framed the event as Jolo burning down as a result of naval and air bombing to flush out MNLF troops attempting to liberate the city from the Philippine State. Dr. Carmen Abubakar (2001) of the UP Islamic Studies stressed that "until now a full account of this event still has to be made."

In this paper, I explore the use of the testimonial narrative or testimonios as a way of uncovering the lived experiences of Tausug survivors who witnessed the effects of the 1974 Battle of Jolo. This paper argues that the testimonios of the survivors reflect how they made sense of their wretched situation, which would then contribute to the

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<sup>3</sup> Although the narrative of the members of the rebel group is now considered as a "narrative from the margin" (i.e. the women of the National Democratic Front in the study of Patricia Arinto or the MNLF rebels during the 1974 Battle in the study of Leilani Halud), the stories from those who were displaced by the battle are relatively more silent in the whole story. Therefore, this study only focuses on these survivors who personally witnessed the effects of the battle.

<sup>4</sup> See Stern (2009) especially Chapter 5, for an insightful description of the 1974 Battle of Jolo by Misuari.

<sup>5</sup> Noor Saada's online article entitled "Kissa and Dawat The 1974 Battle of Jolo, narratives and quest for social conscience" and Said Sadain's "That We may Remember: February 7 1974: The Jolo-caust" (both published in the Mindanews website) can be considered as testimonial narratives. These articles inspired the author to further examine more narratives on this matter.

<sup>6</sup> Mainstream sources on the 1974 Battle of Jolo include the documentary *Lakas Sambayanan* by the Foundation for Worldwide People Power (2002) and a short article 'Beyond Forgetting: The Moros during and After Martial Law' by Prof. Carmen Abubakar in the book *Memory, Truth-telling, and the Pursuit of Justice A Conference on the Legacies of Marcos Dictatorship* published by the Ateneo de Manila University Press in 2001



complexity of the already mainstream and hegemonic Ferdinand Marcos's Martial Law. These testimonios therefore go beyond mere narration of the events from the vantage point of those who experienced the siege. At the same time, this paper explores the use of testimonial narratives or testimonios of the Tausug survivors as counter-history to the dominant, monochromatic, and polarizing historiography of Martial Law that espoused anti-Marcos sentiments but ignored the complexity of people's experiences regarding this period of our nation's history.

The working paper tried to answer the following questions: How can the testimonial narratives of the Tausug survivors challenge the mainstream narratives on the 1974 Siege of Jolo? Accordingly, this paper interrogated a) the silenced narratives of violence, war and displacement against the civilians, b) the complex relationship between different actors such as the civilians, the Philippine State forces, and the MNLF, and c) the displaced Tausug's perception and reflections on the warring forces of the Philippine State and MNLF.

I interviewed three respondents in the Blue Mosque, Taguig City. All of them were chosen via snowball methods. Some of these respondents were referred to me by Prof. Macrina Morados of the UP Islamic Studies Institute (through Prof. Darwin Absari). The respondents should have left Jolo during or after the siege regardless of their age and their socio-economic background. I concealed the identities of the respondents by assigning them their code names. This paper reveals only the respondents' (1) age, (2) sex, (3) personal background (i.e. educational background, current occupation), and most importantly, (4) their personal experiences during the 1974 Battle of Jolo.

**Table 1***Profile of the Respondents*

Respondents	Age During the Siege	Occupation	Life After the Siege
Abdul <sup>7</sup>	29	Unemployed	Originally from Jolo but migrated to Tawi-tawi after the siege. He then started their seaweed business.
Hussein	15	Administrator in one of the major mosques in Metro Manila	Originally from Parang, he took his secondary education in Jolo. Because of the atrocities brought by Martial Law, he became a member of the MNLF in the late 1970s
Mohammad <sup>8</sup>	20	Retired University Professor	Originally from Jolo, he supervised their family business in Zamboanga and observed the flock of refugees in the port of Zamboanga two days after the siege.

**Testimonios**

The fields of literature and history question positivist history's claim to accuracy, authenticity, and veracity of its narrative (Pison, 2005). With this criticism, philosopher Michel Foucault used the term counter history to define the process of reading particular events against the grain of hegemonic histories, and it assigns to the reader/critic an active rather than a passive viewing role in the interpretation of history. Opposing the master narrative, Foucault added that history is a discourse and "cannot merely be a reflection of events". Rather, it "involves both the potential for manipulation – through

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<sup>7</sup> Abdul's responses to the questions were in mixed Tagalog and Cebuano. The researcher here provides their translation.

<sup>8</sup> Although not technically a survivor, Mohammad saw how the refugees flocked to Zamboanga after the battle.



rhetoric and through the power of language and the vision that it creates” (Pison, 2005, p.7).

The Foucauldian concept of archaeology “established statements as events (with their own conditions and domain of appearance) and things (with their own possibility and field of use)”. Foucault refused the idea that discourse is composed of “homogeneous events;” rather, he acknowledged that there are “several possible levels of event within the very density of discourse” (Pison, 2005, p.3). Inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche and opposing the supra-historical perspective of history, Foucault pointed out that the discipline should “encourage subjective recognitions and attribute a form of reconciliation to all displacement of the past” (Pison, 2005, p. 7-8). This means that it should counter how official history monopolizes knowledge-producing practices which silenced the “alternative interpretation of historical experiences” (Medina, 2011).

In short, counter-history (1) “reflects and produces disunity” in the official history where “it resists and invalidates the normative expectations of the imposed dominant ideology, and (2) “reflects and produces discontinuous moments in the people’s past, gaps that are passed over in silence, interstices in the socio-historical fabric of community that have received no attention (Medina 2011, p. 14-15). Therefore, the function of counter-history is to reveal the concealed discourse of those who have” no glory or those who have lost it, and who now find themselves, perhaps for a time – but probably for a long time – in darkness and silence (Medina, 2011, p. 15). Through the resurrection of subjugated knowledge, the critique of institutions, discourses, and hegemonic histories would be possible (Medina, 2011). A nation for instance, would critique the exclusion of subjugated knowledge to its official and hegemonic histories where it failed to “to exhaust the domain of memories and narratives within” (Pandey, 2001, p. 17).



Inspired by Foucault, Michael de Certeau in his book *The Writing of History* underlined that “history has no exclusive right to represent reality”. He added that history survived because “they often displace, and silence other discourses considered to be their rivals” (Pison, 2005, p. 9-10). At the same time, “essential truth” is no longer an issue, but the following questions are more important— “Who says?” and “Whose truth?” Hence, there is a need to examine and interrogate the silences in Philippine history which include the 1974 Siege of Jolo.

Given these hegemonic powers that are currently manifested in narrative writing and mainstream literature, subjugated knowledge should be resurrected to recreate history. One way of resurrecting these kinds of knowledge that challenge and reject the master discourse is through testimonial writing (or *testimonio*) by people in the margin of literature, like the child, the “native”, the insane, the criminal, and the proletarians.

In his article *The Margin at the Center: On Testimonio (Testimonial Narrative)*, John Beverley (1989, p.12-13) defined the *testimonio* as

*a novel or novella length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts and whose unit of narration is usually a “life or a significant life experience*

Giving voice to the subaltern (as posited by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak), *testimonio* is an authentic narrative made by the witness and it “involves an urgency to communicate” the situation (e.g. war, oppression, revolution, etc) (Yudice, 1991, p. 17). It is not simply a recorded participant narrative like oral history, but it emphasizes the intentionality and sincerity of the narrator where he communicates the problems of repression, poverty,



subalternity, imprisonment, the struggle for survival and others (Yudice, 1991, p 14). Aside from that, testimonio looks at the personal issue in the larger political context of its narration that would “interpolate the reader and enjoin him/her” (Moratilla, 2012, p. 44) to act.

Testimonios can be in the form of oral histories, diaries, letters, memoirs, and eyewitness accounts (de Guzman, 2008). If, in an autobiography, the writers traditionally belong to the upper classes of the society, in testimonial writing, the narrator is either functionally illiterate or, if the person is literate, lacks the writing skill (de Guzman, 2008; Beverly, 1989). As part of the so-called emergent culture (Williams, 1977, p. 77), the testimonio uses the language of the common people, and it does not strictly observe narrative conventions.

Aside from that, if autobiography “focuses on the process of an individual to become a special individual who transcends personal limitation which earned him/her a privileged status in a society”, testimonio looks at the experience of the narrator that is representative of a social class or a group, hence making his/her own experience “an agent of a collective memory and identity” from the standpoint of the powerless, dispossessed and disenfranchised (Beverly, 1989, p. 15; Yudice, 1991, p.17). In testimonial writing, the single narrator/author is replaced with a community of witnesses, which then signifies a collective history. The narrative should not be approached as a self-contained text, but rather should understand the world they inhabit.

Related to the concept of counter-memory as posited by Foucault earlier, history in testimonio is “reconfigured into a collage of individualized and collective representations of events, and which therefore do not have pretensions to the objectivity and faithfulness of the truth” (Moratilla, 2012, p.45). Through testimonies, the experiences of people from

the margin of a society will be known; more importantly, they denounce “a present situation of exploitation and oppression or exorcising and setting a right-official history (de Guzman 606). Through the testimonios, memory enables language “to operate as outlets and productions of silent histories, thus making the “invisible” visible, and democratizing the discursive field. Most importantly, testimonios provide “alternative logics and resistance against “mainstream” realities of social exclusion and asymmetrical relations of power” that are different in the dominant forms of historical representation (Moratilla, 2012, p. 45).

Testimonios stress the “voice that speaks to the reader in the form of “I” that demands to be recognized. A testimonio “produces if not the real, then certainly a sensation of experiencing the real ...this has determinate effects on the reader that are different from those produced by even the most realist or “documentary” fiction” (Beverly, 1989, p. 22).

Pohlman (2008, p.58) stressed that testimonio “offers a political and analytical framework with which to collect, analyze and circulate survivors’ narrative”. With the help of the testimonies, the subject reveal how they deal with injustice, suffering, fear, and invisibility (Lusk and Griselda, 2012) and they would then engage in the process of self – constitution, emancipation and survival (Yudice, 1991, p.19). In the context of authoritarian power (i.e. the Marcoses in the Philippines), narratives in the testimonios can serve as a direct challenge against the systematic abuse of power.

Testimonios also re/inscribe the memories of the people experiencing a certain situation, but they are heterogeneous due to tensions and conflicts in what are remembered and forgotten. Although testimonio does not reject the reality of the past, it may “trigger an interrogation of established “truths” by recognizing voices that are marginalized by epistemic violence of hegemonic knowledge. Hence, it should highlight the agency of



those directly affected by marginalization, which would transform his/her narrative from being a victim into a self-conscious subject” (Moratilla, 2012, p. 47), thus mapping out the idea that the personal stories are also political in nature.

In works of literature that tackle testimonio, there is less emphasis on the role of culture and identity in how the marginalized narrate their lived experiences. In this paper, I argue that it is important not only to look at the testimonio of the oppressed group as a mere narrative of marginalization but also to locate these testimonios in their proper cultural and historical context. This is important since some, especially the ethnic minorities, have their own worldview of their wretched situation. These testimonios would then contribute to a counter-history on the official history of Martial Law in Muslim Mindanao.

### *The Silenced Narratives of Violence and Displacement*

After the Jabidah Massacre and the establishment of the MNLF, Nur Misuari began to gain force in the whole Sulu archipelago (Stern, 2009). Hussein (personal communication, March 24, 2019) pointed out that when Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law in 1972, the MNLF started to create their training camp in the town. His testimonial narrative reflects that when he was young, soldiers were perceived as bad and this was reaffirmed when he directly experienced their abuses. The trauma still lingers in his memory at each mention of the GCO (General Headquarters) – or the main office of the military. Although the respondents were sympathetic to the cause of the MNLF, there were also instances that the latter were feared, although only at a minimal level, manifesting that the support of the civilians was not dichotomous and polarizing to the two warring groups. Despite taking a stand on whom their clan supported, they thought that they were just caught in the worsening conflict.





When militarization took place on the island, various forms of coercive social control were stipulated. Jolo was cordoned and the MNLF troops began to flee towards the hinterland. The military viewed the MNLF as a contagion that may spread throughout the region, which would further destabilize the island and region at large. The town of Jolo was then compared to a concentration camp where the movements of the locals were monitored. The objective of these mechanisms was to suppress the elements of rebellion. Hussein (personal communication, March 24, 2019) even pointed out that checkpoints were everywhere. A cedula was often required in the checkpoints and failure to present it to the authority might entail interrogation or arrest. The military imposed a proper haircut to avoid suspicion of being a member of the rebel group.

The repressive state apparatus, which was implemented by the military and the Philippine Constabulary, then prescribed what were deemed appropriate and what were not. The military stripped off the people's liberty in exchange of a promise that if the people cooperated with them, they would attain peace and order. But the people of Sulu who were subjugated to the power needed to adjust their daily and mundane activities. The control of the state then trickled down to the body of the people so that even the hair of men was subjected to power. In the parlance of Michel Foucault (1977, p. 37), the bodies of the Tausugs were reconfigured to become a docile body under "the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which (assure) the constant subjection of its forces". Their bodies were then contained and disciplined to distinguish them from the 'barbarous and violent' MNLF because that is one way to show the "potency of the state" (Reyes, 2018, p.478). In those moments, some survivors felt powerless, but at the same time, some secretly resisted the power of the military.

According to Mohammad (personal communication, March 24, 2019), smuggling was common because the military conducted food blockades to starve the enemy with the



pertinent supply of basic goods and commodities. The military forces were also suspicious that the people might help their relatives (who became rebels) by giving them a supply of rice and other important commodities. Sanctions were then imposed on those who did not follow the authority. Being maisug (Kiefer, 1972), they resisted the power of the Philippine Army and Constabulary by smuggling sacks of rice. This 'resistance from below' was risky as it could lead to arrest or death in the hands of the military. But the civilians viewed their subversion not only as a key to reclaiming their rights to acquire their basic needs to survive, but also as a struggle to regain their dignity and self-worth as human beings.

The continuous militarization eventually led to violence in some areas of the island. Hussein (personal communication, March 24, 2019) stressed that many soldiers died in their encounter against the MNLF

*I guess because of the strong forces of the MNLF. Many soldiers died and you cannot blame them because of the forces of their enemy. Sometimes, there was a truck that suffered three ambushes from the MNLF rebels. If they would enter the town, they would be venting out their frustration against the civilians.*

Sometimes when the military troops lost in an encounter against the MNLF, they would displace their anger and frustrations against the civilian. For the military, the civilians were just an object of power, and the military showed this by refusing to recognize the Muslim civilians as human beings – as if they were just disposable bodies or “a waste product of a society that no longer considers them of any value” (Giroux, 2012, p. 5). Under militarization, the disposability portrayed the everyday reality of the marginalized Tausug marred by fear and oppression.



*As the violence worsened, there was need to transfer from one place to another, leading at some point to the poisoning of Hussein (personal communication, March 24, 2019). The military operation already started. When we were still young, and we were still studying, there were operations everywhere. We would hide where there was no warfare... One time, when I was still in the elementary, I was poisoned by a cassava root crop. Eating it fresh will make you feel dizzy. You need to let a day pass. Because of the need to hurry and because of hunger, parents would find food for their children. But people would not leave because of their livelihood.*

Worsened by the blockade, they needed to acquire their food elsewhere. But because of the ongoing war in the countryside, proper food preparation was also compromised. The continuing displacement of the people worsened the situation on the island.

*When they were still young, narrated Hussein (personal communication, March 24, 2019) ...we were in high school, the soldiers had just come back from an encounter. At night when we did not have anything to do, we would catch big fishes at the pier. There was a soldier there who got drunk and he told us to walk for him to kill all of us. The good thing was our friend arrived. He aided us. It was scary.*

Meanwhile, Abdul (personal communication, March 16, 2019) shared that his sister was killed by the military around the same time when Hussein and his friends were threatened by the military. This was his most traumatic encounter with the military.



*We harvested our copras, then the military patrolled. We were ambushed by the army. There were 17 of us. We only had our itak. The army did not recognize anyone. They did not have preferences -- women, old people, pregnant or minor as long as you are human. My sister was shot because she was left alone.*

The above testimonios of both Hussein and Abdul exemplified the excesses of power by the armed forces, which were recognized by the MNLF narrative while rejected by the Marcosian government. As the implementer of Martial Law, the dictatorship wielded the authority and legitimacy to suppress all forms of rebellion. Providing the military and the constabulary with so much power led to neglect in dealing with the civilians humanely. Human rights violation became common in the Sulu archipelago and elsewhere during that time.<sup>9</sup> As a pawn of the state, the military needed to affirm its power, exercise domination, and impose its will against anyone who was planning to connive with the rebels.

For Hussein and Abdul, these incidents were traumatic since they personally witnessed the extent that the military would go to 'suppress rebellion'—to the point of killing innocent civilians. These were not the only cases of abuses that were instigated by the military. The respondents also mentioned that male civilians were abducted, and some remained missing until today, while women civilians were raped by some members of the armed forces. The bodies of the civilians became a receptacle of intergroup hatred (Millilo 196) against the Muslim Tausugs. With these abuses, some Tausug men were compelled to join the MNLF as a way of restoring honor. As the justice system favored the people

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<sup>9</sup> According to Amnesty International, from 1972 to 1981, "some 70,000 people were imprisoned and 34,000 were tortured; over 3,200 people were killed" in the Philippines during Martial Law.



in power, one of the means to resist the power of martial rule was violence. Hence, the dictatorship itself was the recruiter of rebellion.

By the end of the 1970s, Hussein became a member of the MNLF and his experiences before and during the 1974 Battle of Jolo made him realize that there was no other means to end their suffering against the oppression but to fight for their honor as a Tausug and as a Bangsamoro. In this case, the testimonio became an “individual’s biographical narrative of their coming of age or to a state of greater political awareness” (Lusk and Villalobos, 18). They were able “to grasp what is going on in the world”, and “what is happening in themselves as minute points of the intersections of biography and history within society” (Mills, 1959, p. 3).

But not all the respondents share the same sentiment as Hussein. According to Abdul (personal communication, March 16, 2019), he did not join the rebel group “Because (members of the) MNLF have no salary. If you became part of the CAFGU, there's no salary. Barangay tanod has salary, the MNLF, has no salary”. Asserting his agency as the breadwinner of the family, joining the rebellion was not a rational decision for him. Although he supported the movement, he feared that his children might lose a father if he considered joining the MNLF.

When the MNLF were about to enter the city, the military responded aggressively. The moment they heard the guns and mortars, Abdul and Hussein immediately looked after their families. Both dug a deep hole near their house. The holes then served as their protection against some bombs and canyons that were dropped and thrown by the air force. Abdul (personal communication, March 16, 2019) narrated his experience.

*Because you know, in every house, especially in rural community, we made big underground holes. If there were*



*canyons, we could enter there. We cut the trunk of the coconut tree then we used it to cover the hole so that we would not be hit. We cut it by five meters, depending on the number. If we heard that there was an approaching plane, we let the children enter inside. This was for their safety.*

The government's role in safeguarding the safety and welfare of the civilian was halted. They then focused their attention on the invading forces of the MNLF rebels whose responsibility of protecting themselves and their families rested in the initiatives of the survivors. For them, if they waited for the government, nothing might happen and worst, they might not survive.

Division of labor was created in the family and even the community to ensure the safety of the children and to look for other sources of their basic commodities. They began to slaughter their animals such as chicken, goats, and cows since they needed food to cope with the scarcity and they found difficulty in taking care of these animals. Abdul (personal communication, March 16, 2019) even mentioned that for his baby to survive, instead of giving him a bottle of milk, he fed him a bottle of dissolved sugar. To worsen their situation, they were not allowed to cook freely because they might be suspected as members of the rebel group.

*You are there and you are having trouble then bombing is continuous. When we cooked, we would hide because if the naval forces would see that there was smoke... No one could tell if you were a civilian or a rebel. If there was smoke, they would target that. Others were just hiding, finding ways not to be seen. Sometimes, the people would cook at night. Bombing by the naval forces was continuous.*



This situation exemplified the additional burden that the civilians experienced during the said battle – the continuing surveillance of the armed forces made their survival difficult and this made them more vulnerable to be misrepresented as a rebel. In the eyes of the military, every person was a potential enemy.

The worsening government's surveillance and suspicion towards the civilians and offensives they stipulated against the MNLF made the survivors decide to transfer to a safer place. But this was another hurdle for them to accomplish since gunshots were flying everywhere. If they went out of their houses, chances were they might get caught by the bullet. It was now a choice between life and death for the survivors and their respective families. During that time, Abdul (personal communication, March 16, 2019) carried sacks of rice and sugar while he was escaping the chaos. His testimonio described his experience

*It is frightening, but (fear) would disappear if you would think that you did not have food. The civilians, they were evacuees who brought their things. They were no match against the military. If they were ambushed by the civilians, they would die because they did not have a gun. If the enemy had a gun, they would just run. The people who had no guns would just carry their grandchild. You know what, I carried my kid. I still get goosebumps every time I remember Martial Law that time. Day and night, attacks from the mortars, canyon and machine gun were never-ending.*



Hussein (personal communication, March 24, 2019) added

*You could really see the suffering of the people who were not used to walking. People from the urban became rural already. It was difficult for them. Everyone was equal, no rich nor poor. Everyone carried their things... Some sought refuge using the pump-boat, by land they would just walk. They were not used to it. You would just cry when you see the situation of the people.*

As much as they tried to be maisug (Kiefer, 1972) during their situation, fear was still unavoidable. Both Abdul's and Hussein's testimonios narrated the struggle of the people to escape the chaotic situation on the whole island. Abdul adhered to the concept of 'mind over matter' where he thought about their survival rather than problematized their fears. If fear succumbed to his consciousness, he might not be able to think rationally in that challenging situation. Given their limited capacity to defend themselves, their only way to escape the situation was to run as fast as they could.

Some of the displaced families went to Zamboanga City, yet their struggle for survival continued. This was witnessed by Mohammad (personal communication, March 24, 2019) since he was in the city during the time that the war broke out in Jolo. In his testimonios, the government did not address the needs of the displaced individuals from the moment that they were in Jolo until they arrived in Zamboanga City, which led to their difficulty in adjusting to their new environment. To make things worse, the authorities continued their surveillance where they arrested survivors who had long hair and had no cedula. The military feared that they might spread the battle in the more populous cities like Zamboanga.





Back in Jolo, Abdul (personal communication, March 16, 2019) also mentioned the same sentiment where government agencies that should cater the needs of the survivors were not functioning. Abdul said "During that time, there was no DSWD (Department of Social Welfare and Development) during the time of war. Nothing existed. They disregarded the people". This short narration of Abdul and Mohammad counter the claim of the Marcosian government that it was active in attending to the needs of the survivors. Although the government claimed that a large fund was allocated to help the survivors in Jolo, Abdul did not feel the presence of the agencies that could supposedly help them in reducing the burden that they experienced as victims of the battle.

During and after the war, both Abdul and Hussein observed that the whole town was burned by the mortars from the military. Abdul (personal communication, March 16, 2019) can still recall that the soldiers burned the town so that they could easily find their enemy. Although he was in Zamboanga, Mohammad (personal communication, March 24, 2019) was told by his friend that the military used other means to suppress the enemies.

*The guns of the military could result in burning. It was big, like a double action (sound of the gun). If the bullet hit the building it would burn. It had a fire to flush out the enemy. The town was burned. Nothing was left. Houses and buildings were destroyed by fire. The houses and buildings were destroyed. The fire just stopped when it had nothing left to consume. Then the houses, the posts, were devoured by the fire. There was no fireman. No one helped there.*

The problem created by the MNLF and the armed forces resulted in the death of many civilians who were not able to escape the tragedy. Hussein (personal communication, March 24, 2019) observed that there were a lot of flies flying over the dead bodies while



the smell of the bomb, the powder of the canyon, resonated throughout the town. Skin irritation brought by the powder was also common. Dead bodies were found everywhere, either they died because of the gunshots or their bodies were caught by the ravaging fire that spread easily throughout the town. Abdul, Hussein, and some civilians went out of the island and migrated elsewhere. Because of the lack of necessities, Mohammad (personal communication, March 24, 2019) mentioned that many of the survivors went to Sabah and have not returned to Jolo even after the war.

### ***Tausug's Reflections on the 1974 Battle of Jolo***

One of the most important salient points for their testimonio to be considered as counter-history is the absence of conflict between the Muslim and Christians before the battle occurred. This was pointed out by Hussein (personal communication, March 24, 2019)

*In the past, only 5% were Christians, but every Saturday or Sunday, they would picnic everywhere in Sulu and nobody disturbed them. None. Why is there a Muslim-Christian rivalry where in fact it is not present?*

This kind of narrative challenged the mainstream historiography of Martial Law in Mindanao where there is great emphasis on the rivalry between the Christians and the Muslims as one of the compelling reasons for the growing conflicts in the region. Although the internal colonialism of the Christian-dominated Philippines is a significant element in their marginalization, the discourse of religion as a bone of contention in the conflict in Jolo is uncommon in their narratives. Contrary to the official history of Moro resistance, the respondents felt mutual respect and harmonious relationship between the Christians and the Muslims before the declaration of Martial Law. Later, the mainstream discourses would reinforce the religious conflict and ethnic differences to justify the horrifying events in the Sulu archipelago.



Personal relationships, allegiance to Islam, and their Tausug identity are the basis for their trust and belongingness towards another person or group. Later, conflict activated between the Christians and Muslims in Jolo. In another narrative, also from Abdul (personal communication, March 16, 2019)

*They will not defeat the people of the province. In the province, even the Americans entered here. See the Japanese, the Spaniards. They cannot defeat the province of Jolo. Until now, they cannot defeat... They cannot really defeat. See, they (MNLF) have three guns... At the age of 12, they already have a gun. Will the soldiers continue to enter there? The soldiers will die at their (MNLF) hand.*

Maurice Halbwach (1992, p. 22) stressed that societies “all have distinctive memories that their members have constructed, often over long periods of time”. Consequently, being situated in a specific group context, the individual then “draw on that context to remember or recreate the past” (22). In this case, their long history of resistance against the so called “outsiders” and their Tausug identity as maisug shaped how they viewed the conflict and how they recalled the memories of their past. Carrying their honor as Tausug, their being maisug is validated in their recollection of their history. They are also proud that some of their fellow Tausug already resisted the power of the military even though they were still young. With the values of being maisug, they sympathized with the MNLF rebels as they restored their honor which was trampled by the forces of the Philippine State. As portrayed by their collective memory, the MNLF then represented the Tausugs' cause for self-determination.

Furthermore, both narratives by Abdul and Mohammad countered the perspective of the Marcosian government which claimed that it was the MNLF rebels who burned the town.



In the first place, the military had the technological capacity to make the destruction possible through their air force. They also used destructive weapons such as the napalm bomb (Wikileaks, n.d.). Interestingly, for the survivors both the state forces and the MNLF took advantage of the situation by looting the pawnshops. This was strategic for both the rebels and the military since there was an urgent need to mobilize their resources. As the town of Jolo was burning down, there was a suspension of its social order and lawlessness became prevalent. Vital institutions that were supposed to help in eradicating the fire were not functioning. Jolo then experienced the state of anarchy.

Countering the perspectives of the government and the MNLF, in the eyes of the survivors both have their fair share in starting the 1974 Battle of Jolo. From the point of view of Hussein (personal communication, March 24, 2019)

*The fault of the rebels was that they entered Jolo. But the fault of the military was that they needlessly involved the civilians. As reported in the newspaper, according to the nuns the MNLF burned Jolo. That was released. We do not know because it is unavoidable. The rebels did not know that a lot of civilians would be involved unintentionally. It was the fault of the rebels since they entered Jolo saying that it was their Independence Day, that it would be the same the next year. But it was not true, so that is why a lot of people would say that the rebels are liars.*

Even before the 1974 Battle of Jolo, the people were already sympathetic to the cause of the MNLF due to their principles and their ethnicity and/or kinship. But they were surprised by the rebels' invasion of the town. For the survivors, the rebels did not anticipate the havoc that their action would wreak on the civilians. But in the long run, the survivors were also frustrated in the MNLF since their promise that independence was within their reach did not materialize at all. Instead, they gave the people the false hope



that through independence, they would be liberated from the oppression that they experienced.

### *Stories in Need of Recognition*

The Battle of Jolo in 1974 was just one of the major conflicts that happened in Mindanao during the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. But for the survivors, recognition of their wretched situation during Martial Law remained a major problem. Hussein (personal communication, March 24, 2019) pointed out that three years after the burning of Jolo, his father died because of the scrapping of a camouflage plane by the government troops. After the EDSA Revolution, they sought help from the Commission on Human Rights, hoping that their story would get recognized they would get monetary compensation as victims of the abuses of the Marcos dictatorship. Unfortunately, they were disappointed from being recognized as victims of human rights violation. For Hussein, his ethnicity and religion played vital roles in their non-recognition.

On top of that, he even contemplates that the Reds (former cadres of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army) were prioritized. By looking at his narrative closely, it is the Commission of Human Rights (CHR), the very institution that is supposed to recognize stories of oppression and marginalization against the state forces, that is silencing their narrative.

This neglect can also be attributed to the successors of Ferdinand Marcos. Corazon Aquino appointed Fidel V. Ramos as the Chief-of-Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and later as Secretary of War Defense. His influence in post-Martial Law politics catapulted him to the presidency. But his presence also "slowed the investigation of past human rights abuse in the military" (McCoy, 1991, p.31). The testimonios raised the role of memory in shaping subjectivity of experiences. Rosi Braidoti (1994, p.24)



suggested that “those who have forgotten to forget injustice...their memory is activated against the stream; they enact a rebellion of subjugated knowledge”.

Therefore, I argue that if the Philippine state failed to understand the complexity of these stories from the margin, it would contribute to the difficulty of solving the problem of Mindanao. These survivors and other groups displaced by wars from the periphery of Philippine society directly experienced the marginalization and exploitation of the oppressive system that is perpetuated even to the present. As a counter-history to the dominant narrative of Martial Law under Ferdinand Marcos by interrogating commentary of what the Tausug survivors experienced personally during Martial Law, testimonios opened the doors for identifying the root cause of their problems.

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Personal Interview

"Abdul". 16 March 2019 Personal Interview.

"Hussein". 24 March 2019. Personal Interview.

"Mohammad". 24 March 2019. Personal Interview.



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## How Rebels Get What They Want: Local Interdependencies

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*“Take cues from people that have been dealing with these issues long before funding came or the U.S. government arrived. Work with those who have been doing the work for decades.” – Teresita “Ging” Delles, Advisor to GRP President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in the Office of the Presidential Advisor of Peace Processes (OPAPP)*

Ging Delles’ statement reflects a common paradox among those working to resolve conflict in the developing world. Many practitioners and high-ranking officials are understandably weary of wealthy, powerful nations that intervene in a conflict by steamrolling over local experts and disrupting the groundwork that has been laid for decades. At the same time, the empirical record suggests that international intervention, foreign aid, and mediation can force agreements and bring an end to conflict quicker than it naturally would end (Sisk 2009, Kydd 2003; Beardsley et al. 2006; Svensson 2009; Savun 2008).

While foreign intervention plays a large role in conflict termination, what is often overshadowed by foreign money and interests, as Ging observes, are local politics, which also play an integral part in conflict dynamics. For instance, the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM or Free Aceh Movement), a rebel organization demanding autonomy in Indonesia, witnessed an abrupt end to their decades-long conflict when they engaged in a post-Tsunami reconstruction business to rebuild critical infrastructure for corporations and civilians. This helped create enough influence that the government granted them regional



autonomy (Stange and Patock 2010). In fact, state concessions, such as the granting of regional autonomy, are often a product of a protracted conflict with a complex web of domestic players and interests.

Although empirical analyses highlight the effects of foreign sponsorship in conflict, a specific type of domestic relationships, which I call local interdependencies, are underexplored due to a lack of reporting and the challenges of data collection in conflict zones. In this paper, I argue that rebels' local interdependencies have a significant effect on whether a state will offer concessions. In particular, organizations with local interdependencies are better able to lessen information and commitment obstacles and increase the likelihood of state concessions over organizations that solely use violence or only have foreign dimensions. I test this theory through elite and informal interviews with government officials, academics, members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and current and former rebels. I provide in-depth case comparisons of two rebel movements in the Philippines, the Moros and the Communists, and explain how local interdependencies shaped each's ability to obtain state accommodations. Defining and highlighting local interdependencies and how they shape state calculations of concessions not only sheds light on an unclear and understudied phenomenon, but also can provide a roadmap for how states can better choose negotiating partners.

### **The domestic side of concessions**

Concessions are government accommodations aimed at settling a conflict (Cunningham 2014). Despite political rhetoric to the contrary, governments often do accommodate rebels both in and out of civil war (Bapat 2005; Thomas 2014). These accommodations include permitting the use of indigenous languages, guaranteeing civil rights and privileges, and offering regional autonomy. These become concessions if they grant autonomy to a group or people (Cunningham 2014).



The decision of whether to grant accommodations is generally considered the purview of state leaders and policymakers (Lichbach 1987). However, in addition to political or military considerations, structural elements such as a large size or number of ethnic groups and factions, a high value of the land, and fear of retribution drive calculations of accommodation (Walter 2006; Powell 2004; Ogutcu-Fu 2012; Walter 1999). External support, third-party mediation, democratic governance, resource wealth, and media attention further shape accommodation policy (Abrahms 2006).

Little research is concentrated on how rebel behavior influences state decision-making, although we know it exerts a considerable force. For instance, rebel violence can provoke an aggressive state response, which can radicalize moderates or activate a broad base of rebel support (Lake 2002). In a civil war, rebel violence can force the state into concessions by revealing that the government is unable to protect its citizens (Thomas 2014).

Yet, violence is not the only tool rebels use to trigger state and civilian reactions. Rebels know that civilian support is critical for organizational longevity and often bargain with civilians for their support and cooperation (Kasfir 2005; Wood 2014). Stronger organizations actively cultivate a civilian constituency through governance and nonviolence (Kalyvas 2006; Mampilly 2011; Arjona, Kasfir, Mampilly 2015). These behaviors, including the provision of goods and services, preservation of law and order, and participation in elections increase rebel strength and perceptions of legitimacy to domestic and international audiences (Stepan and Chenoweth 2008; Cunningham and Sawyer 2019; Stewart 2018).

However, scholars have not yet connected these associated governance and nonviolent behaviors to conflict outcomes. For instance, although we know rebels who establish

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extensive infrastructure and coopt civilians are more likely to deter extremists and spoilers (Heger and Jung 2017; Krause 2017), we do not know how or whether this affects state calculations of accommodation and repression.

Hutchcroft (2016) argues that international factors are necessary and useful for progress towards peace, but that domestic politics can override any effects of international involvement. Particularly in hostile zones with low mobility, local politics drives both state and rebel strategic calculations. Still, the empirical record has little to say about how domestic advocacy or how local interdependencies affect conflict outcomes. In the next section, I demonstrate how local interdependencies to rebels, whether explicit or behind-the-scenes, form coalitions that increase the likelihood that the state will grant concessions to rebels.

### **How local interdependencies drive concessions**

In most cases, states are in a position of power and authority over rebels. Therefore, for a state concession to occur, rebels must out-fight the state's military or convince the state that a concession is in its best interest. Local interdependencies often help tip those calculations to favor the rebel organization. I define local interdependencies as networks of local groups and actors who work with or on behalf of rebel movements. These interdependencies can be created out of mutual benefit, such as short-term rebel-military alliances, or because the rebels expose significant government injustices and deficits, as is the case with civil-society and pro-democracy groups.

Effective local interdependencies create a different environment for rebels, one which appears much more conducive to state concessions. This is because, according to the rationalist explanations for war (Fearon 1995), the path to a successful bargain is blocked



by two main obstacles.<sup>1</sup> The first is imperfect information, which can lead parties to abandon hopes for a concession or lead them to an agreement that will not work. The second obstacle is fear over commitment, which occurs because parties do not believe the adversary can make a credible commitment to the terms of the agreement. Generally, negotiations occur after long and sordid conflicts, so parties may have difficulty trusting one another. Rebels fear the state will renege on their promises or not fulfill the terms of the agreement. States may also fear that rebels will return to violence or that the rebels do not have the capacity to fulfill their promises due to spoilers and extremists (Kydd and Walter 2002; Stedman 1997).

One way that rebels overcome these obstacles is by building robust local interdependencies. These interdependent relationships provide clearer information and ameliorate concerns over commitment so that the state has greater confidence in granting a concession. They are categorized by three main channels: civilian politics, NGOs/CSOs, and rebel-security force alliances. The first channel, civilian politics, links the rebel organization to various civilian groups including politicians, businesspeople, and peace advocates. When rebels control a territory, they are more likely to form mutually beneficial relationships with civilians meaning information, food, housing, taxation, and recruits among other material goods (Stewart and Liou 2017).

However, civilians can offer additional benefits including information, lobbying, and issue advocacy. For instance, during the Guatemalan civil war, an estimated 250,000 to 500,000 civilians contributed to leftist insurgency, providing food, clothing, shelter, and information. This support was integral to insurgent control over nine of Guatemala's twenty-two provinces with a significant presence in nine others in 1981 (Valentino, Huth,

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<sup>1</sup> A successful concession is defined as one approved of by both rebel and state leadership and where peace is sustained over years.



Balch-Lindsay 2004, 399). In the Aceh province of Indonesia, women Islamic leaders and activists sided with the rebels in their strongholds to show support of and solidarity with the rebel governance practices to the Indonesian government (Barter 2015). In the Mindanao province of the Philippines, the Moro National Liberation Front chairman, Nur Misuari, was propped up by his predecessor Udtog Matalam, who served as the first governor of the region and advocated for him on the national scene (Chua and Rimban 2011). Both these relationships led to dramatic changes in the posture and receptivity of the state.

In addition to offering information, civilians ensure commitment through peace communities and watchdog groups. These communities refuse entrance to any militaristic presence and advocate for peaceful arbitration of conflict (Hancock and Mitchell 2007). Peace advocates are now brought to the negotiating table and are allowed to exert some control over the process and substance of the discourse (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 228).

The second main channel of influence is through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil-society organizations (CSOs). These organizations, including women's advocacy groups, humanitarian aid, and cross-sectoral alliances, now proliferate in many conflict zones. Though they exist as part of the fabric of society that is independent of the rebel movement, they work in powerful ways to influence outcomes. For instance, while NGOs such as the Red Cross, are traditionally seen as stakeholders of peace during a conflict, they actually can often reinforce divisions (Anderson 1999). This is because they can "commodify peace" by providing material rewards to actors in return for relationships, business opportunities, and democratic liberal notions of peace (Espesor 2017, 4). This is evidenced by the constellations of stakeholders and powerbrokers that rise when disputes arise over natural resources or political authority (Adam, Verbrugge, and Boer



2014). Due to this, many NGOs carry the reputation of “missing the bigger picture” (PCID 2018, 92).

Peace researchers now tout civil society’s involvement in peace efforts as critical to keeping NGOs on target while achieving a lasting settlement. Though CSOs and NGOs are very similar, CSOs are defined by their work building a domestic constituency for an issue and getting the state’s attention. Creating a civilian-centered agenda for peace allows politicians to adopt a peaceful platform without looking weak or losing face, and increases civilian oversight over rebel actions (Rood 2005, 36). Additionally, CSOs help local leaders by communicating messages, informing them on number of issues, and overseeing pilot projects (PCID 2018, 66).

These grassroots organizations also bring attention to the root causes of the issue, having lived among the movement and conflict. Agreements where CSOs are consulted have shown to be of higher quality, more far-reaching, and more legitimate (Barnes 2002, 7-8). Even when CSOs are not able to change public opinion, they can work through elite channels, uniting businesspeople, media, religious leaders and government officials to lobby the government (Rood 2005, 36; Richmond 2013).

The final channel through which local interdependencies transform state calculations of concessions is through rebels and security force alliances. Although seemingly counterintuitive, decades of exposure between rebels and police or military can foster trust, respect, mutually beneficial interests, and even friendships. This can slowly transform the military’s attitude toward the conflict from within.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Most certainly, this does not always happen as genocide continues in areas like the Arakan State in Myanmar despite decades-old resistance (Azeem Ibrahim 2018).





In majority of conflict literature, rebel-military integration is considered a post-conflict dynamic. However, rebels and security forces come into contact more than one might expect. Local police and military units are often familiar with the major players in rebel units and work with them to establish day-to-day order (Baker 2017). Also, in states with weak government security forces, soldiers may bounce back and forth from rebel groups to the military depending on the incentives of the day (Baaz and Verweijen 2013). Corrupt security forces may also work with rebels selling weapons and ammunition (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 55).

Additionally, when rebel organizations have rogue elements or extremist splinter cells, security forces may recruit rebel leaders and offer incentives for their capture. Security forces also recruit local militias to help against mutual threats. This was the case in Mozambique, when the FRELIMO-controlled government recruited local militias to counter the local RENAMO opposition. What has been termed multi-layered governance or hybrid political orders describes the complex web of security actors that form coalitions at any given time (Kasfir, Frerks, and Terpstra 2017; Espesor 2017, 69). These types of task forces and coalitions can change the militant culture of government security forces or force the military's hands into negotiations in return for the rebel's help (Hall 2007).

Table 1 presents a summary of the channels of local interdependencies and examples of actions that alleviate the information and commitment problems. Taken together, these three channels help rebels increase the likelihood of a concession, because they create a united front of rebels, civilians, and elites which cross-pressure the state into granting concessions. This front exerts greater influence on state behavior than rebels alone.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Foreign support, in the form of financial support, weapons support, and diplomacy /mediation, is also a major state incentive for the use of concessions, but this is not the focus of this analysis.

**Table 1***Summary Table of Important Channels for Concessions*

Channel	Examples of how they aid the rebel's likelihood of concession
Civilian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Logistics and resource support</li><li>• Alliances between rebels and clan/local politics</li><li>• Participation in rebel governance structures</li><li>• Civilian-mandated peace zones</li><li>• Civilian-created watchdog groups</li></ul>
NGOs/CSOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promotion and issue advocacy</li><li>• Lobbying local and national politicians</li><li>• NGO-created watchdog groups</li></ul>
Military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Joint task forces on mutually-beneficial operations</li></ul>

As Table 1 displays, civilian relationships alter the day-to-day realities of local governing structures and politics. Since they bear the brunt of violence in conflict zones, civilians can also be at the forefront of peacekeeping measures, such as peace zones and watchdog groups. NGOs and CSOs affect change on the national level mostly through issue advocacy, communications, and lobbying national politicians. Rebel-security force relationships transform the most stalwart opponents to peace processes in the national government. Collectively, these channels signal not only that the rebels are capable of a meaningful power-sharing arrangement, but also that other parties will ensure the enforcement of such an agreement. Therefore, rebels with strong local interdependencies are more likely to receive a state concession.



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## Comparison of the Moro and Communist Movements in the Philippines

### *Research Design*

I test my theory on local interdependencies by examining variations between the Moro and Communist movements in the Philippines. To accomplish this, I conducted elite and general interviews as well as focus groups over seven months in Manila and Cagayan de Oro, Philippines. Comparing the actions of two movements in the Philippines allowed me to make comparisons about local interdependencies, while controlling for state factors such as the administration in power at the time, level of democracy, and GDP per capita.

I conducted 16 elite interviews in accordance with sample size recommendations (Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2009). The purpose of these interviews was to construct a timeline of major events, focused comparisons, and process-tracing of rebel groups from inception to present day (Bennett and George 1997, 9). Interviews were conducted in English with former members of the Office of the Presidential Advisor on Peace Processes (OPAPP), former members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine National Police (PNP), and professors from University of the Philippines, Diliman, Ateneo de Manila University, University of the Philippines Visayas, and the Philippine Foreign Service Institute.

In addition, I worked with Muslim advocates at the Philippine Center on Islam and Democracy (PCID), Mindanao State University, and the U.S. Embassy in a series of workshops on peace education. During these workshops, I met with current and former rebels and held a focus group of student advocates at the University of Philippines, Diliman who had been raised during the conflict. To get a diverse set of perspectives, I reached out to both male and female government officials as well as former rebels. I also studied public information on sites such as Facebook, which is a hugely popular forum for organizations in the Philippines.



Interviews were critical for three key reasons. First, the diverse set of actors I reached allowed me to test and consider multiple alternative hypotheses about how states grant concessions. Second, many of the interviewees had experience with both the Moro and Communist conflict, so that without my prompting they were able to draw comparisons based on years of experience. Third, because of the sensitivity of this research, I had the opportunity to observe the “meta-data,” or the interviewee’s thoughts, feelings, and gestures, which often provide rich and descriptive information (Fujii 2010; Parkinson 2013).

### ***Setting the stage: The Philippines***

The Philippines provides a fruitful setting for the study of conflict and conflict resolution, due to centuries of American and Spanish colonialism which concentrated corrupt power at the center. When the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) declared independence on July 4, 1946, it had established strong, legitimate institutions. However, the immense damage incurred during World War II led to a struggling economy and perpetuated an archaic system for land rights (Arcilla 1998). This led to corruption that delegitimized the government in the minds of many, and the emergence of two main rebel fronts in the 1960s that argued for the expropriation of large estates for redistribution, particularly ones that had been kept since the colonization by the Spanish (Arcilla 1998).

Early leftist ideas and organizations were eventually stamped out by corrupt elites, but issues such as poverty relief, inequality, and land rights would continue to be contentious issues that formed the basis of both the Moro and Communist rebellions. However, despite having similar grievances and working with the same government, only the Moro movement succeeded in reaching state concessions with the GRP in 1976, 1996, and 2014. Peace negotiations with the Communist front in the Philippines were attempted



concurrently with the Moro, but they were rejected, abandoned, and are now largely considered a lost cause. This section will delineate how the three main channels of domestic influence contributed to this dramatic variation.

### Background of the Moro Movement

Problems over minority rights and land distribution came to the fore during the presidency of Fernando Marcos in 1965. This is because parts of the country outside of Manila were largely run by regional strongmen with autonomous control, established under Spanish and American rule. Early in his presidency, Marcos began to dismantle these political networks, particularly among the Moro, or the southern Muslim population.<sup>4</sup> In doing so, Marcos created a political vacuum that became filled by ethno-nationalist political leaders who had forged linkages with sympathetic governments across the Muslim world. Severe economic deprivation, social marginalization, and land grabs of Muslim territory exacerbated these tensions to the point of rebellion in the years following independence. Government antipathy in the region reached a point where civilians, also known as the “silent majority,” only felt safe when the government was absent (Vartavarian 2018; Buendia 2006; Personal interview, 2019, October 25, focus group with former rebels; Personal interview, 2019, November 13, Anonymous Professor).

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<sup>4</sup> The Moro are a Muslim population living in southern Philippines from the 10<sup>th</sup> century. They converted to Islam from Arab traders who left the Middle East during the Crusades. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Spanish colonists called them the *moro*, the Spanish word for Muslim. This was at first leveraged as an insult but was reappropriated in the 1960s-1970s as a source of pride. Their community leaders, or *datus*, purportedly had genealogical ties to former Sultans (Arcill 1998).



In 1968, a massacre of 28 Muslim members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) by the AFP, known as the Corregidor Jabidah,<sup>5</sup> provided the powder-keg to form the Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization (BMLO). This transitioned into the nationalist, secular Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) that then served as the main representative of the Moro movement for decades. The MNLF's manifesto called for an independent Moro Homeland which covered the southern provinces of Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan (MINSUPALA) with military aid and training provided by Libya and Malaysia (Vartavarian 2018, 142; Buendia 2006, 3).

This and other rebellions in the country were the alleged reasons for President Marcos' imposition of martial law and war against rebellions from 1972-1986. As a part of the war against the Moro Front, Marcos placed 75% of the Philippine armed forces in the Moro homeland costing billions of pesos (millions in USD) and over 50,000 lives (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 48). At the height of the conflict, in 1974, nearly the entire new batch of graduates from the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) were killed in battle (Buendia 2006, 4).

Due to these heavy costs and the Moro's relationship with oil-rich nations, Marcos initiated a peace deal with the MNLF. The negotiations were facilitated by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), specifically Libya and Malaysia. In 1976,

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<sup>5</sup> The "Corregidor Jabidah," started as a land grab by the GRP over a resource-rich province in the colony of British Malaya (now the Federation of Malaysia) known as "Sabah," or "morning" in Arabic. According to records dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, this land was owned by the Sultanate of Sulu, incorporated into the Philippines by the Spanish, and leased to the British for use. However, the land was not returned when the British consented to the creation of the Federation of Malaysia following WWII. In 1968, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) recruited 180 Moro, ethnic non-Malays into a covert force codenamed "Jabidah," a common woman's name, tasked with fomenting a rebellion in Sabah to enable the AFP to intervene and retake the territory. The project named "Operation Merdeka", or "Operation Freedom" in Malay, first sent Moro trainees from the Sulu and Tawi-Tawi islands in the southern Philippines to Corregidor Island, a small military training facility in Manila Bay. When the 180 soldiers discovered that their mission involved killing fellow Muslims and that they would not receive their promised stipend, they mutinied. Most soldiers were sent home or transferred to another unit, but one batch of 29 recruits were executed. The event was revealed when fishermen found a sole survivor floating on a piece of driftwood in the nearby waters of Cavite, a province south of Manila (Tiglaio 2015).



the GRP signed the Tripoli Agreement and awarded the MNLF a concession of regional autonomy in a newly created Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 41; Buendia 2006, 5).

This, however, caused a split in the Moro movement, and in 1984 Salamat Hashim formed the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Salamat was unsympathetic to the demands of the GRP and refused any autonomy plan with the government. He also believed MNLF Chairman Misuari used the dealings to become a powerful figurehead within the government, which he did as Regional Governor of the ARMM and chairman of the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD). Salamat established the MILF in Lahore, Pakistan initially promoting his organization to Islamic and Arab states (McKenna 1998).

While MILF gained traction, the MNLF-run ARMM suffered from many difficulties. After Marcos' ouster in 1986, President Corazon Aquino passed the Organic Act to finalize the ARMM, but mismanagement of funds, a lack of political support, and allegations of corruption under Misuari failed to cause lasting peace. In 1992, President Ramos enhanced an amnesty law and decriminalization of ex-rebels leading to the 1996 second "Final Peace Agreement," which tried to bring more structure to the ARMM and incorporated education, Shariah courts, police, and development planning board. However, the MNLF contended that it was not consulted in any negotiations and only had superficial authority, with greater fiscal powers being retained by local governments and the annual congressional appropriations process (Hutchcroft 2016). The ARMM also did not address the core issues of ancestral domain, former land grab policies under Marcos, and political and economic reforms (Lara 2014, 63). Lastly, the unclear authority and lack of economic development paved the way for splinter groups and extremists to intentionally sink the endeavors of the ARMM. Misuari's inability to address the needs of



local elites rapidly advanced the interests of rivals and those who stood to gain from the ARMM's downfall (Lara 2014, 67).

By the late 1990s, MILF leader Hashim Salamat returned to the Philippines and gained a strong foothold in central Mindanao. By 1999, the MILF contained between 15,000 and 40,000 troops and operated 46 rebel camps in this area, most notably Campo Muslim and Campo Abubakar, which effectively worked as shadow governments in the region (Buendia 2006, 8). Within these camps, all local political matters, from political demonstrations to disputes and justice arbitrations were brought to the MILF before being carried out (McKenna 1998).

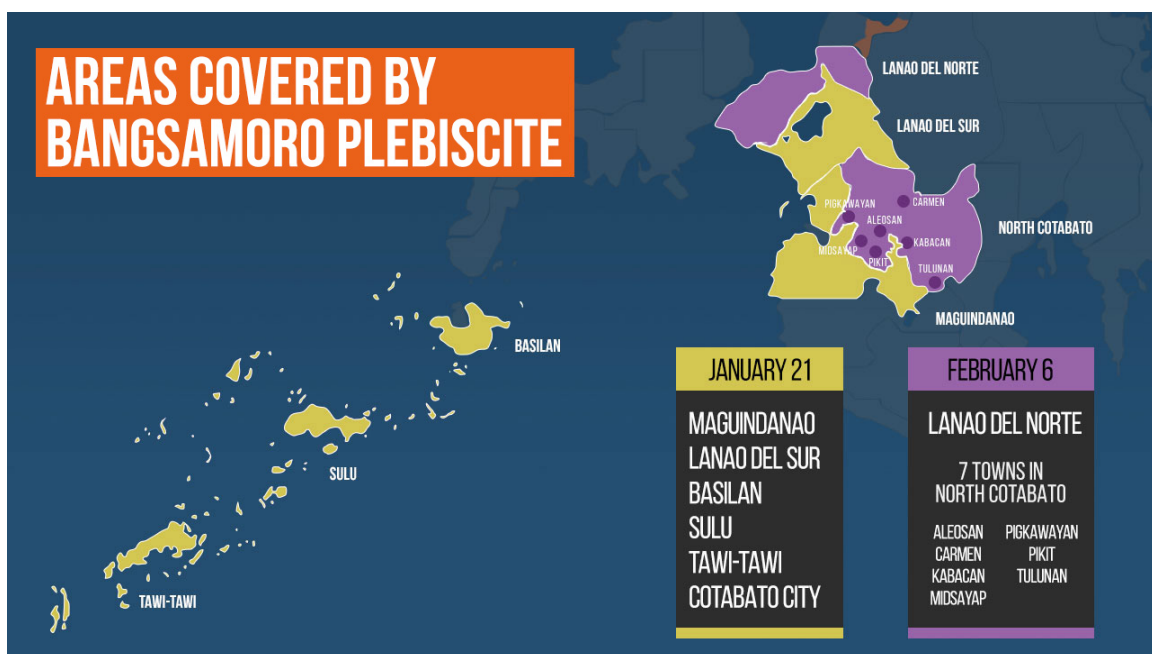
In 1997, the GRP opened peace talks with MILF, observing their rise and the decline in legitimacy of the MNLF and the ARMM. However, in 2000, disagreement on the issue of operating MILF camps, a change of administration, and a culture of military machismo plunged the south into another large-scale conflict, deemed President Estrada's "All Out War." (Buendia 2006, 8; Interview Anonymous former OPAPP Advisor, 11/21/2019). From April to July 2000, the GRP spent roughly \$30-240 million USD (in 2020 dollars) on military operations and devastated the local infrastructure and agriculture economy. Peace talks resumed in 2001, but they only resulted in increasing arms procurement and violence in the region (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 8).

In 2003, responding to a military siege on a Muslim village despite the ceasefire, MILF made concerned efforts to distance itself from civilian-targeted terrorism and showcase its nonviolent agenda. For instance, Salamat wrote a letter to then President Bush in which he defined the MILF as a 'national liberation organization' and urged the United States to help mediate a peace settlement to the separatist conflict, in return for expelling jihadist members (Quimpo, 2016: 70–71). In return, MILF was removed from the U.S.



foreign terrorist organizations list. Additionally, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) began to deliver much needed aid to impoverished Muslim areas and assist in the reintegration of former insurgents into civilian society (Vartavarian 2018, 144; Coronel-Ferrer 2013).

Peace processes were restarted in 2010 by President Benigno Aquino and a framework for agreement was signed in 2012. In 2014, the MILF and GRP signed the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). Military clashes in Mamasapano and Marawi in 2015 and 2017 respectively threatened to upset the progress made, but finally, in 2018, the legislature ratified into law the final version of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL). Now called the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), this concession created an expanded autonomous region in Mindanao with MILF at the helm. Figure 1 shows the increase of land (in purple) granted to



**Figure 1.** Newly created Autonomous Region (Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) (Ranada and Tomacruz 2019)

the Moro from a plebiscite that was held in February 2019. Currently the area is monitored by the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority (BTA) led by the MILF, until elections are held in May 2022 (Ranada and Tomacruz 2019). The MNLF is still in existence and in opposition to the BBL in its island strongholds of Basilian, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi as depicted in Figure 2, although severely weakened after suffering successive splinters between Misuari and its senior leadership (Hall and Hoare 2015, 92).

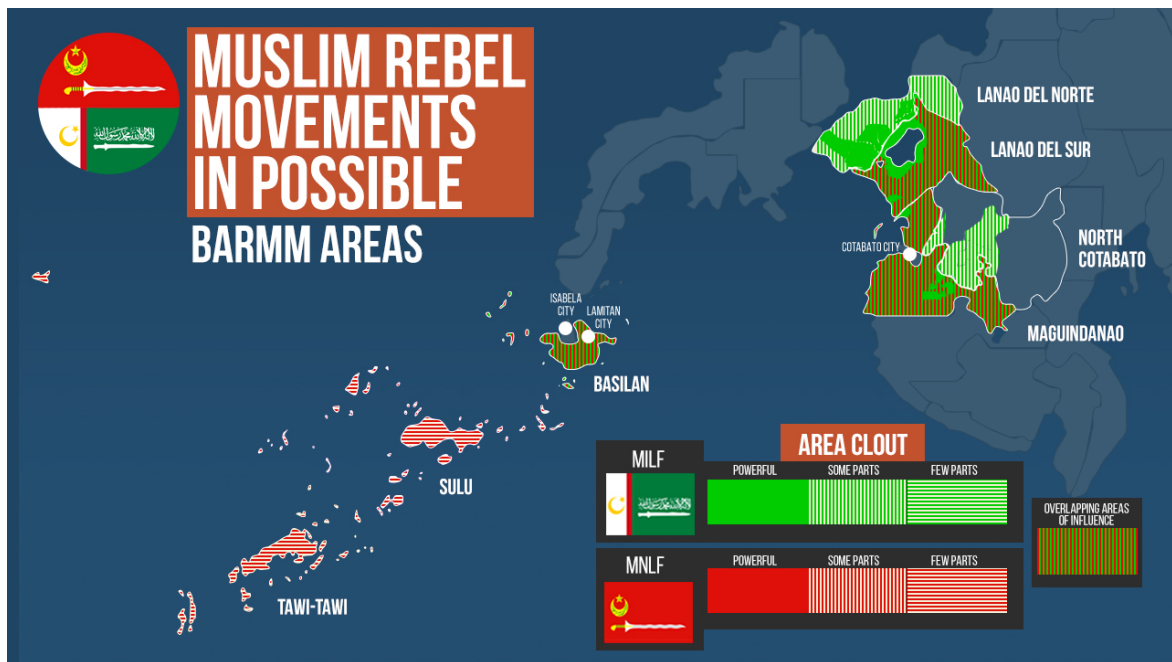
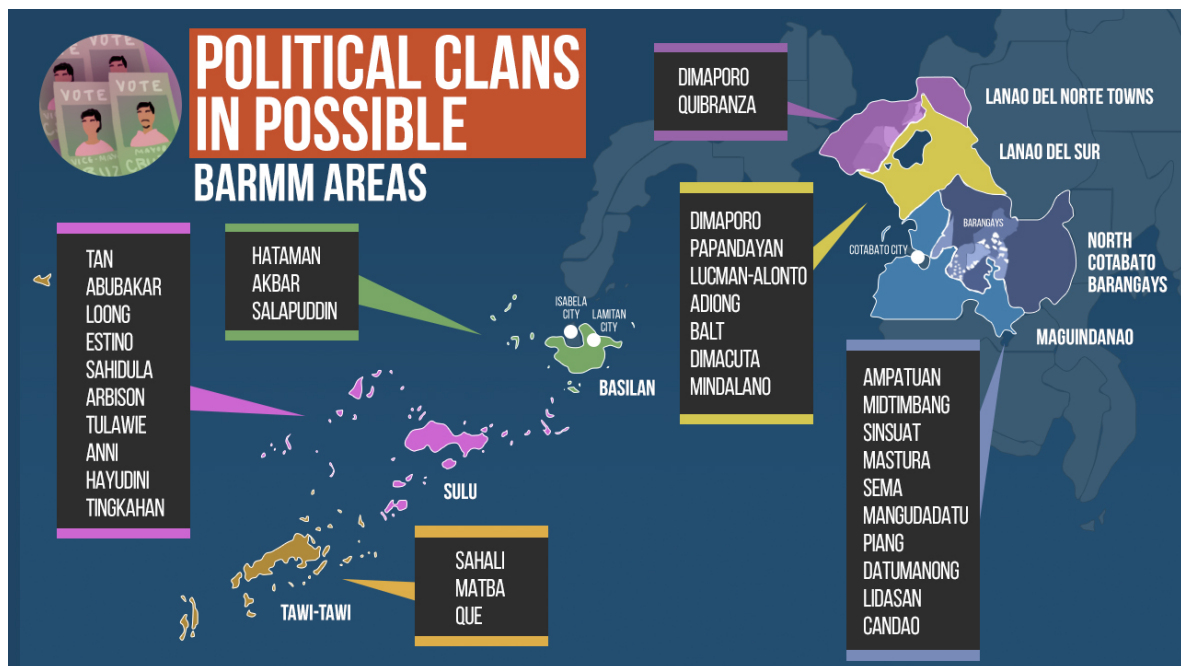


Figure 2. MNLF vs. MILF cleavages in Mindanao (Ranada and Tomacruz 2019)

The three state concessions to the Moro are generally attributed to national and international politics (c.f. the Presidencies of Fidel Ramos and Benigno Aquino, oil wealth, and the influence of the Muslim world). However, after the fall of the MNLF and its regional autonomy agreement, I argue that local interdependencies, via civilians, NGO/CSO, and the military, played an integral if not more important role in the Moro receiving their third and most substantial concession.

**Civilian**

Society in Mindanao is based on a tribal and clan structure as shown in Figure 3. The multiple strongmen and clans that have held power for centuries has led to a phenomenon called rido, or blood-feud, that refers to inter-family disputes among and between clans and tribes. For this reason, the international community, Muslim advocacy organizations, and the national government have been unable to quell much of the violence that occurs in the region. Traditional aid and development programs are unequipped to deal with the group violence that



**Figure 3.** Strongmen and political clans in Mindanao (Ranada and Tomacruz 2019)

occurs concurrently with rebellion. Despite Marcos’ attempt to dismantle this system, politics is still run through local strongmen and clan leaders who yield enormous unchecked authority (Muslim and Cagoco-Guiam 1999, 21; Parks, Colletta, Oppenheim 2013).



Nur Misuari, Chairman of the MNLF, was mostly connected to the Ramos and Estrada Presidencies and international players and not associated with any of the power clans when he became regional governor in 1996. Due to this, MNLF's agreements with the national government fell on deaf ears with local politicians and clan leaders, as Misuari spent more and more time overseas trying to secure more funding for ARMM. When rumors circulated about Misuari's uncontrolled personal spending and investments in personal properties, local officials and opportunists extorted him to get part of the inflow of development money coming to the region. Misuari lost all local credibility and the ability to represent the Moro, leading to MNLF's total loss of legitimacy and influence in 2000 (Lara 2014, 248-250).

In contrast, MILF emerged out of clan rule and nurtured local and regional alliances. These clan and kinship ties linked the MILF directly to local politicians who further legitimized their platform and used the local police to enforce their interests (Abinales 2000, 248; Hall 2007, 1). Most notably, MILF had connections with the Ampatuan clan, one of the longest-standing and most powerful clans in the region, who illegally rigged election ballots for President Gloria Arroyo in 2001, 2004, 2007 (Lara 2014, 269).

Since Nur Misuari of the MNLF underestimated the strength of strongman rule, the Ampatuan clan propped up the MILF because they respected the authority of clan leaders. These ties severely weakened after the death of MILF's leader Hashim Salamat, including when MILF Vice-chairman Ghazali Jaafar publicly blamed clan leaders for ineffective and unresponsive governance (Lara 2014, 265). By then, however, the national government took an important step in signaling that they would control clan rule. In 2009, after a massacre over electoral votes in Maguindanao that resulted in the highest number journalist deaths in history, the national government arrested senior leaders of the



Ampatuan clan. This meant that the weakened Ampatuan-MILF alliance was no longer essential for local stability (Espesor 2017, 69, 75).

MILF also aligned with local ulamas, or local religious leaders that preached Islamic unity and were an important propagation tool to unite various tribes and clans (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 53). Ulamas fostered trust between MILF and the government by helping the AFP and GRP identify youth at risk of extremism (Personal interview, 2019, October 24, Anonymous Activist). As a result, the MILF was viewed positively in most regions of Mindanao, evidenced by high trust ratings (+91 out of 100) from Social Weather Station surveys of Asia Foundation in 2011 and 2014 (Hutchcroft 2016).

Over time, the Office of the Presidential Advisor on Peace Processes (OPAPP) no longer trusted that MNLF represented the movement and switched to negotiating with MILF, who had a demonstrated ability to work among clan and religious leaders and garner civilian support. MILF was also better positioned to marginalize extremist MNLF forces and eventually, the government would negotiate with MNLF only if MILF was present (Lara 2014, 250). Finally, in 2000, the MNLF lost all credibility when they dramatically ramped up their demands from the 1996 agreement, despite their weakening position and suspicions that Misuari was playing the government (Personal interview, 2019, November 21, Anonymous former OPAPP Advisor)

The final blow to MNLF was dealt when MNLF commanders attacked Zamboanga City in order to spoil the MILF negotiations. This led to Chairman Misuari's arrest, organizational chaos, ostracization, and fractionalization. Today, only small MNLF sects exist in Mindanao in outlying islands with quickly diminishing importance and strength. MILF is the now near sole executor of the Bangsamoro Basic Law due to the government's belief



in their sincerity and ability to provide peace dividends (Personal interview, 2019, September 25, Anonymous OPAPP Advisor).

### **NGOs/CSOs**

Unlike civilian relationships, which influenced the state in its later concessions, the nationwide NGO and civil-society community influenced state concessions to the Moro from the ouster of President Marcos to today. First, NGOs and CSOs worked to crack the shell of state militarism towards the Moro resistance and advocate for a peace process, when a national consensus on a peace process was absent (Toohey 2005, 93). The cooperation of religious leaders, women leaders, civil society and a stronger drive from communities quelled the military's inherent pull towards extremism (Interview, Anonymous Activist, 10/24/19).

For instance, in a majority Catholic country, churches and religious sites are a moral and political force in the country. The National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCCP) and Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) are two influential institutions which have actively lobbied for the capabilities of Moro organizations since 1989. This included peace education, multi-party peace talks, and peace agreement monitoring in Mindanao (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 230).

Additionally, between 1989-1993, International alert, National Council of Churches, International Colloquia on Peacemaking, International Conference on Conflict Resolution in the Philippines all held nationwide peace rallies. Peace dialogues with Universities and cross-sectoral alliances, such as the Multisectoral Peace Advocates (MPSA), drew up draft autonomy agreements and held sit-ins on grounds of the legislature, joining people from the church, academe, and government (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 226-227).



Civil society also assisted the government by undertaking conflict management strategies over infractions by both the MILF and AFP. The local monitoring group, Bantay Ceasefire, drew praise from both the government and the MILF for their help in providing impartial analysis and in-depth investigations of criminal activity, including an unfounded allegation that the MILF had a camp harboring a cell of Indonesia's Jemaah Islamiyah operatives (Rood 2005, 36; Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 253). Other academics, business leaders, and church organizations created the Joint Committee on the Ceasefire of Hostilities (JCCH) which introduced local ceasefire monitoring teams to monitor both the government and MILF activity at the provincial level (Toohey 2005, 100).

Lastly, business groups such as the Makati Business Club, Philippine Business for Social Progress, and the Mindanao Business Council, lobbied legislators to pass the Bangsamoro Basic Law in order to reap benefits from the peace and secure productive investments (Hutchcroft 2016). With elites onboard, lobbying efforts towards the government became much more powerful (Lara 2014, xvi).

In addition to NGO/CSO advocacy, MILF worked with local NGOs and CSOs in Mindanao to gain support for their governance agenda. For example, NGOs funded by the European Union developed the political and nonviolent arms of the MILF by creating the Bangsamoro Justice Party and the Centrist Democratic Party. These political offshoots of MILF allowed MILF leaders to engage in parliamentary and democratic governance (Espesor 2017, 20).

NGO's also served as interlocutors between rebels, the community, and the military. For instance, the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry division of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) created a community services office to incorporate NGO requests and investigations (Hall 2007, 20). Additionally, the MILF mobilized support among Muslim students and the urban poor



through the MILF's Bangsamoro People's Consultative Assembly, which was a more organized formation of former MNLF efforts. It created newsletters, a website, and offices that were accessible to the public and allied with local officials. Furthermore, a former MILF commander involved six village leaders to settle a local dispute, which became formalized into the Civilian Volunteer Organization (CVO), a monitoring organization endorsed by the mayor. Additional response teams involving local politicians and MILF members were created in North Cotabato to arbitrate rido disputes and enforce settlements (Hall 2007, 53). Finally, the MILF and the GRP established a development arm, the Bangsamoro Development Authority (BDA) that worked with ground commanders and the Central Committee of the MILF to facilitate development projects in the region.

Though seemingly for altruistic motivations, many of these organizations allowed MILF to gain greater access to Mindanao development funds granted through civil-society organizations (Toohey 2005, 103; Espesor 2017, 80). Nevertheless, NGOs were valuable alternatives to the dysfunctional governance and abject poverty found in Mindanao's conflict zones (Espesor 2017, 81). In the end, this strategy worked as the new 2014 BARMM government gave greater access to purse strings, aspects of culture, and institutions for MILF elders, and a separate MILF police force (Personal interview, 2019, October 15, Anonymous Professor; Personal interview, 2019, October 14, Anonymous Professor; Personal interview, 2019, October 31, Anonymous Professor; Personal interview, November 21, 2019, Anonymous former OPAPP Advisor).

### ***Military***

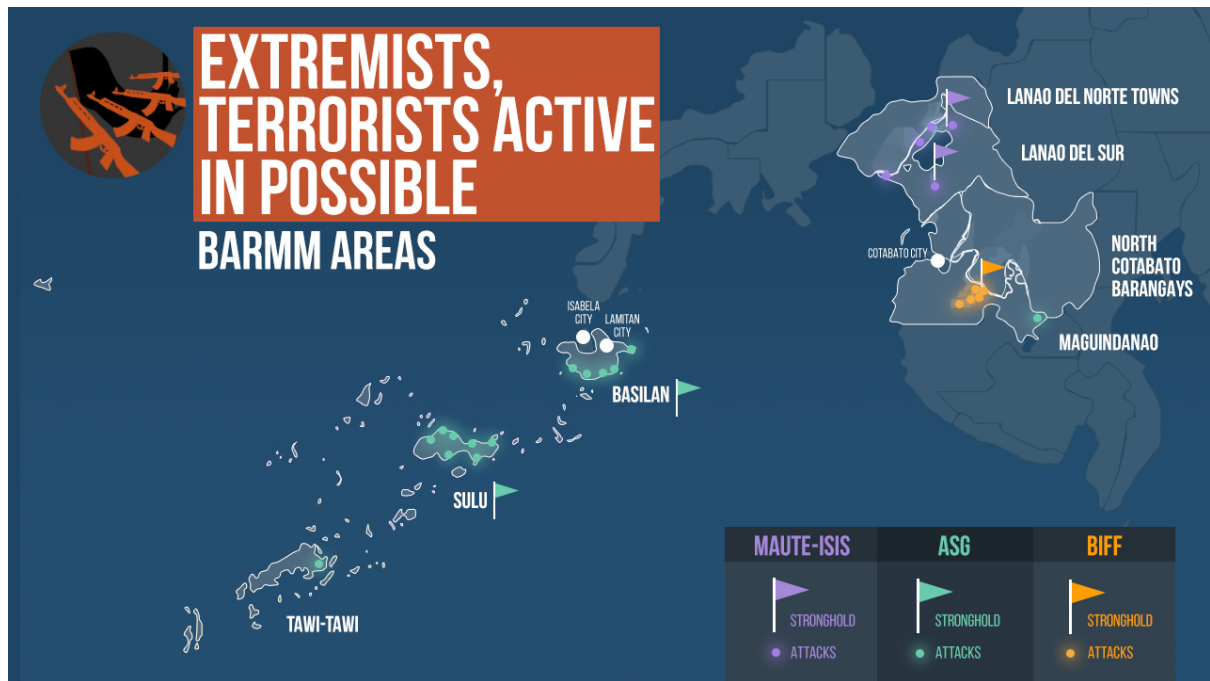
Finally, a mutually beneficial relationship between MILF and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) convinced the state to offer a concession to MILF in 2014. Prior to 2002, a relationship between these two entities could not have been imagined. MILF financed





itself through illegal weapons trade with Pakistan, Russia, and China as well as civilian kidnappings. In 2000, the military attacked a main military camp, Camp Abubakar, on the holy day of Eidl Adha during the ceasefire with the government. The military maintained that it was pursuing criminal gangs, while MILF stated that people were congregating to pray (Lopa-Perez 2008, 92). In addition, from MILF's inception to the war in 2003, the AFP and MILF accused each other of using rido disputes to carry out a civil war. (Muslim 1999, 36). The historical record also showed that when GRP attempted a relationship with the MNLF to pursue criminal gangs, it actually increased arms procurement and militarization in the region (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 265).

However, in 2002, the U.S. government gave technical and financial assistance to the GRP to eliminate lawless and extremist cells in Mindanao, such as Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Despite the existing peace agreement with the MNLF, the MNLF could not control MILF or these more radical splinter groups in the region. Therefore, when the GRP was pressured into a "search and destroy" relationship to ASG, they looked to the MILF who had intelligence and control over many of these areas (Buendia 2006, 1).



**Figure 4.** Extremist areas where joint military and rebel missions occur (Ranada and Tomacruz 2019)

In May 2002, the GRP and the MILF signed an agreement to handle the pursuit of criminal gangs. The GRP and MILF formed the Ad Hoc Joint Advisory Action Group (AHJAG) with an equal number of military and MILF representatives to capture the more extremist, radical groups hiding within MILF controlled territory or areas that MILF had access to, as shown in Figure 4. They hoped to eradicate the kidnap-for-ransom groups that targeted vacation facilities and the cross-border inflow of extremist groups from Indonesia and Malaysia. In time, this relationship succeeded in reducing the extremist threat.

For instance, after bombings at a resort in Bali in 2002, several Indonesian JI members fled to Mindanao, but were pressured to leave by the MILF. In 2004, the MILF facilitated an attack on Tahir Alonto, the leader of a criminal group, the Pentagon Gang, by securing GRP entry onto hostile territory (Rood 2005, 5). In 2005, the MILF helped the GRP enter



into Abu Sayyaf Group camps (Hall 2007, 7-8; “Killing Marwan in Mindano” 2015. 8; “Protecting the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas from Abu Sayyaf Attacks”, 2).

With each GRP and MILF operation, the comradery and ideological convergence increased. Military personnel slept in shared huts with MILF rebels, and rebels and the military would fall asleep on each other’s shoulders during long missions. The military began to warn MILF leaders if they were going to invade an area in order to clear out their people. Even small gestures supported a truce between rebels and police, such as the MILF commander returning a stolen military vehicle to the AFP (Hall 2007, 119). As small steps towards peace continued, the military also began to see the futility in a purely militant approach and shifted from body counts to peace behaviors as incentives for promotions. This paved the way for the military cabinets of successive presidential administrations to consent to the peace initiatives of departments like OPAPP. When militant cabinet members no longer obstructed the peace process, presidents saw peace with the Moro as a winnable prospect, one that could create a legacy as the president who ended the civil war (Personal interview, 2019, November 21, Anonymous former OPAPP Advisor).

In sum, the MNLF and MILF were able to receive three concessions and eventually achieve the ultimate goal of complete autonomy in the southern Philippines. Though the first two concessions were largely driven by international politics and the mediation of the Muslim world, when the MNLF agreements failed to produce lasting change in the region, the effective relationships of the MILF which covered all three domestic channels kept the movement afloat and allowed them to obtain their most significant concession. The next section will contrast the Moro rebellion with the Communist movement. Although the Communists never benefited from foreign support, they also did not



cultivate a strong domestic network and today, they are farther from realizing their goals than ever.

## Background of The Communist Movement

Like the Moro movement, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) was formed in 1969 to tackle poor governance, poverty, and inequality in the Philippines (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 21). The CPP formed from a split in its predecessor organization, the Philippine Communist Party (PKP), which was forced to choose between Chinese and Soviet alliances. Ultimately, the PKP's elite party leaders ingratiated themselves to Beijing by drawing heavily on Maoist doctrine, assuming the name CPP (Mediansky 1986, 1).

Shortly after the CPP's formation, however, China reneged on their support in order to pursue a blossoming relationship with the Government of the Philippines (GRP). CPP leaders quickly adapted and joined forces with an ethnic guerilla unit, the Huk, which had also fallen on hard times. This union formed the New People's Army (NPA), the militant arm of the movement, which would lead the charge towards an agrarian revolution. Though a separate arm, the NPA was still under strict hierarchical central control from the CPP Central Committee, as shown in the parallel administrative structure between the party and the army (Figure 5). In only a few years, the NPA built hundreds of local militia forces and guerilla units that were equal in size to a regular company of the AFP (Bernstein and Heredia 1989, 282).

Partially due to the movement's successes, President Ferdinand Marcos in 1972 declared martial law as an excuse to consolidate power, gain absolute rule in the country, and eliminate any security threats. However, Marcos' dismissal of all civilian rights only fanned the flames of conflict, as shown by the exponential growth of the NPA from a few hundred to 25,000-30,000 guerillas. By 1980, the CPP-NPA controlled over 530 villages in 60 out

of 73 provinces stretching over the east coast of the entire country, by 1986 estimates as shown in Figure 6 (Mediansky 1986, 2).

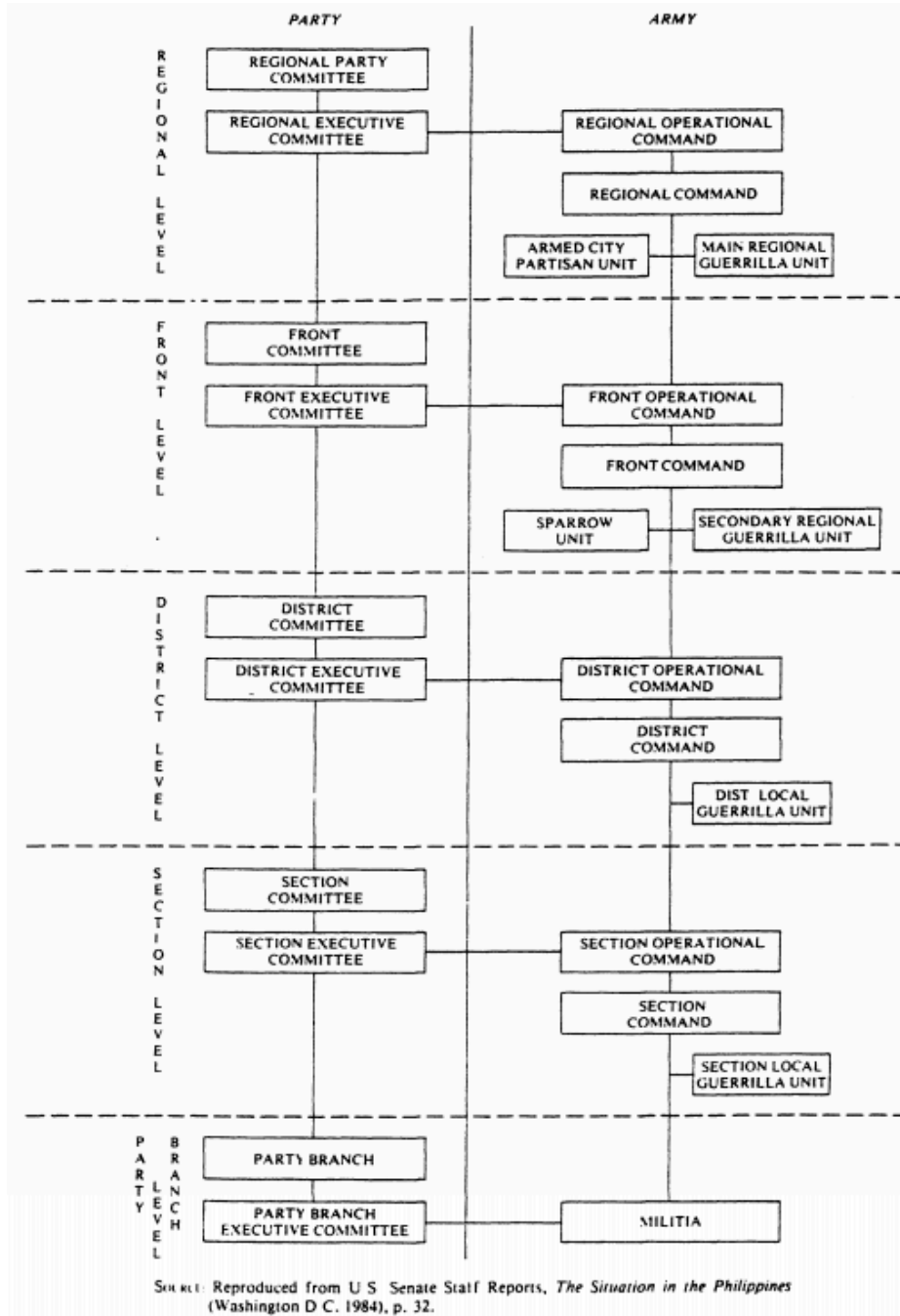


Figure 5. Command Structure of CPP-NPA (Mediansky 1986)

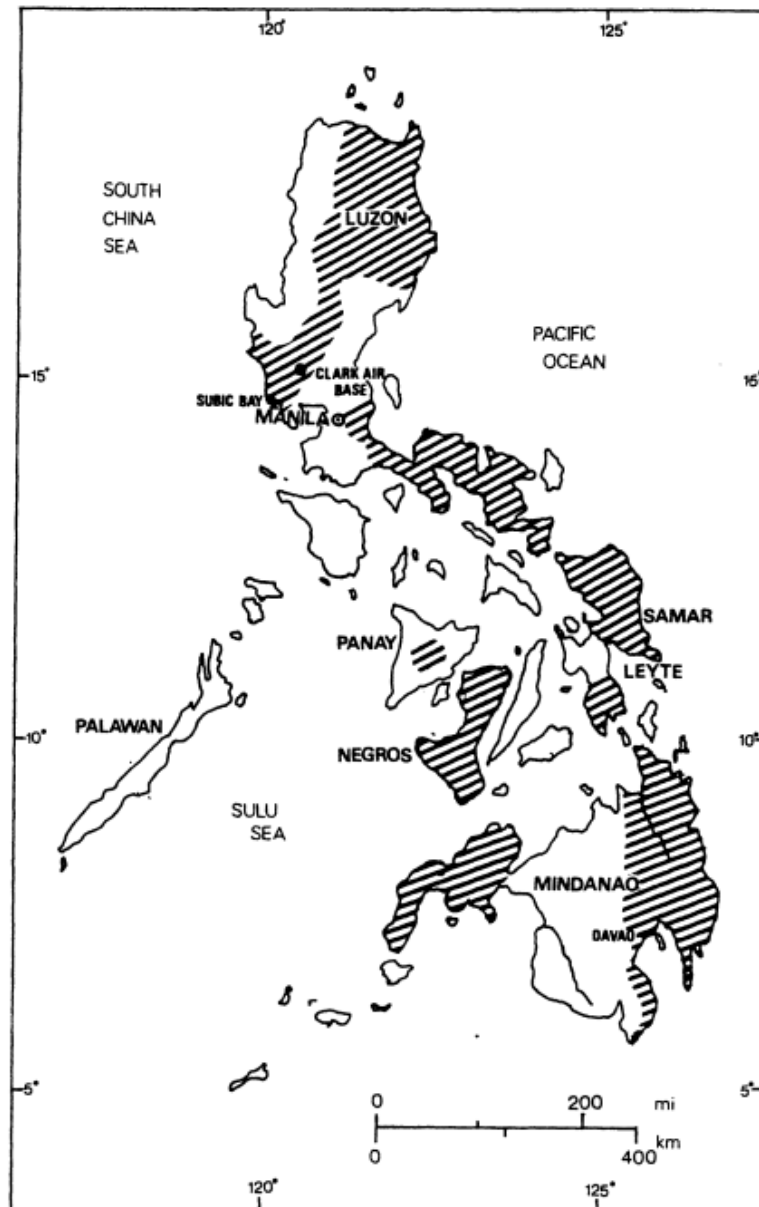


Figure 6. Presence of CPP-NPA circa 1986 (Mediansky 1986)

The CPP-NPA sought to gain territorial control, build popular support, and challenge the government in a number of rural fronts, consistent with Maoist insurgency doctrine. To do so, the CPP purchased arms from Syria and Libya, who were also supplying arms to Moro rebels, and forced “revolutionary taxes” on all civilians under control. The NPA



became infamous for its assassination squads, called “sparrow units,” that delivered vigilante justice in areas under their control. These units were designed to assassinate corrupt officials and crony capitalists, but they eventually drifted to disrupting any attempts to strengthen the local government or autonomy. For instance, they targeted businesses, demanding a hefty tax in return for not destroying equipment or murdering employees (Mediansky 1986, 7-8).

Despite this, many civilians still preferred the CPP-NPA over the violent and corrupt police and military. Inefficient government programming additionally drew people towards the social and economic programs of the CPP-NPA (Mediansky 1986, 9). To incorporate the country’s increasing call for the ouster of President Marcos and restoration of liberal democracy, the CPP created an additional political entity called the National Democratic Front (NDF), which proffered a broader platform of nationalism, anti-U.S. imperialism, and democratic socialism (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 22; Bernstein and Heredia 1989, 279-281; Santos 2010, 20). They moved NDF cadres to Europe to resist capture and funnel financial aid from European socialist groups (Bernstein and Heredia 1989, 291).

By the mid-1980s the AFP and the CPP-NPA were engaged in a full civil war, with intelligence estimates envisioning a strategic stalemate between the two by 1987. In 1986, however, President Marcos was overthrown in the civilian-led People’s Power Revolution and replaced by Corazon Aquino, the widow of the late Senator Benigno Aquino. While this signaled the passing of martial law and militancy, it did not necessarily bode well for the CPP-NPA. The People Power Revolution of 1986 paved the way for a liberal democratic order and sidelined many of the concerns of the CPP-NPA (Mediansky 1986, 14; Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 22).



However, once in power, President Aquino made attempts to make peace with the rebels. She freed political prisoners Jose Maria Sison, the first party chairman, and Bernabe Buscayno, the first CPP-NPA commander, and took the unprecedented step of agreeing to a cease-fire and peace negotiations. Despite this, Sison denied this olive branch remarking that the Aquino government was not fundamentally different from Marcos and that the armed revolutionary movement should continue. As a result, in 1986, the CPP Central Committee newsletter proudly displayed the slogan, "Oppose the US-Aquino regime!" (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 95)

Despite this, the CPP sent NDF operatives to begin discreet negotiations with government representatives, including Jesuit priest Bienvenido Nebres and Aquino's security advisors Rafael Ileto and Fr. Joaquin Bernas. The CPP preferred to work through the NDF because they represented a broader coalition of groups, even though it retained total control over the NDF. These initial talks were successful and a 60-day ceasefire was agreed upon on August 5, 1986.

However, as Phase II of the peace agreement commenced, the two parties lost all common ground. The NDF asked the Aquino government to undertake significant land reform and cut all ties with the U.S. The Aquino government refused and by February 8, 1987, the NDF withdrew from the talks and let the 60-day ceasefire lapse. The CPP-NPA returned to the armed struggle from 1987-1989, launching up to ten tactical offensives a day especially on infrastructure and development projects (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 98-99, 105). In return, the AFP launched Oplan Lambat Bitag, or "net trap," which reduced the number of CPP-NPA troops from 25,000 to 15,000 by 1991, while tens of thousands were forcibly moved from their homes (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 107; Santos 2010, 21).





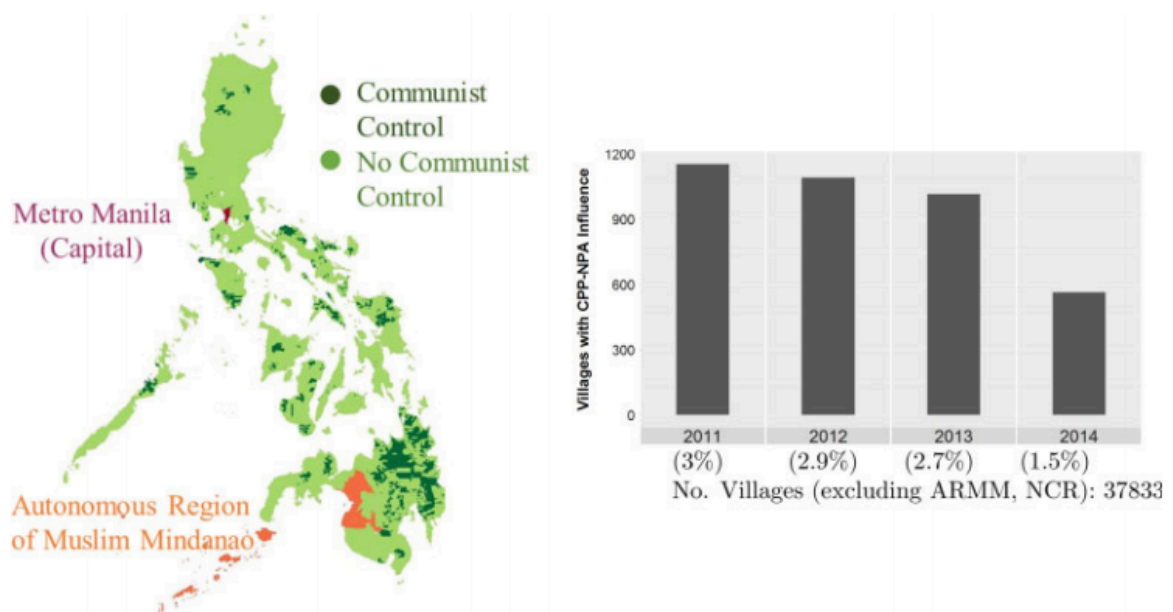
Internally, the movement struggled as well. In 1987, the NDF lost all their races for congressional offices. In 1992, leader Jose Maria Sison denounced urban-based strategies, preferring Maoist agrarian revolutionary doctrine. This caused an ugly split of the organization into two camps: 'reaffirmationist' and 'rejectionist.' Additionally, the fall of the Soviet Union, urbanization, and the civilian preference for democracy all weakened their traditional base (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 112; Santos 2010, 21; Bernstein and Heredia 1989, 291).

President Fidel Ramos initiated peace talks in 1992 with the reaffirmationist CPP-NPA but the two parties were only able to sign agreements that created the parameters for future meetings and a mutual agreement on adherence to human rights and humanitarian law. In 2002, under the US war on terrorism, CPP leader Jose Marie Sison was placed on the foreign terrorist watch list, which additionally undercut their internal and external legitimacy and hampered any hopes of reconciliation (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 19; Santos 2010, 24).

In 2004, the GRP and NDF reconvened one last time but only succeeded in recommitting to their previously agreed-upon human rights treaty facilitated by the Norwegian government (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 88). Since 2005, talks between the GRP and NDF have been suspended due to NPA's continued guerilla warfare on AFP posts. Today, talks between the NDF and GRP are only conducted through informal backchannel talks and have failed to make any progress (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 300, 27). Additionally, public support for the talks has waned as increasingly hostile rounds of negotiations are now perceived as futile.

Due to national political instability, however, both reaffirmationist and rejectionist CPP-NPA groups rebounded by the 2000s and had hybrid or full control over 5,000 villages,

most of which were marked by poverty and a lack of government presence. Figure 7 shows the regrowth of CPP-NPA controlled villages, but also a steady decline since 2011, which may reflect the movement’s increased coercion tactics and a heavy reliance on taxes (International Crisis Group 2011). President Benigno Aquino III resumed negotiations with the NDF with meetings in 2011, 2014, and 2015, even meeting with NPA leader Jose Maria Sison in the Netherlands, to no avail. However, all three of these meetings have been informal and described as “bridgebuilding and social meeting.” (Holmes 2016, 757). In addition, the AFP, OPAPP, and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DWSD) all have counterinsurgency and poverty reduction projects underway in NPA-controlled villages. President Duterte’s Executive No. 70 renewed peace plans in 2018 and NPA politicians are in President Duterte’s cabinet and the bureaucracy (Maitem 2016; Personal interview, 2019, September 25, Anonymous former OPAPP advisor).



**Figure 7.** Presence of CPP-NPA in 2020 (Rubin 2020)

However, the movement seems no closer to a state concession and persists as a marginal actor in Philippine politics (Caouette 2004, 699).



### *Civilian*

Even though dominated by elites, the CPP-NPA began as a people's revolution and is very attractive to civilians. They offered an ideology that is a simple solution to all of society's ills and protected civilians against looting, thefts, and surly government military and police. However, their idealism often did not match with ground realities. For instance, the CPP-NPA violates human rights agreements by abusing government operatives deemed, "enemies of the people." They also heavily tax civilians, although they contend that they use these profits to provide healthcare, literacy lessons, lower land rent, sanitation, protection from domestic abuse, and cultural events. Although they initially promised revolutionary land reform, which aimed to increase tenants' share in production, their coercive tactics against landlords to renegotiate land rents caused peasant organizations and NGOs to accuse the CPP-NPA of being just as exploitative as their former landlords. In 2007-2008, the CPP-NPA was linked to at least five killings of leaders of peasant organizations (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 81; Santos 2010, 46-48).

In addition, three defining moments caused the disillusionment from its members, civilians, and peace advocates. First, many accounts state that the CPP-NPA missed a major opportunity in the People Power Revolution by not participating in the protests and boycotting the 1985 snap elections called for by President Marcos. Not only was the CPP-NPA left out of power negotiations when President Corazon Aquino took power, but Aquino made a number of concessions to the right-wing members of the government, which prevented the CPP-NPA from entering into power. In retaliation, the CPP resumed insurrection against Aquino, but this only marginalized and ostracized them further. The changing demographics of the country, including increasing urbanization, higher education, and new class formations, was not consistent the movement's agrarian message (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 82, 92-96).



Second, in 1992, Jose Sison wrote what are now known as the, “fax attacks,” attacking other key leaders and calling them agents of the Philippine government for not following ‘Maoist fundamentalism’ doctrine (Collier 1995, 96). These attacks and reaffirmation to an agrarian revolution caused the organization to lose half its membership, and as a result of organizational chaos, troops began to ignore central leadership and pursue their own path. For instance, neighboring villages established local and regional conferences to convene on strategy. Some of these local conferences began their own negotiations with government and some splintered into separate rebel organizations, political parties, cooperatives, NGOs, and unions (Santos 2010, 22). Other members grew disillusioned and left the movement entirely. As a result, public trust in the CPP-NPA declined greatly (Rutten 2001, 652; Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 103).

Finally, when CPP-NPA leaders were placed on the terrorism watch list by the U.S., the E.U., Britain, Canada, and Australia in 2004, many followers abandoned any remaining hope for present or future meaningful negotiations with the GRP (Santos 2010, 24; Personal Interview, 2019, September 26, Anonymous Lt. Col AFP). Since being granted political asylum from the Netherlands in 1992, Sison has worked to develop international associations including a cadre based in the U.S., European speaking tours, and friendships with members of the El Salvadorean Farabundo Marti Liberation Front as well as Zimbabwean peace negotiators. However, these relationships have not made any demonstrable impact to their status within the Philippines (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 93, 110, 131).

### **NGOs/CSOs**

In addition to languishing civilian initiatives, the CPP-NPA also does not have a strong NGO or CSO presence. Historically, the message of the CPP-NPA resonated with many church leaders who provided logistical support for the NPA, food, arms, shelter, and



funds to the movement (Bernstein and Heredia 1989, 289). However, the illicit support for the NPA ceased in the late 1980s and transitioned to support for a peaceful solution. Instead, Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) and the protestant National Council of Churches of the Philippines (NCCP) became participants in the 1986 ceasefire agreement and served as local monitors. They took control of the clergy-driven National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA), an organization long suspected of funneling resources to the CPP-NPA. Younger peace groups and coalitions including the Multisectoral Peace Advocates (MSPA), the Coalition for Peace (CfP), and the National Peace Conference (NPC) also lobbied the government on behalf of the CPP-NPA (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 109, 133).

Additionally, in 2002, the University of the Philippines created a program for Peace, Conflict Resolution headed by the Office of the Presidential Advisor on Peace Processes (OPAPP). Named the, "All-Out Peace Group," these organizations brought together peace institutes, NGOs, and individuals concerned with the floundering negotiations. Furthermore, the Citizens' Council for Peace (CCP) was created from representatives acceptable to both GRP and rebels, including businessmen and deans of local universities, and was specifically tasked with reaching another peace agreement (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 33).

Despite these initiatives, critics argue that civil society attention on the NPA never reached a critical mass. One reason for this is that in the past 20 years, CPP-NPA troop numbers have decreased by almost three-fourths and are dispersed across the country. The CPP-NPA engaged in a number of internal purges and in the 1990s, the group faced its fatal split and a considerable number of NPA rebels voluntarily demobilized. CPP-NPA members tired of combat joined state paramilitary groups or took advantage of amnesty



and livelihood packages offered by the GRP (Verbrugge and Adam 2016, 265; Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 79; Hall 2007, 55).

Today, while the CPP-NPA accepts CSO and NGO lobbying on their behalf, they do not readily accept them into their movement or work with them on the local level. In fact, the CPP leadership criticizes CSO and NGO involvement calling it divide-and-rule tactics by the government and military. In 2006, The CPP-NPA created temporary alliances to topple the corrupt administration of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, but these were short-term and died shortly after President Arroyo left office (Santos 2010, 30).

### ***Military***

Lastly, the CPP-NPA also does not benefit from a working relationship or common ground with the military. Though the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has made strides to curb their militant agenda in recent years, they have taken minimal effort at trying to overcome a persistent and deeply entrenched anti-communist bias (Personal interview, 2019, September 19, Professor; Personal interview 2019, October 31, Professor). Given that the AFP was created in the U.S. military's image and that the majority of foreign military assistance comes from the U.S., the AFP is steeped in anti-communist ideology and even uses it as a unifying force in their institution. While estimates, even from the AFP, do not predict a total military victory over the CPP-NPA, the AFP prefers stalemate and a piecemeal approach to liberating affected communities. They accomplish this by improving civil-military relations and preventing communist re-infiltration with the use of civilian paramilitary groups such as the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 83; Hall 2007b, 243).

Even when President Aquino pursued peace negotiations in 1986, she was pressured by the military, right-wing, and sections of the U.S. government who favored a more



aggressive counterinsurgency program. The animus between the military and rebels grows with every peace talk because the AFP often becomes the target of all the blame and condemnation (Santos 2010, 25; Personal interview, 2019, November 11, former OPAPP advisor). This is due to events during the 1986 negotiations, when the AFP kidnapped CPP chair Rodolfo Salas, his wife, and his aide so that he could not participate in peace talks. Even after the ceasefire was agreed to, AFP members committed extrajudicial imprisonment of rebels and allegedly abducted and murdered labor leader Rolando Olalia (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 99-101).

The CPP-NPA also does not benefit from any foreign leverage to change the AFP's mindset. For instance, from the 1980s onward, China and the Soviet Union were passive observers of the communist presence. Vietnam and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are other entities which could break the GRP's militant attitude towards communism, but both parties maintain a posture of noninterference in internal affairs (Coronel-Ferrer 2013, 131-132). The U.S. government has been the only vocal party in agreements, and they have made their disapproval for negotiations well-known. For instance, the U.S. pressured the GRP not to grant amnesty to CPP-NPA rebels due to a 1989 murder of U.S. military attaché Col. James Rowe. As a result of this pressure, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo announced complete elimination of the communist insurgency by 2008, further inciting distrust (Hall 2007b, 228).

Finally, to date, neither party has found common ground, which could force them to work together. The CPP-NPA and the AFP aligned briefly to overthrow the corrupt government of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in 2006. Once she was removed from office, however, the AFP and CPP-NPA no longer had additional common ground. Peace talks are now routinely sabotaged by ground aggression or terrorism perpetrated by the CPP-



NPA, the AFP, or both (Santos 2010, 25-26; Personal interview, 2019, November 21, Anonymous former OPAPP advisor).

Though the CPP-NPA had some element of NGO/CSO support in the 1980s, they have little to no CSO support today, they lack independent civilian initiatives, and have no leverage against the state's militant proclivities. Combined with an ineffective foreign strategy, the CPP-NPA has gone from a valid challenge to the incumbent government to a small group with hybrid control over remote villages in the Philippines. How the government will continue to handle the villages which are at least under partial control by the CPP-NPA is unknown. The current government response is counterinsurgency with a focus on eliminating their presence altogether, despite some political rhetoric to the contrary, such as President Duterte's Executive Order No. 70.

### **How some rebels got what they wanted**

From these two cases, it is clear that local interdependencies contributed to state decisions to offer a concession to rebels. While factors such as resource wealth and the strength of foreign contacts increases the likelihood of concessions, civilian, CSO/NGO, and military relationships internally crack the shell of state militarism and build confidence in the rebels' ability to enforce peace. Table 2 summarizes the local interdependencies in each movement listed in the above sections. Foreign relationships are also summarized for comparison.



**Table 2**

*Summary of Domestic and Foreign Relationships between the Moro (MNLF and MILF and Communist (CPP-NPA-NDF)*

Channel	Moro (nationalist)		Communist	
	MNLF	MILF	CPP-NPA-NDF	
Civilian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alliances between rebels and clan/local politics</li> <li>• Participation in rebel governance structures</li> <li>• Peace zones</li> <li>• Watchdogs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early connections to local leaders (Utdog Matalam)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong early connections to local clans (i.e. Ampatuan clan)</li> <li>• Strong connections with religious leaders (ulamas)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak participation in local politics and governance, if any</li> </ul>
NGOs/CSOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion and issue advocacy</li> <li>• Lobbying local and national politicians</li> <li>• NGO-created watchdog groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support of NCCP and Catholic Bishop's Conference in the 1980s</li> <li>• Peace rallies</li> <li>• Ceasefire watchdog groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent support of NCCP and Catholic Bishop's Conference</li> <li>• Peace rallies</li> <li>• Ceasefire watchdog groups</li> <li>• Political parties</li> <li>• Local outreach efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support of NCCP and Catholic Bishop's Conference in the 1980s</li> <li>• Support of the 'All-Out Peace Group' in 2002</li> <li>• Local NGO participation (vague,</li> </ul>



Channel	Moro (nationalist)		Communist
	MNLF	MILF	CPP-NPA- NDF
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dispute arbitration</li> <li>• Bangsamoro Development Authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unspecified reports)</li> <li>• Willing to let others lobby, but not engage in projects</li> </ul>
<p>Military</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint task forces on mutually-beneficial operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of MNLF into policy and security forces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ad Hoc Joint Advisory Action Group (AHJAG)</li> <li>• Reintegration of MNLF into policy and security forces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AFP projects in NPA-controlled villages</li> <li>• Brief coalition to overthrow President GMA in 2004</li> </ul>
<p>Foreign</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial support</li> <li>• Weapons support</li> <li>• Conflict Mediation</li> <li>• Diplomatic support/pressure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization of the Islamic Conference</li> <li>• Conflict mediation through Indonesia</li> <li>• Arms trading with Syria, Libya</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach to U.S. President Bush and USAID in 2003</li> <li>• Conflict mediation by Malaysia</li> <li>• Arms sales to Pakistan, Russia, China</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arms trading with Syria, Libya</li> <li>• Cooperation with European socialist groups</li> <li>• Political amnesty in</li> </ul>



Channel	Moro (nationalist)		Communist
	MNLF	MILF	CPP-NPA- NDF
			the Netherlands • Connections with FMLF (El Salvador)
Concession • Increased autonomy	Yes	Yes	No

The importance of these channels for local interdependencies is reflected in the contrast between the Moro and Communist movement in the Philippines, particularly since 2000. Even though the Moros have support from the OIC and Malaysia, MILF cultivated linkages with local politicians, offered basic goods and services to civilians, facilitated and had active CSO support, and cooperated with the military to face a common threat. As a result, the President and Legislature of the GRP agreed to an extensive autonomy package in Mindanao.

Two main alternative hypotheses emerge from this analysis. First, since the Moros already had two concessions before MILF began negotiations with the government, how did the previous concessions pave the way for the third concession's success? I argue that MILF's early connections with local clan and religious leaders and their nonviolent governance predates their interest in negotiations for an autonomy agreement with the Government by nearly a decade. Additionally, according to a former OPAPP advisor, for the GRP to offer a concession, it must see evidence of peace dividends on the ground or a level of normalization where violence is not the default. Both MNLF and MILF had to demonstrate their capacity to control violence before the state offered concessions (Personal interview,

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2019, September 25, Anonymous former OPAPP advisor; Personal interview, 2019, October 7, Anonymous Professor).

The second alternative hypothesis asks how differences in ideology (ethnic nationalism vs. communism) drive the variation between the MILF and the CPP-NPA. In other words, although ideology does not always start conflict (Collier and Hoeffler 2004, 565; Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner 2009, 2), could it end it?

Ethnic-based conflict<sup>6</sup> theoretically offers more opportunities for the state and rebels to reach a bargain. This is because membership in an ethnic group functions as a stable but flexible information cue for political choices. For instance, if an ethnic group feels fairly and adequately represented in electoral politics or decision-making, members generally adopt peaceful contestation. In contrast, if political access is not offered to an ethnic group, group members will pursue alternative means of expression, such as rebellion (Birnie 2007, 20). Therefore, if states are willing to offer power-sharing alternatives, states and rebels can choose from a number of potential agreements and institutional pathways to incentivize peaceful politics.

Ethnic nationalist groups, or those that integrate ethnic and territorial rights, may even be amenable to concessions. This is especially true since their goal, by definition, is to be granted political autonomy (Krause 2017, 3; Cunningham 2014, 4). However, their success may be a product of movement cohesion, rather than their ideology. Movements

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<sup>6</sup> Ethnicity or membership in ethnic groups is defined by collective belonging based on common descent, history, territorial control, language, race, religion, or some combination of all of these. These characteristics are difficult if not impossible to suppress (Horowitz 1985; Varshney 2007, 277; Birnie 2007, 24). While people may possess multiple ethnic identities, ethnic coalition-building begins when actors see the benefits or promises of mobilization around a specific ethnicity (Posner 2005, 3). Social-identity theory, mobilization theory, collective action problems are all used to explain why ethnic mobilization and individual loyalty to an ethnic group occurs (Birnie 2007, 28-31).



that experience outbidding, challenges to power, spoiling and infighting are more likely to have limited success and demonstrate increasing violence towards the state, other factions, and even co-ethnics (Krause 2017, 30, 34; Cunningham, Baake, Seymour 2012, 85). Cohesive nationalist movements exhibit the highest likelihood of success and group unity has been shown to yield more explanatory leverage than leadership type, age, ideology, regime type, and movement strength (Krause 2017, 186, 190). Therefore, coopting cohesive ethnic and/or nationalist groups by offering political access early in the conflict offers a simple roadmap to diffuse ethnic-nationalist conflict (Birrir 2007, 42, 161, 198).

Alternatively, communist or leftist groups are less likely to end conflict by negotiated settlements. This is because leftist revolutions mostly occur in authoritarian systems and dysfunctional democracies unable to curtail the revolutionary threat. However, Staniland (2020) introduces the concept of 'incorporation windows,' where leftist movements in democracies choose between electoral politics and revolutionary violence. His theory suggests that when a movement such as the CPP-NPA is uninterested in electoral politics or other gestures, it will continue its revolutionary threat, regardless of incorporation windows, movement cohesion, or fragmentation (Staniland 2020, 9). This theory applies well to the CPP-NPA, which could have settled for autonomy many times when it was on the table for negotiations. Additionally, the CPP-NPA has allowed peace processes since 1986 to be derailed due to disagreements and events peripheral to the negotiations (Hall 2007b, 232).

This obstinacy may also originate from foundational works of socialist/communist ideology that shun moderation and accommodation. For example, Maoist doctrine emphasizes only two possible prospects: liberation or subjugation. In his writing, "On



Protracted War,” Chairman Tse-tung emphasizes that although quick victory is unlikely and protracted war is probable, compromise is a betrayal. He states,

*“The existence of serious weaknesses in the War of Resistance may lead to setbacks, retreats, internal splits, betrayals, temporary and partial compromises and other such reverses. Therefore, it should be realized that the war will be arduous and protracted. But we are confident that, through the efforts of our Party and the whole people, the resistance already started will sweep aside all obstacles and continue to advance and develop.”* (Tse-tung 1938, 71 footnote 7)

This article falls short of comprehensively examining the effects of communist ideology and Maoism in the CPP-NPA, but the evidence suggests that given a willing state government, ethnic and ethnic nationalist movements are more likely to receive a concession than political movements. However, ideology does not predict concessions alone. Factors such as group unity or fragmentation (Krause 2017; Cunningham 2014), willingness to be coopted into electoral politics (Staniland 2020), and local interdependencies change the posture of the state to one that is receptive to concessions, not the organization’s ideology. Rather than an alternative hypothesis, I argue that ideology influences rebels’ strategy and decisions, which shape the establishment of local interdependencies. Testing the causal mechanisms behind local interdependencies is beyond the scope of this article, but the role of ideology offers an interesting extension for research on local interdependency networks.

## Conclusion

Though rebels use violence for attention and to generate a reaction, rebels’ nonviolent agenda, particularly their local interdependencies, provide the information and



commitment to persuade the state into a concession. The empirical record suggests the significance of foreign support, but I highlight the equally important role of local interdependencies in the concession-making process. Therefore, I not only address an overlooked phenomenon, but I demonstrate how rebel behavior contributes to state decision-making. With this understanding of how rebels signal readiness for governance and peace, states can choose more committed negotiating partners, reducing the costs and frustration of unsuccessful negotiations with organizations that are not signaling compliance.

Interviews in the Philippines have also made clear that state accommodation strategy is not always based on the nature of the threat but is often ad hoc and based on the administration in power. Publicizing research on the evolving nature of rebel strategy and the importance of cross-sector collaboration can hold elected officials accountable for clearly planned and orchestrated peace processes. This can build off the existing efforts of government, NGO/CSOs, and peace advocates, as called for in the article's motivating quote.

Additional work is needed to confirm findings across context as well as locate the balance between foreign and local interdependencies. For instance, are all three domestic channels necessary for a state concession and if not, how much weight does each carry? If the CPP-NPA and the AFP are never able to ally, can civilian initiatives or CSOs/NGOs overcome this deficit? More research is needed to clarify the importance and weight of each factor across context.

Future research should also examine whether robust local interdependencies also make concessions more sustainable or durable long term. Do the signals of commitment that enable concessions translate to actual commitment and improved outcomes? Unlocking



the rebel behaviors that contribute to successful concessions will additionally enable future leaders to determine which rebels are amenable to and capable of durable peace.

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## The Voice of the Bangsamoros Amidst Challenges in the Implementation of Presidential Decree 1083

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### Introduction

Peace is the most sought after fundamental state in life given its essential part in overall-well-being. However, peace in this world is something that has eluded people for years since peace could only be attained if humans are sincere and eager to resolve conflicts (Obuekwe, 2017). Many scholars think of laws as one of the instruments to achieve peace. The need to implement these laws thereby requires that courts be avenues for their application and interpretation. Courts, in turn, must be guided by rules for effective implementation of decisions (Gubat, 1995).

A country's economic and overall societal development is dependent among others on its ability to uphold the rule of law, including the establishment and maintenance of mechanisms of justice and dispute transformation to ensure the efficient, speedy and fair application of laws (UNDP, 2004). Among Muslims, Shari'ah law is the most applicable as a set of principles derived from the words of Prophet Muhammad (Hadith), his actions (Sunnah), and the Quran. Not just a list of rules and regulations, it also states principles that guide the various aspects of life. Its judicial system is composed of the Islamic, customary, and statutory (like the case of Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan) and its practice integrates civil law and religious laws (World atlas, 2018; Billion Bibles, 2018). Brunei in Southeast Asia became the first East Asian state to adopt Shari'ah law. The nation moved towards implementing Shari'ah law into its national penal code and the



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Islamic court's role deals mainly with family law and disputes (Panda, 2013).

In the Philippines, where thirteen ethno-linguistic groups of Muslims are found, different kinds of conflict settlement have been established over the course of history (UNDP, 2004). Personal, family, and clan conflict as well as other conflicts bearing political and religious character have been recorded. Some conflicts are resolved by elders while others end in pain and can even result in disputes, especially when parties involved belong to powerful clans. Avenues of understanding have begun to be explored to accommodate the demands of Muslims, and recognition has been made by the Philippine Government for the application and enforcement of Islamic laws, including personal laws and beliefs (Pigkaulan, 2010).

The Shari'ah Courts in the Philippines were established after then President Ferdinand Marcos issued Presidential Decree (PD 1083) promulgating the Code of Muslim Personal Laws of the Philippines (CMPL) in 1977. This codification of Islamic laws in the areas of marriage, divorce, and inheritance provides for a system of Sharia courts that would operate within the larger framework of the legal system of the Philippines. In the said code, Bangsamoros are given the opportunity to have their system of laws enforced in their communities to establish sustainable peace and development. It also fulfilled Muslim aspirations to efficiently administer justice in consideration of and accordance with their "Adat" (Customary Law) (Office of Muslim Affairs, 2010).

It is quite alarming that despite the aforementioned measures, many provinces in BARMM are still experiencing rido (family feud) and other forms of disputes. The codification of Islamic law did not have the far-reaching impact that many anticipated. The CMPL has failed to provide substantive relief to Bangsamoros in need of legal remedies (Abubakar, et al, 2016).



This researcher aimed to look into the implementation of the Code of Muslim Personal Laws (PD 1083) in the province of BARMM. The study hoped to determine the relevance of CMPL in Filipino Muslim life and whether such relevance might be a determinant of its effective implementation. Furthermore, it sought to determine the structure, mechanisms and functions of the Sharia Court, as well as its impact in the community. From this study, it is hoped that a policy can be drawn which would enhance the implementation of the Muslim Personal Laws in BARMM, providing guidance for amendments should these be deemed necessary. Furthermore, it is hoped that literature may be added on the prevailing condition or status of CMPL in the Philippines.

## Methodology

The main research question of the study was: “Are the Shari’ah Courts effective in resolving conflicts on inheritance and property rights among Muslims?” To address this problem statement, the study sought to describe the effectiveness of the implementation of PD 1083 in relation to inheritance and property rights. Specifically, this study aimed to determine (1) the participants’ perception of the Shari’ah Court and (2) the issues and challenges faced by the Shari’ah Court in the implementation of PD 1083 in relation to inheritance and property rights.

This study employed an exploratory-descriptive qualitative research design to present the participants’ experiences in resolving their legal cases under the Sharia court system. Essentially, this study focused on how the respondents perceive the meaning of their experiences, as drawn primarily from their narratives, and secondarily validated from legal-documentary sources.

Qualitative research analyzes data from direct fieldwork observations, in-depth, open-ended interviews, and written documents. Qualitative researchers engage in naturalistic



inquiry, studying real-world settings inductively to generate rich narrative descriptions and construct case studies. Inductive analysis across cases yields patterns and themes, the fruit of qualitative research (Patton, 2005).

This study gathered both primary and secondary data. By means of the Key Informants Interviews (KIIs), primary data were collected and then analyzed using thematic content analysis and bracketing. The researcher relied on personal responses, revelation and narration, considering that the study employed qualitative approach.

The study used purposive sampling and snowball or referral sampling methods. Purposive sampling is also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling. Purposive samples are selected based on characteristics of a population and the objectives of the study (Crossman, 2017). Snowball or referral sampling (also called network, chain, referral, or reputational) is a method of identifying and sampling (or selecting) cases in a network. It is based on an analogy to a snowball, which begins small but becomes larger as it rolls on wet snow and picks up additional snow (Bowerman et al., 2015).

In this study, the key informants (service recipients/clients) were selected equally from among different provinces and cities that represent BARMM. There were 11 respondents, representing the five provinces of BARMM. These service recipients were selected based on the recommendation of lawyers and clerks of court. Moreover, four Shari'ah lawyers and five clerks of courts representing the five sharia courts were participants of the study. The lawyers were chosen based on experience in handling at least one case relating to inheritance and property rights while the clerks of court were selected from the five Shari'ah District Courts of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

The sample size is shown in the table below.

**Table 1**

*Distribution of Participants of the Study*

Location	Service Recipients	Shari'ah lawyers	Shari'ah clerks of court	Total
Cotabato City	3	1	1	5
Sulu	2	1	1	4
Tawi-Tawi	2		1	3
Marawi City	2	1	1	4
Basilan	2	1	1	4
	11	4	5	20

The research was conducted in the provinces of BARMM. The researcher sent a request letter to concerned personalities and authorities to conduct the key informant interview. The researcher used an interview guide to gather participant responses and data taken were analyzed by recursive readings, from which tentative commonalities were documented. These data were refined and clarified through grouping of ideas or concepts to form clusters of related terms, building toward overarching themes that were used as basis for identifying variables. The result of the interview was processed using thematic content analysis and bracketing.

This study used thematic content analysis and bracketing in analyzing the data. Thematic analysis is used to analyze classifications and present themes (patterns) that relate to the data. It illustrates the data in great detail and deals with diverse subjects via interpretations (Boyatzis1998). Thematic analysis is the most appropriate for a study that seeks to discover by means of interpretations. It allows the researcher to associate an analysis of the frequency of a theme with one of the whole content, conferring accuracy and intricacy and enhancing the research's whole meaning. Qualitative research requires understanding and collecting diverse aspects and data, and thematic analysis provides



the opportunity to better understand the potential of any issue (Marks and Yardley 2004).

## Literature Review

Shari'ah law is Islam's legal system. It is derived from the Quran, Islam's central text, and fatwas – the rulings of Islamic scholars. Sharia literally means “the clear, well-trodden path to water” (BBC, 2014). Shari'ah Law is broad, as it covers both public and private behavior and even individual beliefs. It is a set of principles derived from the words of Prophet Muhammad (Hadith), his actions (Sunnah), and the Quran. It is a list not of rules and regulations but of principles that guide the various aspects of life. Shari'ah law cannot be altered, but the interpretation (fiqh) by Islamic jurists (muftis) is given some latitude depending on the situation and the outcome. Classical Sharia system is still used in some Islamic states, though most countries have integrated Sharia law with civil or common laws (World Atlas, 2018).

Muslims throughout the world believed that Islam is not only a religion but a complete way of life as pointed out by Lombardi (2006). Islam has a well-established system of socio- economics, politics, administration, culture and religion including dispute settlement. This means both the worldly and the afterlife (Antonio, 2005). Societies and states do not prosper without peace and they become problematic in the absence of justice and its proper administration. Justice is one of the fundamental functions of a state. Quran says: Those who, if we give them power in the land, observe the prayer and pay Zakat and enjoin what is good (al-ma'ruf) and forbid what is evil (al-munkar)... (Azad, 1994). The government made an effort for cultural integration of minority peoples including the Muslims. Certainly, the prime motive was a natural wish to forge national unity in order to counter the centrifugal forces of traditional regionalism and tribalism (Gowing, 1975).



In the Philippines, the roots of the Muslim legal system and its system of justice are deeply embedded in the Islamic religion. This is particularly reinforced by the practices of conflict resolution that are characterized by traditional practices and enforced by religious and community leaders. The codification of customary laws marks the start of the formalization of the justice system and the enforcement of legal civil rights. With PD 1083, it was expected that the codification would align with indigenous and customary laws of the Muslims and the indigenous cultural communities in the autonomous region (UNDP (2004).

Over centuries, adat has become tightly interwoven with the Muslims' understanding of their religion and identity (Barra, 1994). Muslim justice is based on religion. In Muslim tradition, religious leaders play a significant role in informal dispute settlement, indicating that informal settlements particularly on cases involving family and property matters are preferred over the formal (court) processes. This way, litigants would not suffer shame with having their private problems documented in the court records (Rasak, 2008). For many tribal groups in the southern Philippines, adat supplies the primary source of law. is an expression of Islam and the Sharia (Forsyth, 2009). In addition to this scenario, conflicts are resolved elsewhere, for example, in barangay courts with local Datus or traditional leaders still exercising the role in conflict resolution. The rebel groups Moro National Liberation Front and Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Rebel Groups' controlled areas revealed that they have also established Adat their own court systems in settling disputes (Bacani, 2004).

The CMPL also provides for the use of "adat" or customs. Adat is considered as the bedrock of Islamic tradition and can vary greatly from one region to the next, taking the form of extensive codifications or simply establishing certain procedures for the administration of laws that generally proscribe community conduct and individual

behavior. Despite geographic variations, most Filipino Muslims share a strong concept on adat (Lombardi, 2006). Majority of those living in rural areas identify themselves primarily by reference to their tribe or religious subgroup. These people rely upon the traditional order and its inherent authority. Within that order, adat plays a crucial role in shaping personal and legal relationships and is seen as a vital part of the Shari'ah (Rasul, 1994). However, CMPL was made complicated because it contains some provisions that are not aligned with the adat (Mastura, 1994).

Sociological and legal issues led to the Code of Muslim Personal Laws (CMPL) through P.D. 1083, which has coexisted alongside the Family Code (E.D. 209) and the Civil Code (R.A. 386). Muslim personal law is a discrete body of law and custom, varying considerably from the more formal rules of Shari'ah which is a code of law and morality derived from the Quran and expounded in numerous classical literature (Mastura, 1994). The CMPL was introduced to resolve long-standing conflicts between Christians and Muslims in the Philippines (Bacaro, 2019). In the Philippines, new issues of the application of Islamic family law arose after the codification of the Muslim Personal law through Presidential Decree 1083 in February 1977. The promulgation of the Muslim personal law as part of the laws of the state has indeed undergone certain processes and stages designed to ensure the conformity of the code to the constitution (Ali, 2010). This codification of Islamic laws in the areas of marriage, divorce, and inheritance provided for a system of Shari'ah Courts that would operate within the larger framework of the legal system of the Philippines (Chiarella, 2012).

## Results and Discussions

Issues and challenges faced by the Shari'ah Court in the implementation of PD 1083 related to inheritance and property rights pose obstacles in achieving its desired output.



First is the practical and procedural obstacle. There still lies a silent issue on standard operating procedures in the bureaucratic system of judicial procedure of the courts. The laws are limited in jurisdiction and lawyers resort to the application of customary laws. This practice leads to confusion among implementers who apply only customary laws when there is an absence of existing laws, resulting in different interpretations on the application of laws. Consequently, the poor cannot access court services because of the lack of alternatives for entrée like the public attorney's office. The difficulty on the side of the Shari'ah lawyers is the authority of the higher court such as the Supreme Court to review and alter the decision which in fact has no in-depth understanding of the unique cultural richness of the Islamic Judicial system. According to UNDP (2004), in the formation of PD 1083, it was expected that the codification would be aligned with indigenous and customary laws of the Muslims and the indigenous cultural communities in the autonomous region. PD 1083 was also flawed in that the decision of the Shari'ah court could be reviewed and altered by the Supreme Court. For Ali (2010), the bias is that the Supreme Court does not include any Muslim justice who has knowledge of Muslim traditions and could interpret Muslim laws objectively. This condition poses a serious threat to the integrity of the CMPL as an Islamic legal system, as asserted by the following respondents:

*"Challenges confronted by the Shari'ah Court in the implementation of PD 1083 are different interpretation on the application of laws governing the Muslims"* (Shari'ah Lawyer of Jolo).

*"There are still silent issues on SOP in the bureaucratic system of judicial procedure. Courts are not excuse on the said issue"* (Shari'ah Lawyer of Marawi).



Second challenge is the limited application of customary law. The customary law is slightly recognized in the enactment of the PD1083 and the law itself has limited jurisdiction. Customary law applies only as an alternative source of laws in the absence of existing laws, causing confusion in its interpretation, and sometimes customary law is contradictory to the formal law of the land. Mastura (1994) expressed that CMPL was made complicated because there are some provisions that are not aligned with the adat. In these cases, only the fundamental principles were stated, and the implementation was bestowed on judges. Based on Muslim belief and tradition, legal complexities are not made simple by legal construction and understanding alone, for applying the law must include the proper categorization of rules of decision when laws conflict. The code states simply that when Muslim law and adat are not embodied in the code, they must be proven in evidence as a fact. This is essential to determine their validity as sources of supplementary law, as reiterated by the following respondents:

*“Customary laws are applicable only if it is not contrary to the constitution of the Philippine laws. The Laws are limited in jurisdiction, and then sometimes the court considers the application of customary laws...the customary law applies only when there is absence of existing laws, this will cause confusion on its interpretation, considering that the PD1083 is a mixed law”* (Shari’ah Lawyer of Jolo).

*“Most of the cases related to inheritance were unresolved within the level of Agama Arbitration Council. Hence, the clients withdrawn the cases, then settle it among themselves; elsewhere, some were passed to the elders or community leaders. When the case is not settled using Customary law, then the regular law shall apply. This simply means that we have given*





*an option in settling disputes base on our culture and practice.  
But the law does not allow us to go beyond those limitations”*  
(Clerk of Court of Tawi-Tawi).

Third is the omission of sources of authorities. These authorities are Islamic law, Hadith and Customary Law which are considered very important sources of authority among Muslims. The enduring importance of adat can also be seen in the approach to clan violence in rural areas of the southern Philippines. Rido has cost thousands of lives over the last century. Customary law also appeals because the parties to a dispute generally accept the procedure, respect the integrity of the mediators, and consent to be bound by the result (Bacaron, 2019). Although the CMPL provides for the use of adat in rendering decisions, its inability to recognize the decisions of local Muslim courts impedes its functional ability to include adat. Barra (1994) recognizes that there are three traditional vehicles for conflict resolution; these are adat, consensus, and the Holy Qur’an. The kali courts (local courts or tribal courts) are the pillars of the Muslim community. Their jurisdiction extends to matters of communal life, most especially conflict resolution. Despite their importance, the CMPL does not recognize the decisions of these courts. The exclusion of the kali courts from the Shari’ah court system eliminates one of the clearest avenues for adat to influence interpretations of Islamic law, as presented in the following responses:

*“Sources of authorities is the Shari’ah law. And the shari’ah law  
has three main sources: Islamic law, Hadith and Customary Law”*  
(Shari’ah Lawyer of Jolo)

*“We should understand and accept the fact that the Shari’ah  
here in the country is quite different from abroad particularly in  
the Islamic State wherein the law implemented is purely base on*



*Islamic teachings and principles. Our Shari'ah here has only limited jurisdictions. It's a mixed law. There are provisions of the Code derived from Islamic doctrine while some are not. And this should be understood by the Muslims in the country to avoid confusions and misinterpretations. Especially the Ustadzes since their concepts on Shari'ah were just base from Quran and Hadith" (Clerk of Court of Tawi-Tawi).*

Fourth is the limited knowledge of the law. Not all Filipino Muslims respect the law on inheritance and property rights and only few are aware of the provisions of the law. It is consistent with the results of the study of Pigkaulan (2010) revealing that few Muslims file cases before the Shari'ah Courts due to a lack of information regarding the procedures of the Shari'ah Courts.

*"Not all Filipino Muslims respect the law on inheritance and property rights. Only a few are aware of the provisions of the law" (Shari'ah Lawyer of Maguidanao).*

Fifth major challenge is corruption. This issue is prevalent among courts and many government agencies of the country, and the Shari'ah court is not exempted. The "lagayan" (bribery) system is a silent practice in some Shari'ah Courts. Money sometimes becomes an indicator of success in the court proceedings. Corrupt practices within the public sector hamper the clear definition and enforcement of laws. According to Rose-Ackerman (1997), widespread corruption is a symptom that the state is functioning poorly.

*"The "lagay muna" (pay first) is the obstacle within the current system. If you don't have enough money, you cannot expect for the good output of your case" (Shari'ah Lawyer of Maguidanao).*



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*“We are not excuse from the practice of Red Tape system as hindrance to possible speedy transaction of the case” (Client 6 Marawi City).*

Sixth is the lack of courts and lawyers. The main challenge in the speedy disposition of the cases is the availability of the courts and lawyers. Only a few Shari’ah lawyers practice in Shari’ah court and the low passing rate in the bar adds to this burden. In most instances, there is only one lawyer serving different courts. The worst part is the absence of the Shari’ah court in the conflict area, leaving the parties involved to opt for travel to the nearest Shari’ah court even while the latter’s capacity and authority to decide on cases is under question. Based on the report of UNDP (2004), the court is difficult to access because of its geographical location. Several geographical access issues were identified, such as the lack of Shari’ah courts in regions outside of Regions 9, 12 and ARMM; and the difficulty and cost of travel to courts based in provincial and city centers by Muslim populations dispersed in the wider far-flung areas. The southern Philippines remains a largely rural, agrarian society (NSO, 2003). The Shari’ah courts, on the other hand, are limited to urban areas. Because of geographical conditions and lack of familiarity with the CMPL, many Muslims are not able to access the services of the courts (Guerrero et al, 2007).

*“There is lack of Shari’ah lawyers practicing in Shari’ah courts”  
(Clerk of Court, Cotabato).*

*“The jurisdictional issue. There are cases sometimes brought here since there are no available or established Shari’ah courts in their respective place or locality” (Clerk of Court of Zamboanga).*



Lastly, one major challenge is the issue of trust and confidence. Many Muslims still doubt the fairness of decision of the Shari'ah court. "Palakasan" (influence) system is still prevalent in the court. The wealthy and influential individual has a higher chance of winning a case compared to less fortunate clients. Some clients prefer to settle an issue outside the court using traditional ways rather than undergo formal litigation which could be quite expensive. UNDP (2004) stated that Filipino Muslims lack confidence in the Islamic justice system, as described by the following respondents:

*"The Shari'ah in the Philippines is not in accordance with the Islamic system. Because I have witnessed Shari'ah from abroad so it is quite too far if we will compare. This is one of the problems in our Shari'ah, they just select what case or whose case shall be addressed and resolved in the court; resulting to some others resolving the case outside the court litigation"*  
(Client 2, Maguindanao).

*"The money system is the problem...until money or expenses are involve in the process and also those influential people"*  
(Client 4).

## Summary and Recommendations

The courts are efficient in resolving cases because they function according to the mandates of the laws and apply procedures prescribed and authorized by law. Also, the court is transparent and fair in proceedings. The court is efficient only in light cases such as family relations, marriage and divorce, but not in disputes related to Property and Inheritance. Seemingly, functional operations efficiency depends on the nature of the case and the personalities involved.



On the other hand, the existing approaches and processes of the court in settling cases on inheritance and property rights are fairly or moderately effective. Some people do not go to court and do not trust the capability and power of the court particularly on issues like inheritance and property, considered to be the most sensitive case. Due to the sensitivity of inheritance and property right, the judge is very cautious in its action not only to avoid rido or family feud but also for security.

Indeed, the court has the credibility and functions well according to its mandates in resolving cases, in both case proceedings and settlement strategies. It has been able to develop a legacy for the Muslim communities in restoring wholesome relationships particularly on the cases that have been amicably settled. However, the impact of the court on the community has been limited to those who have the financial capability to access the court and by the nature of the case being filed. Hence, the court is faced with obstacles in achieving its desired output, such as 1) practical and procedural obstacles, 2) limited application of customary law, 3) omission of sources of Islamic authorities, 4) the limited knowledge of Filipino Muslims on PD 1083, 5) corruption, 6) lack of courts and lawyers, and 7) the low level of trust and confidence of Filipino Muslims on the Shari'ah court.

Based on the foregoing findings and conclusions, the subsequent recommendations are offered:

1. Employ a massive Information and Education Campaign on PD 1083 among Filipino Muslims. This activity will allow the community to be informed on the salient provisions of PD 1083 as well as their basic rights and roles, and empower and encourage Muslim Filipinos to participate in judicial activities to settle conflict in the community.



2. Establish more Shari'ah Courts not only in BARMM but also in Luzon and Visayas where Muslim communities are present. This will ensure that all Muslims will have an equal opportunity to justice and access to courts services. Furthermore, it will give Muslims the chance to settle conflicts faster and promote peace and development in the community.
3. Fill up vacant positions in the courts. This will ensure efficient and effective service delivery among its clients and guarantee quality of services to recipients.
4. Extend the scope of judicial power and function of the Shari'ah court beyond the implementation of PD 1083 to other areas of judicial functions wherein the court has relevance. The inclusion of criminal cases may be considered and may reduce the role of the criminal court in the judicial process related to criminal laws. The Shari'ah lawyer may be authorized by law to notarize public documents. Lastly, the higher courts of the country should be able to alter the decision of the Shari'ah court; or, the Supreme Court can have a representative from the Muslim lawyers if the cases to be reviewed are related to Shari'ah decisions.
5. Establish a performance evaluation of the court, allowing innovations and strategic management to ensure the achievement of the target.
6. Clarify the application of customary laws in the formal judicial proceedings to avoid confusion and differing interpretations among implementers. Also, include the traditional and other forms of sources of Islamic authorities in conflict resolution to strengthen the Islamic judicial system.
7. Encourage further studies on the implementation of PD 1083 using other areas of judicial functions such as marriage and family life, as well as explore more areas to be included in the functions of the Shari'ah court, such as criminal cases.



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## An Analysis of the Influence of Facebook on Political Participation of College Students in Cebu City Based on the Cognitive and Communication Mediation Model

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### Introduction

Every year Facebook company creates something to make Facebook more beneficial for everyone online. From being exclusively for Harvard University students, it reached 2.38 billion active monthly users worldwide last year 2019. It is primarily a tool to communicate not just with family but with anyone around the world. Facebook has developed as a source of information that allows people to read and share online. Indeed, it has grown more prominent, and its scope has become more comprehensive from a simple to a sophisticated avenue for various aspects. Notably, the events in the US 2008 Election and Arab Spring in 2011 motivated many scholars to study social media and political participation relationships. However, the availability and accessibility of social media in parts of the world are limited or restrained, especially in autocratic states like China, where political activism is highly discouraged with barriers such as communication surveillance and stringent censorship by the authorities. Nonetheless, these conditions motivated Chen and Chan in 2017 to study the democratizing or counter-democratizing function of social media in China.

Chen and Chan (2017) examined the motivations of social media use with an analysis of its influence on political participation by integrating the Uses and Gratifications theory and the cognitive/communication mediation model. They claim that China's political environment is a significant factor in the extent of social media use and political participation, both online and offline, among Chinese college students.

Unlike China, there is widespread active use of social media platforms such as Facebook in the Philippines. According to the report of Ruben Licera Jr. entitled *State of Digital and Social Media in The Philippines 2018*, as of January, there were 67 million internet and social media users out of the 105.7 million population, with the highest percentage of the 23 million users belonging to the age range of 18 to 24 years,. Though it opens an opportunity for researchers to investigate its impact on the offline and online participation of Filipinos, most of the existing Philippine literature focus only on traditional political participation (e.g., Hjorth, & Arnold, 2011; Mendoza, 2013; Carthew & Winkelman, 2013; Lim et al, 2016; Salvador et al, 2017; and David, San Pascual, & Torres, 2019). Moreover, only a few were based on a theoretical framework to investigate the phenomenon.

Hence, the research done by Chen and Chan in 2017 prompted the author to ask permission to replicate their study. With their consent, this paper would be the first replication study, with the main objective of analyzing Facebook's influence on the political participation of college students in Cebu City based on the Cognitive and Communication Mediation Model developed by Chen and Chan (2017). This study is needed because modern times demand the investigation of both offline and online forms of political participation, especially among the youth who actively use Facebook. Most importantly, its analysis may help explain whether Facebook significantly affects political participation in a modern liberal state like the Philippines.

## Literature Review

### *Political Participation*

Scholars have devoted their time and effort to defining political participation. Verba, Scholzman, and Brady (1995) as cited in Hooghe (2014), defined political participation as an activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action – either



directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies. Van Deth (2001) asserts that political participation in the 1940s to 1950s mostly came from the casting of vote and campaign activities. Then, in the early 1960s it included campaigning by politicians and parties and contact between citizens and government officials (van Deth, 2001). These forms became known as 'conventional' or formal modes of participation, which continued to expand because of social developments.

On the other hand, in the early 1970s activities such as protest, rejections, signing a petition, boycott, participation in marches, and demonstrations were referred to as the 'unconventional' or informal modes of participation since these were not what the social norms dictated (Barnes & Kaase, 1979; van Deth, 2001; Pontes, Henn & Griffiths, 2018). From there, more social movements and civic engagement transpired in the early 1990s. Thus, scholars suggest that citizens' active political participation is an enabling factor that develops and strengthens democracy as a rule (Huntington, 2006; Schulz, 2005; Jacinto, 2018; Schmitter & Karl, 1991; Kruikemeier, 2014).

The nature and the development of political participation are becoming more interesting to investigate, mainly because of technology. As emphasized by a scholar, "in the new world of digital politics, e-participation offers new possibilities, such as producing webcasts and podcasts; responding to surveys; participating in web-portals, chat rooms, polls, and decision-making games; and e-petitioning and e-voting" (Hartleb , 2017, p.305), These new forms of participation are known as 'online participation,' adapted from the 'offline' definitions, which also include online political information, contacting politicians via e-mail, or petitioning online (Pontes et al, 2018).



### *Social media and political participation of the youth*

The online forms of political activism became the new trend and focus of research as social media became popular globally. In the US, Metzgar, and Maruggi (2009), claim that Barack Obama's social media popularity has contributed to his triumph in the 2008 elections. Similarly, Parikh (2012) reveals that the American youth who voted in the 2008 Presidential Elections showed their support by using Facebook and Twitter to participate in political discussions and express their views to show support and loyalty to their candidate. However, although both studies had shown the positive impact of social media use, the fact remains that Obama is personally popular and charismatic, which could be the primary factor why he gained many supporters either on an offline or online basis.

In Europe, Vaccari et al (2013) affirm the idea that the youth benefits from the use of social media as a medium to engage and interact in the realm of politics, specifically during elections. Also, Nulty, Theocharis, Popa, Parnet, and Benoir (2016) reveal that people become more active on Twitter and Facebook because of their desire to be involved in political matters, especially during the EU Parliamentary General Election in the 2014 campaign period. Effing, van Hillegersberg, and Huibers (2012) noted that it is more likely for certain people to engage in politics online if they are personally interested in politics offline. These studies imply that political interest and limited access to the internet affect offline and online political engagement.

In South Africa, Bosch (2013) discovered the high level of engagement among the young generation on Facebook and Twitter. Furthermore, it revealed that the youth consider these online platforms as essential channels for news information and space to freely associate themselves with a specific cause or advocacy such as human rights, violence against women, animal rights activism, and environmental concerns. In Nigeria, Abdu,



Mohamad, and Muda (2017) found no significant relationship between Facebook use and interaction with politicians and online youth participation. It implies that the candidates' political affiliations and interests matter in the youth's choice to interact with these candidates since the youth possess idealism for their country and countrymen. Notwithstanding, the study affirms a significant relationship between Facebook use, quality of information, political interest, and online political participation of the youth. They further argue that political interest plays a substantial role in facilitating participation in politics among the youth.

In Asia, Hong and Lin (2017) reveal that the Singaporean youth are more confident in using online news media sources because of the ease of access, less cost, and perceived safety of online social media platforms. They further claim that there is a vast opportunity offered by social media use as it can be the new online channel whereby the youth can learn more about the politicians and the issues related to public concerns. In the Philippines, Mendoza (2013) reveals that the number of Filipino registered voters who use social media to participate in online political discussion are very few. Moreover, Carthew and Winkelmann (2013) reveal that the popularity or the number of followers in the digital world does not necessarily convert into votes on the actual election day. Although the scholars note that the lack of access to the Internet or social media is a factor, an election based on familiarity or personality still explains the result since it is rooted in the Philippines' political culture (Mendoza, 2013). On the other hand, the study of Salvador, Vivar, de Vera III, Inocian, and Rosaroso (2017) focuses on Facebook's influence on electoral processes, voter's decision-making, and political choice of the people. Accordingly, the 2016 Presidential Election became more engaging and exciting with Facebook as a tool for the political campaign, which helped the candidates quickly disseminate campaign information (Salvador et al, 2017). However, voters from rural areas seldom used their accounts to share or express their views about the election

candidates.

In comparison, those who live in urban areas maximized their Facebook use by participating in the discussions online, sharing their opinions, and supporting their candidates during the election (Salvador et al, 2017). Furthermore, Salvador et al (2017) discovered that voting decisions and political activism remain personal and usually not influenced by political advertisements on Facebook. Comparing the findings of these works indicates a development in terms of active use of social media during electoral campaigns, yet voting decisions remain personal among the electorate.

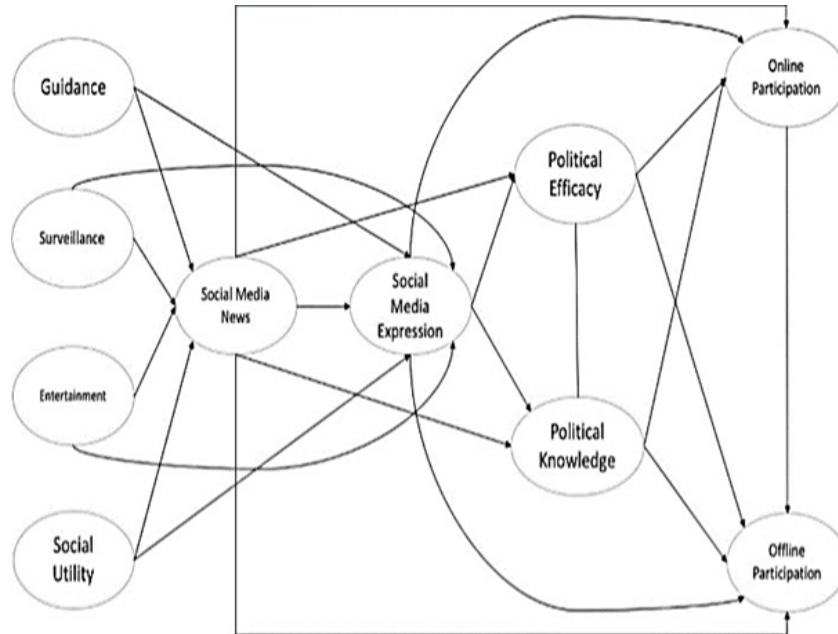
Most of these studies focus on traditional political participation forms, such as the election campaign and voting decisions. Furthermore, most of the literature reviewed did not use an analytic framework that thoroughly identified the variables which could affect both offline and online political participation of the youth using social media. Hence, this paper wants to address the gap by exploring the realm of Facebook use and political participation among college students in Cebu City using Chen and Chen's (2017) framework.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Chen & Chan (2017) conducted a study that integrated the Uses and Gratification theory (U & G theory) and cognitive/communication mediation models (O-S-R-O-R) in China. The U & G theory argues that media users consume media content to satisfy their different goals, wants, or needs (Kaye & Johnson, 2002; Whiting & Williams, 2013; Musa, Azmi, & Ismail, 2015). On the other hand, the O-S-R-O-R framework (O-orientation, S-stimuli, R-reasoning, O-outcome, R-response) was commonly used to examine the relationship between citizen's communication and participation (e.g., Cho, Shah,



McLeod, J.M., McLeod, D. M., Scholl, & Gotlieb, 2009; Jung, Kim, & de Zuniga, 2011; and Chan, 2016).



**Figure 1.** Cognitive and Communication Mediation Model (Chen & Chan, 2017)

*O – motivations, S – Social media news, R- Social media expression, O- efficacy & knowledge, R- online & offline political participation*

Chen & Chan (2017) argue that integrating both is necessary because ‘different individuals have various motivations for using media and such motivated media exposure may exhibit various effects on subsequent media use, attitudes and participation’ (Chen & Chan, 2017, p.3). Hence, they examined the role of motivations using the O-S-R-O-R model with its corresponding variables, as shown (Figure 1).

Since the Chinese government has censored their mainstream media, Chen and Chan (2017) examined potential social media influence among Chinese students. It became the medium by which they could access sensitive information related to politics, leading to discussion or deliberation. Just like Jung et al (2011) and Chan (2016), these factors

determine how social media influences political engagement, but Chen and Chan (2017) attach much premium on the importance of motivations.

Chen and Chan (2017) removed all insignificant paths with  $p > .05$  and conducted a Lagrange Multiplier test to examine whether adding direct paths from motivations to offline and online political participation would improve the model. As a result, surveillance motivation is the only factor that is significant to offline participation. Furthermore, after the revision, the model framework showed excellent fit:  $\chi^2(21) = 28.48, p = .10; CFI = .99; TLI = .98; RMSEA = .04; SRMR = .03$  (see figure 2).

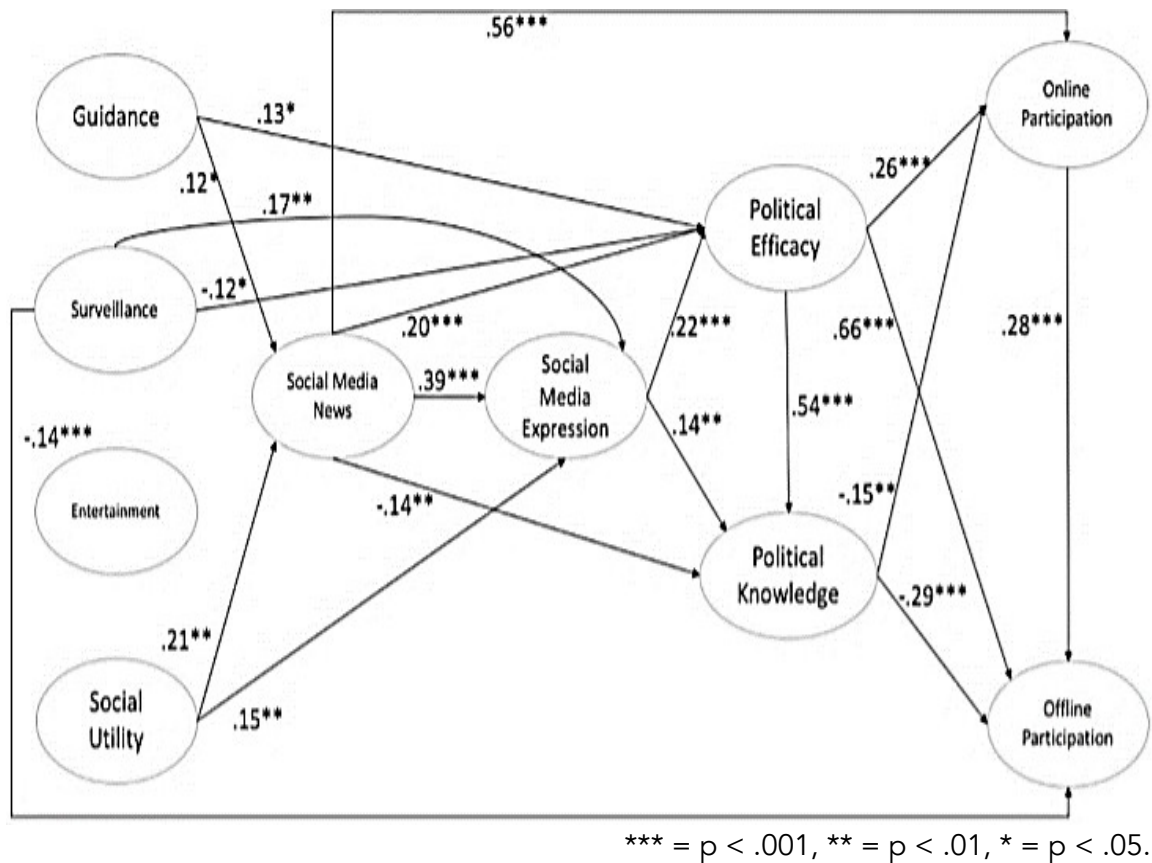


Figure 2. Final revised model (Chen & Chan, 2017)

Figure 2 shows that the four motivations have an indirect effect on participation. For instance, guidance motivations exert influence on political efficacy and then on both



online and offline participation. In terms of direct relationships, surveillance motivations have a negative but significant connection with offline political participation. Indeed the result shows the extent to which the identified factors together influence political participation through direct and indirect pathways. Hence, the study of Chen & Chan (2017) provides a robust theoretical framework to determine the answers to the specific questions of the present research in the Philippine context with the following variables.

**Motivations (first O).** Most research identified surveillance and entertainment as consistently related to media use. Chen & Chan (2017) included two more motivations: guidance (i.e., how to judge political candidates) and social utility (i.e., to socialize with people) to complete the four primary motivations for obtaining political information online among internet users according to Kaye and Johnson (2002).

**Facebook news use/consumption (S) and expression (R).** The use of social media as a primary source of relevant information is vital for political awareness among the youth (Chen & Chan, 2017). Hence, news exposure or consumption in a convenient channel such as Facebook gives room for political expression since its unique platform enables spontaneous feedback through the commenting feature. It includes mental efforts to "elaborate" and "reflect" on the received information through political expression (Cho et al, 2009).

**Political Knowledge and Political Efficacy (O).** Political knowledge refers to a person's understanding, information, and awareness about politics acquired from formal education, interpersonal discussion, and traditional news consumption (Carpini & Keeter, 1996; Kenski & Stroud, 2006). Political efficacy, specifically internal political efficacy, refers to how an individual feels that he or she could influence the political process (Chen & Chan, 2017). Political knowledge and political efficacy are considered



the outcome orientation of political communication, which also serves as the precursor of political participation (Chan, 2017; Jung et al, 2011).

**Online and Offline Participation (R).** Chen and Chan (2017) emphasized that 'offline political participation refers to the individual's engagement in collective activities related to the public interest or political appeals while online participation pays more attention to the mobilization action, that is, how they actively connect with others for political purposes (Chen and Chan, 2017, p.8).

### **Methodology**

This study pursued a quantitative methodology with a non-experimental research design using exploratory data analysis. Specifically, it used path analysis to examine the relationships between the multiple variables and a descriptive survey method to gather and describe the respondents' responses.

The University of San Carlos (USC), Cebu Normal University (CNU), and University of the Philippines- Cebu College (UP-Cebu) in Cebu City were selected as the research environment of the study primarily because the city itself has an impressive political structure and culture as a result of historical developments (Sanchez, 2017). Also, the political practices and economic activities strengthen the electoral competition and capital accumulation, making Cebuano politics dynamic throughout its history (Sanchez, 2017). Investigating the college students' participation as may be influenced by Facebook use can contribute to political dynamics and further intensify the electoral campaign or contest. Hence, the researcher secured first the permission from each university by submitting a request letter attached with a Certificate of Ethics Review, Informed Consent Form, and questionnaire for their perusal. With the positive feedback from each research environment, the researcher employed face to face recruiting



method to reduce the risk of bias and capture the target respondents of this research. The survey was delimited among students taking up Political Science and Public Administration from the three universities for five reasons. First, the perspective of these target respondents is more relevant to the researcher; hence, she could better analyze the possible results. Second, the respondents' delimitation was necessary to avoid the overwhelming data that are not significant in the study. Third, data were gathered within the time frame of the research and delays due to a vast number of populations per university were prevented. Fourth, expenses in the conduct of the study were minimized. Lastly, who Being active social Media users with ages ranging between 18-24, they are part of the electorate and thus are the best target respondents whose attitudes and beliefs can provide the needed information to attain this research goal.

Although the researcher wanted to survey all students taking the said programs, most of the graduating students were no longer required to attend the remaining school days since they took their final examination one week before the survey while others no longer needed to meet because some professors arranged for an early final exam. Some students refused to participate, and some were absent or already dropped out of school. The universities also provided only the total number of enrolled students as part of the implementation of the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Hence, the researcher found it challenging to conduct random sampling. Thus, the paper utilized convenient sampling based on who were willing to participate as respondents of the study and present during the data gathering. Though it was a non-randomized method, the 372 respondents are statistically reliable since they represent the 419 total populations, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1***Respondents Population Distribution*

University	Total Population of Political Science and Public Administration students (N)	Total Number of Respondents (n)	Percentage based on total population (n/N x 100)	Percentage distribution (n/total n x 100)
UP	79	70	89%	19%
CNU	168	156	93%	42%
USC	172	146	85%	39%
Total	419	372	88.78%	100%

This study adopted the instrument from Chen and Chan (2017), who also used the items under each variable from the literature (i.e., Kaye and Johnson, 2002; Shah et al, 2005; & Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991). Hence, the motivation variables come in the form of a Likert Scale with a 5 – point scale, ranging from "strongly agree," which is the highest scale equivalent to 5, "agree" which is equal to 4, "neither agree nor disagree" which is equivalent to 3, "disagree" which is equivalent to 2, and "strongly disagree" which is the lowest scale equal to 1.

A 5-point scale was utilized to measure the frequency of Facebook news consumption and expression with the following equivalents: "Never" being the lowest in the scale with an equivalent of 1, "Rarely" equivalent to 2, "Sometimes" equivalent to 3, "Frequently" equivalent to 4, and "Very Frequently" as the highest in the scale, equivalent to 5. For political knowledge, the respondents answered six questions. Correct answers were coded as 1 while a wrong or blank item were coded as 0; the right answers were then summed up to form a scale. Also, 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the respondents' level of agreement, ranging from 5 representing "Strongly Agree" to 1 "Strongly Disagree" for internal political efficacy. Lastly, it used a 5-point Likert scale to measure the offline political participation and online political participation of the



respondents: "Never" being the lowest with an equivalent of 1, "Rarely" equivalent to 2, "Sometimes" equivalent to 3, "Frequently" equivalent to 4 and "Very Frequently" as the highest in the scale, equivalent to 5.

### *Treatment of Data*

This paper analyzed the data through the statistical technique called a Path analysis. This technique was developed in the 1920s to help social scientists examine the hypothesized relationship between multiple variables involved in their studies (Stage, Carter, & Nora, 2015). Specifically, it is a method used to examine the causal patterns among a set of variables and conduct a series of regression analyses to analyze influences on the dependent variables within the study's theoretical model (Stage et al, 2015). Accordingly, the primary goal of path analysis is to offer an estimated degree and implication of hypothesized causal connections among sets of variables displayed using path diagrams (Stage et al, 2015). It is considered the most fitting technique since it depicts the influence of one variable on another (Spaeth, 1975), which helped the author determine the online and offline political participation of the college students as influenced by motivations, Facebook news consumption, expression, political knowledge, and efficacy. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the direct effect arises when an independent variable affects the dependent variable, while the indirect effect happens when an independent variable affects a dependent variable through a mediating variable. Hence, analyzing the relationship between the variables is necessary for the investigation to validate the study's hypothesis.

Table 2 shows the summarized result of the descriptive data of the variables and their items. Also, Cronbach's alpha shows the internal consistency and scale reliability of each variable. The moderately low score may mean that many college students are not very interested in politics.

**Table 2***Measurement of Key Variables*

Variables	Question items	M	SD	alpha
Guidance	I use Facebook ...to help me decide about important issues. ...to know more about the government officials. ...to help me know about the opinion of others. ...to gain more confidence about public issues.	3.46	0.38	0.80
Surveillance	I use Facebook ...because information is easy to obtain. ...to find specific information I am interested in. ...to keep up with political affairs. ... to improve my understanding.	3.45	0.18	0.82
Entertainment	I use Facebook ... because it is interesting ... because it is exciting. ... because it is relaxing	3.68	0.29	0.79
Social Utility	I use Facebook ...to communicate with others. ... to have something to talk about with others. ... to express my opinion.	4.05	0.59	0.55
Facebook News consumption	How often do you use Facebook ...to read news related to public issues? ...to get information from central or local government accounts?	3.26	0.13	0.78





Variables	Question items	M	SD	alpha
	...to t information from others' accounts? ...to pay attention to the progress of specific public issues or campaigns?			
Facebook use for expression	How often do you ...send messages about political campaigns? ...use Facebook to criticize government policy or action? ...use Facebook to make fun of the government policy or action? ...use Facebook to interact with the government official accounts? ...use Facebook to discuss government policy or action?	2.48	0.20	0.83
Internal Political Efficacy	I have enough ability ...to understand political matters. ...to talk about and participate in public affairs.	3.90	0.11	0.81
Political Knowledge	Who is the present President of the Philippines? Who is the present Vice-President of the Philippines? What is the law-making body of the Philippines? How many members of Senators are there in the Philippines? How frequent is the National Election in the Philippines? What branch of the government that is tasked to interpret the law?	0.88	0.12	0.50

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Variables	Question items	M	SD	alpha
Offline Political Participation	How often do you participate in ... a community or civic affairs ... a political campaign	2.57	0.38	0.70
Online Political Participation	How often do you ... actively launched/mobilized an online campaign (e.g., protest) ... participated in a collective activity online Associated with people sharing similar opinions	2.59	0.43	0.82

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**Legend:****Mean Range Interpretation**

4.20 - 5.00	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
3.40 - 4.19	<i>Agree</i>
2.60 - 3.39	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>
1.00 - 1.79	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>

**Mean Range Interpretation**

0.00 - 0.49	<i>Unknowledgeable</i>
0.50 - 1.00	<i>Knowledgeable</i>

**Results and Discussion**

The present study focuses on Facebook use and its potential influence on college students' political participation in the Philippine context. It used path analysis to examine the causal patterns among the variables and conducted a series of regression analyses to analyze influences between the variables. Consequently, Figure 3 shows the full model to eliminate all non-significant paths to depict the significant variables.

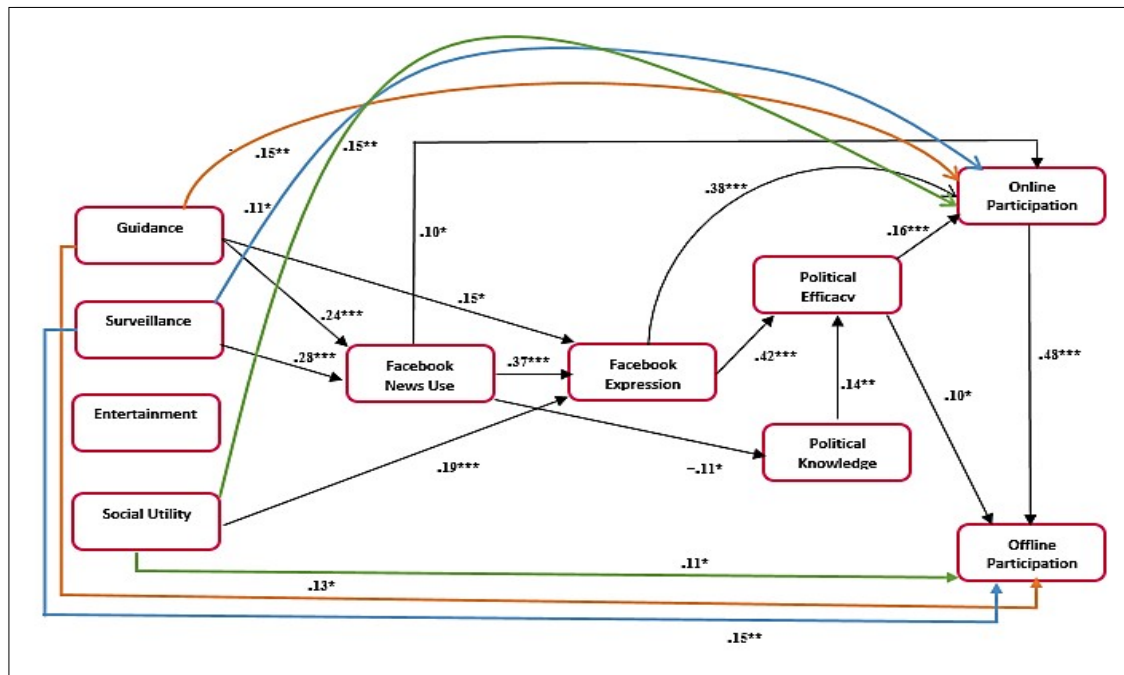


Figure 3. Path Model on the influence of Facebook use on political participation

Legend:  $p < .001$  – very highly significant \*\*\*

$p < .01$  – highly significant \*\*

$p < .05$  – significant \*

Figure 3 reveals the direct and indirect relationships between the variables. Guidance (.24) and surveillance (.28) motivations both have a very highly significant relationship to Facebook news use. This finding affirms the idea that the initial *orientation* (*first O*) or motivations affect the *stimuli* (*S*) or Facebook news use. It implies that the interest in learning more about the government, knowing others’ opinions on a political issue, and understanding political affairs motivate the respondents to access or consume news information from Facebook. Hence, similar to previous studies (e.g., Vacarri et al., 2013; Chen & Chan, 2017), the desire to be politically aware and the information-seeking of an individual can yield a positive effect on Facebook news consumption.



Further, the result shows that entertainment motivation does not predict political participation since it has no significant effect on the variables such as Facebook news consumption expression, political knowledge, and efficacy, indicating that Facebook entertainment motivations do not have a relationship with the online and offline political participation among college students, a finding similar to Chen and Chan (2017).

Moreover, the social utility motivations of the respondents had no relation to Facebook news consumption. The finding is different from Chen and Chan (2017), which revealed that Chinese college students use social media to engage in political discussion and access critical and mostly censored information under an autocratic rule in China. Instead, it implies that the more they want to talk about public issues, the more they are motivated to access information on Social media. The result suggests that the availability and accessibility of news information in several mediums do not force people to communicate and exchange ideas with others on Facebook, especially among Filipino college students.

On the mediating variables, Facebook news consumption has a very high positive relation to Facebook use for political expression (.37). It confirms previous studies (e.g., Chen and Chan, 2017; Hong et al., 2017; Abdu et al., 2017; and Pap et al., 2018), revealing that news consumption predicts political expression on social media platforms. David et al. (2019) argued that social media is a convenient and inexpensive tool that allows Filipinos to obtain current news and share their personal views, implying that the respondents' exposure and consumption of pertinent issues on Facebook can engender political expression. Hence, the persistence of reactions, opinions, and criticisms in matters involving government policymaking on Facebook are consequences of Facebook users' information-seeking motivations.



The finding also reveals that Facebook news use directly links to online political participation (.10). This result confirms that exposure to political news information on Facebook can positively influence participation in politics online. Vacarri et al. (2013) argued that providing information about political issues, offering social cues that motivate citizens to act, and reducing collective action costs can make social media conducive to greater civic engagement. Moreover, it reveals that Facebook use for political expression shows a very highly significant relationship to online political participation (.38). Thus, frequent use of Facebook to voice public concerns or dissent can yield more meaningful opportunities for participating in the online political collective campaign.

Further, Facebook news consumption has a direct but negative influence on political knowledge (-.11). The negative relationship between Facebook news consumption and political knowledge opposes Jung et al. (2011), who found a positive correlation between news media use and political knowledge. Nonetheless, the inverse effect denotes that the respondents' acquired information about government policies or national issues may have a negative impact on how they view and understand politics. Also, like Chen and Chan (2017), the result suggests that political consciousness can make a person more skeptical about the information on social media. Hence, information richness and credibility are factors to consider in using Facebook for news consumption to avoid misinformation about politics among Filipinos, especially the youth.

Interestingly, the result also reveals that no relationship exists between the respondents' use of Facebook for political expression and their political knowledge. Contrary to Chen and Chan's (2017) observation, the finding suggests that sentiments, views, and opinions about politics that the respondents post on Facebook are not necessarily related to their knowledge and understanding about the system of governance in the country. Hence, the exercise of freedom of expression or speech through Facebook may not

automatically reflect or improve political consciousness among the respondents.

Moreover, Figure 3 reveals that Facebook news consumption has an indirect positive effect on political efficacy through Facebook use for expression (.42). The finding affirms Chen and Chan (2017), which discovers that 'seeking news information and expressing opinions can engender internal political efficacy.' Additionally, the result suggests that the respondents' exposure to relevant news information and confidence to voice their ideas on Facebook positively affects their perceived capacity to understand and influence political processes. Similarly, the finding supports Chan (2016), who emphasized that 'the news media constitutes one important antecedent of political efficacy because it facilitates learning and understanding of salient political and social issues.' Hence, the confidence to affect change in politics is positively related to the richness of news media consumption and expression of informed opinion on Facebook.

Figure 3 indicates that political knowledge is positively related to political efficacy (.14), which consequently has a significant relationship to online (.16) and offline (.10) political participation. This means that the respondents' political knowledge indirectly influences their online and offline political participation through their internal political efficacy. This result is quite different from Chen & Chan (2017), which revealed that Chinese college students' political cognitions affect online and offline political participation. This nuance results from the fact that Chinese citizens' knowledge about their political system is already a factor or reason to participate in politics. On the other hand, Filipino college students' political consciousness influences their perceived capability to understand and impact political processes, consequently influencing involvement in politics, both in online and offline forms. So, political knowledge alone does not affect political engagement. This supports Jung et al (2011), who claimed that political involvement is a consequence of internal political efficacy, as predicted by political knowledge level.

The result also indicates that online political participation has a very high significant relationship to offline political involvement (.48). It confirms the previous works of Chen & Chan (2017) and Jung et al (2011), which reveal that greater online participation predicts active participation in offline activities. It suggests that involvement in collective political activities on Facebook is positively related to offline political activities. Hence, the more active respondents in online political movements tend to become more involved in offline political activities. Vigorous use of Facebook can influence political activism, both online and offline, through motivations, news consumption, political expression, and political cognition of Facebook users.

As shown in Figure 3, the path analysis revealed both direct and indirect relationships between variables. Precisely, motivations for Facebook use, such as guidance and surveillance, predict news consumption and expression. And subsequently, it affects political knowledge and efficacy, which influence both online and offline political participation. However, social utility motivation directly relates to Facebook expression, while entertainment motivation is not a significant variable in the respondents' political participation.

#### ***Direct relationships between independent and dependent variables***

Further examination reveals a direct connection between the independent (motivations) and dependent variables (online and offline political participation). As shown in Figure 3, guidance, surveillance, and social utility motivations predict political participation. Specifically, guidance motivations are positively related to online (.15) and offline political involvement (.13). This finding implies that the respondents' interest in learning more about the government system, politicians, and political affairs can motivate them to engage in politics, both offline and online. On the other hand, surveillance motivations display a significant relationship to online (.11) and offline political participation (.15). It indicates that when respondents are highly motivated to use



Facebook to seek out information on matters relevant to their political interest, they become more engaged in politics, both online and offline activities.

Social utility motivation is significantly related to online (.15) and offline political participation (.11). This result means that respondents who are motivated to use Facebook to communicate, have something to talk about and express themselves directly, affect online and offline participation in politics. However, this finding differs from Chen & Chan (2017), which revealed that surveillance directly and negatively influences offline political participation. Considering the political environment in China, the more the citizens engaged in political discussion on social media, the higher the possibility of not participating in offline activities. Chen and Chan (2017) explained that the Chinese authorities' stringent censorship and suppression result in fear among Chinese youngsters. Though they are knowledgeable about their government system, they remain pragmatic. Since they rely on the government's opportunities and resources, they tend to be very cautious in their actions to secure their future. Hence, knowing the negative consequences of political activism affect their interest in joining political rallies.

In general, Figure 3 reveals the extent and significance of the relationship between the variables. It also shows the direct and indirect relationship between the independent and dependent variables, enabling this research to analyze the total causal effect (see Table 3).



**Table 3***Summary of Influence of Motivations on Online and Offline Participation*

Motivations	Online Political Participation	Offline Political Participation
<i>Guidance</i>		
Total direct effect	0.15	0.13
Total indirect effect	0.13	0.03
via Facebook news use	0.02	
via Facebook expression	0.06	
via Facebook news use and expression	0.03	
via Facebook expression and political efficacy	0.01	
via Facebook news use, expression and political efficacy	0.006	0.004
via Facebook news use, expression and online participation		0.02
via Facebook news use and online participation		0.01
via Facebook news use, political knowledge and political efficacy		-0.0004
via Facebook news use, political knowledge, political efficacy and online participation		-0.0003
Total Causal effect	0.28	0.16
<i>Surveillance</i>		
Total direct effect	0.11	0.15
Total indirect effect	0.08	0.03
via Facebook news use	0.03	
via Facebook news use and expression	0.04	
via Facebook news use, expression and political efficacy	0.007	
via Facebook news use, political knowledge and political efficacy	-0.0007	
via Facebook news use and online participation		0.01

Motivations	Online Political Participation	Offline Political Participation
via Facebook news use, expression and online participation		0.02
via Facebook news use, expression, political efficacy and online participation		0.003
via Facebook news use, political knowledge, political efficacy and online participation		-0.0003
Total Causal effect	0.19	0.18
<i>Social utility</i>		
Total direct effect	0.15	0.11
Total indirect effect	0.08	0.04
via Facebook expression	0.07	
via Facebook expression and political efficacy	0.01	0.008
via Facebook expression and online participation		0.03
via Facebook expression, political efficacy and online participation		0.006
Total Causal effect	0.23	0.15

Table 3 summarizes the direct and indirect effects between the variables and their total causal effect. It reveals that Facebook use's guidance, surveillance, and social utility motivations significantly influence online and offline political participation through several pathways. On the other hand, entertainment motivations show no relationship to online and offline political participation, like Chen and Chan's (2017) finding. It suggests that Facebook use for entertainment does not influence respondents' engagement in politics, news consumption, political expression, and cognition.

The examination of direct effects shows that guidance, surveillance, and social utility motivations predict political participation in both aspects. In contrast, the indirect effects go through the mediating factors from the shortest to the longest path. Comparing the



direct impact, guidance and social utility motivations show a higher relation to online participation, while surveillance motivations reveal a higher direct relationship to offline participation. It implies that respondents' guidance and social utility motivations for Facebook use have a more substantial direct influence on online political participation. In contrast, their surveillance motivations for Facebook use show a more significant impact on offline political participation, further suggesting that young Filipinos' motivations to use Facebook to access salient news information and communicate or express themselves to others can positively result in joining political mobilization or other activities online. The finding is like the study of Basilisco (2015), which revealed that Filipinos' Facebook use is strongly related to seeking convenience motivations because of its technological capabilities, with features useful for communication, connecting with friends or anyone, and promoting oneself conveniently. Moreover, government officials' information and others' opinions are very much accessible via Facebook (Basilisco, 2015). Thus, the affordance and convenience of feature tools of Facebook explain the direct relationship between the respondents' guidance and social utility motivations to online political participation.

On the other hand, surveillance motivations show a higher direct impact on offline political activities. This result affirms Basilisco's (2015) findings, which showed that Filipinos' Facebook use is positively related to their motivations for seeking information that interests them. Further, David et al (2019) revealed that higher political interest among Filipino youth, such as the interest to learn about politicians or government affairs, is strongly associated with their offline engagement in politics. It indicates that seeking information is motivated by political interest, resulting in active involvement in political and civic affairs offline.



Moreover, the indirect effects of the motivations show that guidance, surveillance, and social utility are more significantly related to online political participation as mediated by news consumption, political expression, knowledge, and efficacy. The motivations to learn about public affairs, seeking out political information, and making their voice heard have a higher possibility of being active in online political movements, as a subsequent impact of Facebook news consumption, political expression, knowledge, and internal efficacy. Participating in online campaigns for public interests is highly possible because of its accessibility and availability on social media platforms such as on Facebook (Hong et al, 2011; Abdu et al, 2017; Jung et al, 2011). Basilisco et al (2015) also argued that the convenient motivations of Facebook use for communication, information, and news consumption can motivate the Filipinos to be more politically engaged online. Thus, higher online political participation is related to the convenience factor in the use of Facebook, which gratifies the need for news information and expression as mediated by political knowledge and internal efficacy level.

In terms of a total causal effect, guidance motivation has a higher positive influence on online political participation than surveillance and social utility motivations, suggesting that the respondents' online political involvement is highly influenced by guidance motivation as mediated by Facebook news consumption, political expression, knowledge, and internal political efficacy. Since Facebook has convenient features that help the respondents learn about political issues and know more about politicians' stand on policies, Facebook use shows higher direct and indirect effects on online political participation.

On the other hand, the respondents' surveillance motivation of Facebook use has a stronger positive influence on offline political participation than guidance and social utility motivations. It means that the respondents' seeking-information behavior can



profoundly influence them to get involved in political rallies, campaigns, and other activities offline as mediated by their news consumption, political expression, knowledge, and internal efficacy. The study of Jacinto (2018) also reveals that political interest, efficacy, and social networking-based political activities are significantly related to offline political participation among Filipinos. These findings affirm that Facebook user's convenience and political interest motivations are factors that influence political participation, both online and offline, among Filipinos (Basilisco, 2015).

The limitation of this paper falls mainly on the non-inclusion in the instrument of the traditional and the newer forms of political participation from previous researches (e.g., Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995; van Deth, 2000; Kruikemeier, 2014; Jung et al, 2011; Chan, 2016). Modifying and contextualizing more items under each variable could incur more significant results from the analysis. Nevertheless, the analysis shows that Facebook's influence on the political participation of college students in Cebu City are both direct and indirect pathways. As shown in Table 3, the direct effects of guidance and social utility motivations show a high relation to online participation, while surveillance motivations reveal a higher direct relationship to offline participation. On the other hand, the indirect effects of the motivations show that guidance and surveillance have a more substantial influence on online political participation, channeled mostly through news use, expression, knowledge, and efficacy. Social utility motivations primarily influence online participation through Facebook expression and then political efficacy. Thus, college students' motivations for Facebook use, news consumption, political expression, knowledge, and political efficacy are driving forces that influence them to participate in democratic processes, both online and offline.

## Conclusion

The replication of the Cognitive and Communication Mediation Model of Chen & Chan (2017) in the Philippine context enabled this paper to provide a comprehensive analysis of how Facebook influences political participation among its most active users in the country. Indeed, the significant relationships between the variables affirm the potential power of Facebook to engender political activism among Filipino youth, both online and offline forms. Hence, this study's contribution to the existing literature is the finding that the motivations of Facebook users can, directly and indirectly, influence online and offline political participation in a modern liberal country as shown in its total causal effect. Since most motivations primarily affect news use or consumption, safeguarding and promoting reliable and quality news information on Facebook must be prioritized by the company as well as the political or social institutions that guide the youth and other social media users to make informed political decisions. Future research could further examine news media content, political expression, and political knowledge by modifying the items under each variable based on other literature in the Philippines' context. Finally, motivations in the use of other social networks may be identified and further examined for their impact on Filipinos' participation in politics.

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## Suwara o mga Baē: Exploring Narratives of Empowerment Among Meranao Women in Southern Philippines

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### Introduction

In democratic societies like the Philippines, gender equality and specifically, women empowerment is among the benchmarks of social and political development. However, the notion of women empowerment in a multicultural society, as in this case Southern Philippines has remained to be contested in the context of socio-cultural realities and subjectivities in the region.

From the feminist perspective, empowerment is defined as changing the relations of power between men and women and between social classes through interventions that help shift the sources of power (including resources like land, labour and money) and, transforming the institutions and ideologies that justify and perpetuate gender inequality (Kabeer, 1994; Batliwala, 2007). What has taken its place are more instrumental discourses around growth and social harmony (Anyidoho, Akua and Manuh, 2010).

Empowerment is described as the process by which women become aware of power differentials between the sexes and are enabled to act to redress these. However, empowerment cannot be handed to women but must come from their own initiative. The concept of gender equality (and, by extension, women's empowerment) is presented both as a question of rights- political and social participation (decision-making)- and as increased power (access and control of resources). Kabeer's (1999) exemplified three interrelated dimensions of empowerment: (1) resources which are pre-conditions under which the choices are made; (2) agency or the 'power within', which also refers to the



ability of a person to define her goals and act upon them); and (3) achievements, which are the outcomes of the choices one makes (p. 438). In this study, women's source of empowerment is anchored on the nuancing of their socio-cultural, economic and political autonomy in relation to the men in their communities, their agency as a member of the society, and the resources that pave the way for their choices and the outcome of their choices. This study explores emerging narratives of empowerment among Meranao women in terms of the interrelated dimensions of agency, resources, and achievements.

The cultural nuancing of the concept of women empowerment is one of the understudied dimensions in women studies. There is limited research on gender empowerment and equal opportunity in non-Western societies (Syed 2010, p. 283). Predominant western literature tackling to examine Muslim women have a deeply embedded bias that they are oppressed or subjugated (Siann & Khalid, 1984). Meranao women, who are followers of Islam, are viewed to be oppressed as they are subject to discrimination within their own societies as well as to stereotyping (Velasco, 2018). However, to develop one single category of "Muslim women" is also misleading because of the diversity found in various Muslim cultures throughout the world today (Zubair, 2010). In the case of the Philippines, the Meranaos are among the multiethnic Muslim Bangsamoro tribes located in western Mindanao, residing around the Lake. The Meranao term for Lake is "Ranao", hence, Meranaos literally means "people of the Lake". They are among the politically dominant groups together with Tausug and Maguindanaons in the Bangsamoro Region (Velasco, 2018). Interestingly, Meranao Muslim women exist within a society shaped by the Meranao culture and the Islamic traditions and they are not homogeneous to Maguindanaoan and Tausug Muslim women.

In studying empowerment, Porter (2013) emphasized that it must be driven according to cultural contexts, in this case, the Meranao culture. She argued that the traditional and



neoliberal agenda of empowerment fails to encapsulate the “culturally relevant nuances around local understandings of the concepts and practices of empowerment” (Porter, 2013, p. 5). Further, Adjei (2015) argued that women empowerment measures and indicators should take into consideration the context and values that are within women’s environment, rather than rely on abstractions that tend to reduce and universalize all women of different societies.

Extant literature mainly depicts a western-based model of empowerment such as UNDP’s GEM (Adjei, 2015) and World Economic Forum’s Gender Gap Index. GEM, specifically, is criticized for elite bias (Klasen 2006) and euro-centric prejudices (Adjei, 2015). Further, research and analysis fail to integrate socio-cultural and religious contexts especially in non-Western societies (Syed, 2010; Adjei, 2015). Furthermore, narratives of Meranao (Muslim) women are not mainstreamed in national discourses of gender and empowerment. Neither is it mainstream in the formulation of gender and development policies and initiatives. Cornwall and Harrison (2007) argue that gender and development is mostly limited to institutions, bureaucracies, and individuals with their own agenda settings and interests and access to power. As such, feminist thought remains marginal and excluded in the mainstream agenda.

Aiming to contribute to filling a perceived lacuna, and in light of the newly formed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao and its Bangsamoro Women’s Commission, this study emerged. It seeks to answer three questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of Meranao women in relation to the exercise of their agency?
2. What are the cultural resources in the Meranao culture that support women empowerment?
3. What have been the achievements of Meranao women empowerment?



This study intends to challenge the western-centric view of empowerment. In exploring and surfacing a culturally-nuanced understanding of empowerment from the micro-level with the narratives of the lived realities of Meranao women, it hopes to contribute to the formulation of gender-fair policies, programs, and initiatives that are centered on experiences of women in the grassroots.

### **Revisiting the Concept of Women Empowerment**

Empowerment, as conceived in this study, is multidimensional and socio-culturally nuanced as defined from the vista of Meranao women, belonging to one of the thirteen ethnolinguistic groups of the Bangsamoro in Southern Philippines and among the politically dominant ethnic groups. Hence, the following relevant studies and literature will further the analyses of this study.

In his basic and instructive definition, Kabeer (1994) sees empowerment as the “the expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them” (Malhotra et. al 2002:6). Exemplifying further this definition, Malhotra et al. (2002) identify two important elements of empowerment that distinguish it from the general concept of “power”: the idea of process or change from a condition of disempowerment and the concept of human agency, which implies choices made from the vantage point of real alternatives without severe consequences. Women’s empowerment, then, is conceptualized as an increase in agency over time.

Several researches recognize that women are constantly negotiating and transforming their identities based on the recognition that their lives are defined within the bounds of gender relations and gender roles (Brah, 1993; Dryer, 2000; Knott & Khokker, 1993). In fact, several studies have challenged the dominant view of Muslim women which depicts them as oppressed subjects and have demonstrated their agency within the embedded



structures and social relations (Rinaldo, 2014; Okuyan, 2018). For instance, the studies of Wagner, Sen, Permanadeli, and Howarth (2012) deconstruct the concept of the veil -often misconstrued as a symbol of oppression and patriarchy in the non-Muslim countries of the West - as a way for Muslim women to affirm their identity. According to the participants, instead of the negative connotations of the Western literature about the act of veiling, it has become a personal and political response, a functional garment for convenience (lifestyle), or as a mark of identity and resistance (Wagner, Sen, Permanadeli, and Howarth 2012). Similarly, the study of Utomo, Reimondos, Mcdonald, Iwu, and Hull (2018) in Indonesia noted a shift in the perception of veiling from an obligatory and marginal practice to being part of the mainstream consumer culture.

On the other hand, Dryer (2000) highlighted how British South Asian Muslim women often reconcile the establishment of their own identities that often clash with familial expectations of femininity and the Westernized environment of UK. As such, these Muslim women draw upon their own alternative “hybrid” identities that transcend the binary oppositions (Dryer, 2000). An example of how they reconstruct their gendered identities is in the way they dress. While their dress is a determinant of their parents to check their religious and cultural “purity”, it also acts as a mechanism to redefine themselves as “typical Muslim girls” (Dryer, 2000). They argued that it is possible to wear different kinds of clothes as long as they conform to the Islamic strictures of the appropriate dress code; thus, long trousers and skirts are appropriate forms of Islamic dress since these cover their skin (Dryer, 2000). In addition, the act of choosing and wearing the clothes that resist dualistic meanings allows them to recreate their own gendered identity “which challenged parental assumptions about appropriate attire but could also confound the expectations of others” (Dryer, 2000, p. 481). This fashion style also challenges the notions of what is “Asian” and “British” – creating a hybrid that is both “Western” and



“Islamic” (Dryer, 2000), something that is also observable in the context of Muslim Filipino women in the Southern Philippines.

Giving women a voice in the decision-making sphere is one of the crucial measures of women development and empowerment (Al Maaitah, Olaimat, & Gharaeibeh, 2011). In fact, the participation of women in politics was one of the central focus of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and continually reaffirmed by the Sustainable Development Goals (UN Women, 2018). Still, women are historically undermined in the political sphere as opposed to men (Pyeatt & Yanus, 2017), as politics is considered to be part of the “public sphere” where men continually dominate.

Pyeatt and Yanus (2017) noted a distinct paradox pertaining to the vast literature of gender gaps when it comes to women’s interest, engagement, and participation in politics. It is revealed that women are more likely to participate and engage in “community-centered activism” (i.e., voting and civic engagement) than their male counterparts, where the latter is more recognized to be involved in the malestream dominated public sphere of politics. (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Beauregard, 2013; Lawless, 2004).

There are several reasons that explain women’s inability to fully participate in the realm of politics. In the United States, Lawless (2004) noted gender stereotypes contributed to women’s little participation in politics. Accordingly, the decrease of citizen support for a woman nominee in a presidential campaign is due to the belief that men are more likely to embody leadership qualities, competent in legislating policies and superior at addressing issues of national security (Lawless, 2004). In addition, Crowder-Meyer and Lauderdale (2014) observed that women are less preferred candidates in the US party nominations. Similarly, in Asian countries, particularly in East and Southeast Asia,



women's representation in political leaderships in both the local and national level lagged behind their male counterparts despite the recent gains on their socio-economic status and political rights (Choi, 2018). In the Arab region, Al Subhi and Smith (2017) noted that the rates of women's legislative representations are second lowest in the world. Indeed, the lack of women's participation in politics is often attributed to patronage, gender stereotypes, lack of trust, media representation, among others (Choi, 2018; Al Subhi & Smith, 2017).

Finally, it is important to highlight that women's capacity to be and to do is mediated by their socio-economic, cultural and political contexts as shown in this study. Further, it is important to note that understanding women empowerment must involve delving into the resources and established achievements that enhance the agency or the ability of women to lead their lives based on the dictates of their desires and to achieve the valued ways of 'being and doing' (Adjie, 2020). Central to the empowerment discourse is agency - or the ability to control and make decisions.

## Methodology

The research focused on surfacing the lived realities of Meranao women in the exercise of their agency, the resources available that strengthen their ability to make choices, and the achievements/outcomes of their choices. This study utilized primary and secondary data. Primary data were gathered from the semi-structured interviews which were employed through individual interviews of Meranao women. Personal interviews were conducted with Meranao women in business, in educational institutions, in revolutionary groups, in NGOs, in government offices, in free-lancing work, and those displaced by the Marawi Siege. The respondents of the study were Meranao women and the interviews reached the Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, and Misamis Oriental provinces. A total of



twelve (12) interviews were conducted from the period of November 2019 to January 2020.

**Table 1**

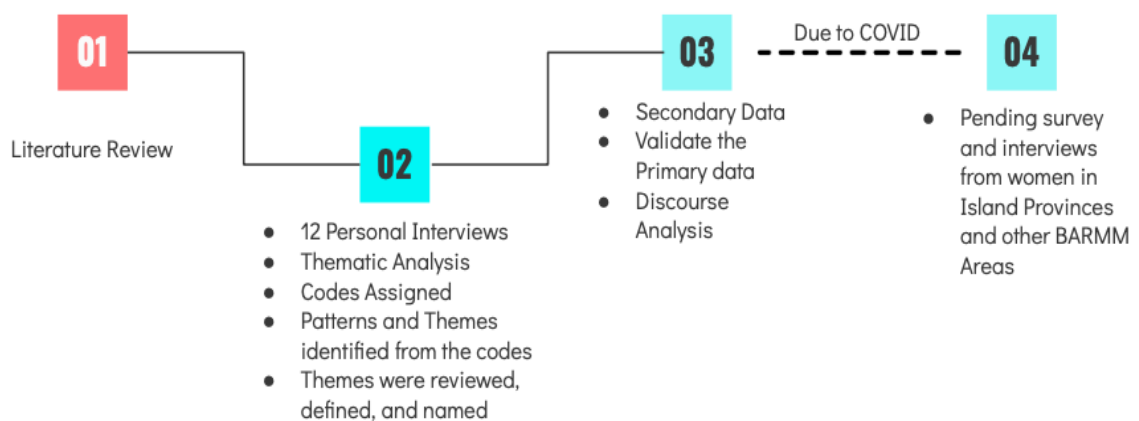
*Profile of the Respondents*

Respondent	Age	Status	Employment details	Residence
Respondent A	27	Single	Free Lancer	Marawi, LDS
Respondent B	28	Married	NGO worker	Marawi, LDS
Respondent C	23	Single	Law Student	Iligan, LDN
Respondent D	35	Single	Teacher	Iligan, LDN
Respondent E	34	Single	Administrative Officer V	Balo-i, LDN
Respondent F	34	Married	Administrative Officer III	Marawi, LDS
Respondent G	35	Single	Unemployed	Marawi (IDP), LDS
Respondent H	20	Single	Call center agent	Marawi (IDP), LDS
Respondent I	65	Married	Full-time Housewife	Marawi
Respondent J	34	Married	Real Estate Broker	Cagayan de Oro, Mis. Or.
Respondent K	24	Single	Teacher	Iligan, LDN
Respondent L	36	Single	Teacher	Iligan, LDN

Primary data were analyzed using thematic analysis. After transcription and in-depth familiarization, codes were then assigned to the interview extracts. Codes were examined to identify patterns and themes. Themes were then reviewed by re-validating them to the primary data.

For further validation of the initial analysis from the interviews, secondary data were also utilized. These included published and unpublished materials such as books, journals, and written speeches of women relevant to the nuanced understanding of empowerment, specifically culturally-rooted embodiment of women empowerment. Discourse analysis was used as a method of analyzing the secondary data. The researchers used thematic analysis to look at the factors in relation to the exercise of the interlinking concepts of agency, resources and achievements, in the context of the socio-cultural notion of empowerment among Meranao women.

Figure 1 below illustrates the process of data analysis:



**Figure 1.** Data Analysis

In Phase 4 of the research, there were planned interviews to be conducted by March 2020 and a survey that would triangulate the data from the interviews but because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions it imposed on the conduct of in-person interviews and travelling, the research is yet to be completed.

The study is primarily focused on the Meranao women in Mindanao and not the broader category of Muslim women in Mindanao which encompasses other ethnic groups such as



the Tausug and Maguindanaoan, to name a few. Also, the study does not seek to suggest indicators and measures for empowerment but merely explores women empowerment at a micro-level, focusing on their agency, resources, and achievements.

A physical limitation of this study is that it failed to increase the data from Meranao women outside of the Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte areas. This is due to the COVID-19 situation in the Philippines which essentially posed difficulties in the data gathering process.

## Findings and Discussion

### *On Being an Empowered Meranao Woman*

It is a mark of an empowered Meranao woman to be able to exercise her agency in acquiring a professional degree, managing her own source of income, and having access to health care, all within the bounds of Meranao culture. How the Meranao women negotiate their space and exercise agency in different aspects from the home to the community, is presented in the discussions below.

#### **1. Education is a status symbol.**

A professional degree/education is seen as a social status symbol in Meranao culture. It is a source of pride. For Meranao people, education is categorized into formal education which includes education in Arabic, education in faith, about Islam, about religion; and education on how one takes care of the family and the children (Personal Interviews, and October 13, 2019, Tibanga, Iligan City). Education is considered an indicator of empowerment as it opens the door for women to have a voice in family decisions (Personal Interviews, October 15, 2019). The educational attainment of a woman is also considered a source of pride of the entire clan; it can be said that a good quality of education is valued by the Meranao society. While women do not face barriers in



accessing education, there is a limiting force of cultural practices among Meranao families, wherein the family choice prevails over the personal choice in terms of the degree to pursue in college. Another social pressure is how educated Meranao women should still act in accordance to the “*taritib ago igma*” (customary laws of the community) such that they have to consider marrying at a young age so that they would have a guardian in their pursuit of knowledge (Personal interview, October 15, 2019, Balo-i, Lanao del Norte). The safety and security of a woman is a primary condition in negotiating with Meranao women’s choices pertaining to education.

Traditionally, Meranaos are treated like a *pearl in a shell*, hence they are expected to be protected and secured in the private confines of the household and more so in the public sphere, such as the educational institutions. Interestingly, one key informant emphasized that she is able to exercise her agency, by which she meant the freedom to choose her degree program to pursue in college and the educational institution because her family trusts her ability to think for herself and her family. The educational decisions of a Meranao woman, therefore, is impinged on the decision of her family, based on the potential risks and harm in the woman’s environment.

## **2. Meranao women are economically empowered.**

In the area of economic empowerment, several indicators were explored including participation of women in household budgeting and spending, employment, and enjoyment of one’s own salary. In an inquiry regarding women’s participation in household budgeting and spending, it was revealed that Meranao women in the household take charge of household budgeting and spending. According to one of the interviewees, economic empowerment is influenced by the Islamic faith that women should be given financial autonomy because the men are expected to provide for the



family. There is now a trend in women working because many are now the breadwinners and because they have to work to provide for the needs of their respective families.

Meranao women are also entrepreneurs who take pride in the Islamic value of financial autonomy given to Muslim women, even when they are already married, such that the properties of women do not become conjugal property even after they get married. Meranao women are free to work and to enjoy the fruits of their labor. They can inherit property and are entrusted to manage businesses and inherit properties. In this sense, economic power can be exercised by Meranao women as reinforced by their religion.

Kabeer (1997) studied power relations of urban women working in garment factories, wherein there is a category of women who entered the factory in order to earn money for their own expenses; and since they are the daughter of the family, they are not obliged to contribute to the financial need of the household; thus, they keep their money as their own. Moreover, it is considered as a 'patriarchal bargain' for women to rely on men in terms of protection and overall provision since the culture still appoints men as guardians and main providers of the household vis-a-vis the women (Kabeer, 1997).

### **3. Motherhood is a resource for empowerment.**

There is kin pressure for Meranao women to be married and have children. Narratives of domestic role assigned to women have been one of the common narratives from the interviews. Housekeeping is considered to be one of the major responsibilities of the women in the family while motherhood is considered to be an empowering role as it is a mark of economic and emotional security (Personal Interviews, September 11, 2019, Cagayan de Oro City). An elderly Meranao woman said that child-rearing is one of the most important roles of a Meranao woman, which should include the ability to shape the values of her children such that she is the first teacher in both secular and religious



education; i.e., “western-based education and madrasah”, by which is meant a balanced kind of education, for both Meranao girls and boys. A highly educated Meranao woman intimated that “motherhood” is a source of empowerment as it is through this role that Meranao women can assert their role in shaping the mindset of their children, who will in turn be the future leaders of the society.

These two striking narratives have revealed that motherhood is seen as intrinsic to the social notion of women empowerment, which is collective in nature as against the individualist-centric notion of feminism in the west.

#### **4. Chastity is an achievement in taking control of one’s body.**

Sexual agency is defined as “the ability to act according to one’s will in a sexual realm” (Crown and Roberts, 2007, p. 386) which is based on a Western neoliberal approach that postulates that a woman is a free agent; thus, she should make sexual choices as a manifestation of her own agency (Abboud, Sweet, & Sommers, 2019). However, the Western concept of agency involving women's sexuality is argued by many scholars because it often ignores nuances such as culture and tradition. (Butler, 2004; Gill, 2007; Mahmood, 2005). On freedom over their body and sexuality, Meranao women are free to do whatever they see fit with their body for as long as they remain within the confines of culture and religion. A respondent emphasized that she has control over her own body.

On the cultural value of chastity/virginity, Meranao women view virginity as a personal form of security, as well as a cultural norm to be reinforced. Common among the narratives, the women interviewees have expressed that virginity is a much-revered value for Meranao women, as a matter of moral obligation in the Islamic Faith. It is taught in Islam that a woman must keep herself chaste, and chastity and purity before marriage is a non-negotiable Islamic obligation (Personal Interview, September 9, 2019, Marawi City).

Virginity in Arab and non-Arab Muslim countries is considered to be a sign of purity that represents the honor of a woman and her family (El-Saadawi, 1991; Abder-Rahman, 2015). In fact, Eid (2007) argued that female premarital virginity is a distinguishing feature of the Arab and non-Arab Muslim countries different from other cultures. However, despite the fact that Islam specifies that both men and women shall remain virgins before marriage (Musso, Cherabi, & Fanget, 2002), virginity has become a female-specific obligation by which the majority of women should abide (Eid, 2007).

Just like the majority population in Philippine society, discourse on sexuality and gender identification remains to be considered as a “taboo” among Meranao women. They mentioned the religious sanction of the Islamic faith as regard the need to safeguard the sanctity of male and female sexuality; however, it is still a very sensitive topic which the Muslim communities, and particularly Meranao society is confronted with (Personal interview, October 15, 2019, Tibanga, Iligan City).

##### **5. *Hijab* is a political statement: covering is a form of empowerment.**

One of the striking statements among the key informant interview is the statement, “*My hijab, my human right*” (Personal Interviews, October 13, 2019, Tibanga, Iligan City), addressing the question of the limitations set forth by Islam on her ability to do and to become. For Meranao women who wear the *hijab* or veil (not all Meranao Muslim women wear the veil), the veil is a symbol of obedience to Divine authority, and a reminder to be modest at times, in all circumstances. She added, “*Moderation is a form of empowerment*” in Islam (Ibid). This makes for the contested notion of empowerment in the discourse of gender and development.

Studies of Wagner, Sen, Permanadeli, and Howarth (2012) deconstruct the concept of the veil,—often misconstrued as a symbol of oppression and patriarchy in the non-Muslim



countries of the West, as a way for Muslim women to affirm their identity. According to the participants, contrary to negative connotations of Western literature, the veil has become a personal and political response, a functional garment for convenience, or a mark of identity and resistance (Wagner, Sen, Permanadeli, and Howarth 2012). In the predominantly Muslim-dominated country of Indonesia, the perception of veiling has shifted from an obligatory and marginal practice to being a part of the mainstream culture (Utomo, Reimondos, Mcdonald, Iwu, and Hull, 2018). This has been the case of the controversial “veiling” among Muslim women, particularly among Meranao women.

In feminist literature, one of the controversial figures in terms of cultural difference is the characterization of the veiled, Muslim woman (Bilge, 2010; Hamid, 2006; Kirmani, 2009; Wagner, Sen, Permanadeli, and Howarth 2012). The veil is often described as a signifier of women’s oppression in Islam, a fundamentalist peril, and among others (Bilge, 2010). According to Bilge (2010), a paradox – seen as a “victim of oppressive patriarchal culture/religion and male kin” (p. 10) and as a “threat to Western modernity and culture of freedoms” (p. 10). Kirmani (2009) stated that the Orientalist fascination of the veil reinforced the idea that Muslim women are perceived as “symbols of the brutishness of colonized peoples and the symbolic ‘Other’ to Europe’s rational civilization” (p. 49). Veiled Muslim women are seen as “passive, sexless beings covered up in masses of cloth, a sharp contrast to the self-assured “sexually liberated” women of the advanced West” (Hamid, 2006).

For the Meranao women, women’s rights are not absolute because they are sanctioned by their religious belief. Modesty through covering one’s body and self-restraint is something non-negotiable (Personal interview, September 11, Cagayan de Oro City). In the interviews, there has been no common narrative on how the liberating forces of the Islamic faith can overcome the cultural practices of male domination, as these two



seemingly opposing realities are not mutually exclusive. Certain cultural practices such as the subordinating role of Meranao women to the domestic sphere is reinforced by religious belief. According to one of the key interviewees, Meranao women are in dilemma: while their communities have been adopting a modern lifestyle like the style of dress and education, certain practices such as relegating Meranao women to the sphere of the home remains intact (KII, September 9, 2010, Marawi City).

#### 6. Politics is also a woman's business.

In Meranao society, politics is not limited to men only; it is also considered as the space where women can participate, alongside their male counterparts. Meranao women are generally given the sense of political space, including access to justice and redress from grievances. However, it is not through the regular mechanisms of the court of laws, but through the traditional system of conflict settlement, mediated by the clan/family members. According to one key informant interviewee:

*In a Meranao family, women are also negotiators, they are good at resolving the conflict because they are by nature calm and peace-oriented; hence empowering them will help the government in settling rido (family feud) quite common in our society. (KII, September 9, 2019, Marawi City).*

Generally, all the women respondents have emphasized that Meranao women have relative freedoms to participate in political exercises such as voting, campaigning for their political candidates, joining political parties; however, their primary consideration is the familiarity of their candidates during elections. The mediating factor is "money politics" as has been the case in Philippine political elections (Personal Interviews, October 15, 2019, Balo-I, Lanao Del Norte). According to a former elected leader in Lanao Del Norte,

the electoral contest does not care much about sexual or gender identity (Personal Interview, October 13, 2019, Kauswagan, Lanao Del Norte).

An important space for women in politics is the cultural position of the Baes. Baes are the counterparts of Sultans, considered to be an important representation of women in politics. Further, Islam and the Maranao culture support political activism among women such as being part of organizations and advocacy groups.

### ***Re-defining empowerment: A Cultural Resource for Meranao Women***

The cultural base of power among Meranao women include the following: “*Kaseselai*” (giving due honor and recognition to fellow women), “*Kanggiginawai*” (sisterhood as a form of social bond), and “*Katagompiya*” (development) as expressed in both the private sphere of their household and the public sphere of economic transactions, political and civic participation and their collective struggle to share equal access and space in the decision-making process of the state. It is from these cultural bases that women’s agency is strengthened.

#### **1. “*Kaseselai*”: Community Honoring Women**

The cultural value of *maratabat*, which has no exact translation in the English language, is also a form of empowerment among Meranao women. The cultural value of *kaseselai* which literally means “honoring”, respecting women, and men in the community is a source of *maratabat* or loosely translated as communal pride. The source of *kaseselai* is embedded in the Meranao ‘*adat*’ (customs), such that in the Meranao culture:

*Women play key roles in conflict resolution and settlement of clan feuds. In the olden days, particularly in the social order of Ragain-Dudsaan, the nobility assigned the title to a lady peacemaker as Bae-a- Romapenet, meaning, Princess of Peace*



*and Tranquility! She's a member of Babaya-sa-Taritib, meaning, Parliament, and other structures of power in the realm. Her central role usually comes handy when the men couldn't get their act together in the resolution of parliamentary issues, including a conflict between feuding individuals or families, and she intervenes. The decision of the Bae a Labi (counterpart of the Sultan) is being honored) (remote interview, Marawi City. October 19, 2019).*

Kaseselai is important to Meranao culture because Meranao culture is very clannish. Meranao women are able to enhance their agency through the social security mechanisms of their family and kin. Hence, an empowered Meranao woman is not only family-oriented but also an asset to the *inged* (community). This strong social bond among women and the community of men supportive of women are cultural resources that strengthen women's exercise of agency.

## 2. "*Kanggiginawai*": Sisterhood as a Resource of Empowerment

Friendship and social bond are considered to be among the most important cultural values, according to one of the interviewees. As succinctly put in her local language, "*Sekami na sekano, sekano na sekami*" literally means 'We are One'. In the context of conflict management and resolution, seeking the help of Meranao women is one of the effective ways of managing *rido* or armed conflict because women are building on their social trust in their fellow women. It is that ability to transform the heated discussion to a nurturing one that makes women, and in this case, Meranao women's sisterhood an important cultural resource of confidence building in a socially polarized society.

*Kanggiginawai* reflects the strength of the Meranao sisterhood. It serves as a channel for individual empowerment because the power of a woman is expressed in the translation of her consciousness into action with others, as a way to withstand the limitations experienced (Gilkes, 1988; Bookman, 1988; Sadan, 1997).

### 3. “*Katagompiya*”: Empowerment is Development

Common to the narratives of Meranao women is their belief in social change, such as gender equality, through *katagompiya*, a Meranao term loosely translated as “development”. *Katagompiya* is an inward-looking developmental perspective which encapsulates how women contribute to development in their communities. A respondent expounded on this, stating:

*Women in the Meranao culture are seen as socially responsible and kind members of their society contributing to the socio-economic development, as professionals, entrepreneurs, and as Mothers, making decisions in the household. (Personal Interview, September 9, 2019, Cagayan de Oro City).*

*Katagompiya* exemplifies how Meranao culture strengthens Meranao women empowerment in relation to breaking the boundaries between the self and their community. It reinforces empowerment in the sense that Meranao women transcend from personal empowerment to community empowerment. Sadan (1997: 82) defines empowerment after all as the coming out from the limited boundaries of the *I* into the expanse of possibilities of the *We*.

*Kaseselai*, *Kanggiginawai*, and “*Katagompiya*” provide cultural power base in strengthening individual empowerment that enables a Meranao woman to transcend from the confines of herself to confidently lead transformative change in her society.



These cultural values highlight the existing mutuality in Meranao women empowerment where mutual empowerment enhances and strengthens the individual agency of women. These cultural values have been instrumental in the achievements in Meranao women empowerment, in the sense of developing their agency and securing their space in their communities.

### *Narratives of Meranao Women's Achievement as Empowered Women*

Among Meranao women, empowerment could mean different things but most pervading in the narratives are the following attributes: **Balengkasan** (loosely translated as strong in personality), **Bilangataw** (of good character), and **Maongagen** (wise). These attributes are linked to the influential roles that Meranao women have secured in their society which are indicative of the achievements of women in their agency and resources.

### *Balengkasan a bae: "Women are Strong, Too"*

In a patriarchal society, Meranao women assert their being "balengkasan" (being strong) by harnessing their traditional roles in the household and in community affairs. This negotiated space is mediated by their adherence to Islam, which recognizes the equal worth of women in the greater community (Ummah). This attribution of being strong, is in the context of Meranao women assuming leadership roles in their respective communities as mediators, negotiators, community organizers, and peacebuilders. One of the women respondents expressed this achievement in being one of the co-founding conveners of UMMI Inc. (United Mothers of Marawi), which was organized as a women-led organization to prevent and transform violent extremism through value-formation and peace education centered in the home and the family. As a women-led organization, they primarily empower their fellow women through culture-sensitive and peace-promoting approaches.



*Since 2018, we have been organizing Meranao women IDPs particularly in the evacuation sites of Sagonsongan, because women have assumed the role of household heads due to the limited mobility of their husbands, male members of the family. This limited mobility is primarily because of the fear of being attacked by the existing rido (clan feuds). In the post-Marawi siege rehabilitation for example, Meranao women have been instrumental in community organizing, relief assistance and humanitarian works, and even in protest action, we, Meranao women are strong, too. (Personal Interview, September 19, 2019).*

The strength of women, made even bolder by situations like the Marawi Siege, is another evidence of how women were able to hold together their community and influence their environment amidst devastating post-war conditions. Sadan (1997) connects how a woman's sense of faith in her own strength is a testament to her empowerment and is crucial to advance social change in her community (Sadan, 1997).

### ***Bilangataw: Meranao Women as Role Models in the Community***

As agents of peacebuilding and conflict resolution, Meranao women are seen as role models in terms of keeping the peace and safety of their household and *inged* (community). One significant achievement of an empowered Meranao woman is being able to play the role of a mediator with the support of her family and the community. In Lanao areas, Meranao women are active players in politics and civic affairs, such as humanitarian and non-profit organizing. Being a ***Bilangataw*** or role model is an important determinant to the social role played by Meranao women in the larger community. Meranao women are seen as social agents of change by their community.



Such cultural value hinges on the capacity of Meranao women to be economically empowered and financially autonomous, such that many of the Meranao women also define the politics of their own locality. One of the *Bilangataw* that was mentioned by the respondent is the first-ever Governor of Lanao del Sur, Princess Tarhata Alonto-Lucman, who is also a peacemaker and a cultural icon in the Ranaw country.

The notion of women as role models and drivers of positive social change in their society reflects that empowerment is truly a pro-active concept which involves a process in the individual to recognize and act on her agency and will to influence her environment (Sadan, 1997). This is contextualized in this study through the exercise of the cultural right of Meranao women as conflict mediators and community peacebuilding agents.

#### ***Maongangen A bae: A Woman of Wisdom***

Meranao women have layers of struggles as members of cultural minorities, especially their gender struggle to fight for equal access to socio-economic and political development. According to one of the personal interviewees, 'ongagen' (wisdom) is considered to be a virtue in a Meranao community; those who have it are a cultural asset for conflict resolution and thus, instrumental in social cohesion. As she succinctly puts it:

*In Islam and Maranao culture, you really need to give back to the community; being part of organizations and advocacy groups that help the community is charity and that is giving back. Traditionally, we have the Baes. And these Baes are the counterparts of Sultans. It is a political position. That would only mean that it actually gives importance to women's representation in political sides.*

Meranao women are generally given the sense of political space, including access to justice and redress from grievances; however, it is not through the regular mechanisms



of the court of laws, but through the traditional system of conflict settlement, mediated by the clan/family members.

*In a Meranao family, women are also negotiators; they are good at resolving conflict because they are by nature calm and peace-oriented. Hence, empowering them will help the government in settling rido (family feud) quite common in our society (Personal Interview, September 9, 2019, Marawi City).*

In another statement, a millennial respondent reiterated the achievement of Meranao women empowerment in the context of the Islamic faith, as she expressed that:

*Islam actually encourages women empowerment. Contrary to popular belief that it does not encourage empowerment for women; it does. It is just that some do not read much about the religion or do not try to learn more about the religion. And they only take things as face value. But for me, Islam should not be seen as that. It should be understood with a context. Look at this alone, one of the greatest advisers of the prophet Muhammad was his wife; he listened to his wife. That alone is an indication that women's voice is respected.*

These narratives have emphasized the need to nuance the understanding of women empowerment in accordance to the cultural norms and practices, including religion as among the important factors in shaping the discourse and exercise of empowerment, particularly among Meranao women.





## Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this study revealed the significant role played by religion and culture in the empowerment of Meranao women of Southern Philippines. On one hand, Islam is seen as a liberating force among Meranao women, giving them the inherent right to strive for equitable rights in overcoming the patriarchal culture that politically subjugates women to a subordinate and secondary role. On the other hand, Meranao culture complements Islam in empowering women thru cultural resources in the form of Meranao values of *Kaseselai*, *Kanggiginawai*, and *Katagompiya*.

Delving into women's agency and resources, motherhood is more than child-rearing. It is a resource for empowerment in that motherhood is regarded as a form of socio-economic power whereby Meranao women exercise their influence in shaping the orientation of their children, including their political perspectives. In a Meranao community, women are perceived as empowered through education, the freedom to choose their partner for marriage, and being able to join in political exercises without fear of harassment and abuse. Hence, Meranao women can exercise their agency over their educational decisions and their participation in economic and political activities. Meranao women are also entrepreneurs who take pride in the Islamic value of financial autonomy. Women can own properties and have sole ownership over properties even after marriage. In this sense, economic power can be exercised by Meranao women as reinforced by their religion. In addition, *Hijab* is also a source of empowerment for women who see it as a political statement. Finally, being an empowered Meranao woman is about exercising her agency over her own affairs, yet remaining conscious of the socio-cultural norms in her society, including taking charge of the domestic sphere while engaging in civil and even political activities in the public sphere of power relations.



Meranao women's form of empowerment is also a source of empowerment in a Meranao community. These are depicted in the attributes ascribed to women in the Meranao Society, attributes such as *Balengkasan*, *Bilangataw*, and *Maongagen*. These attributes attest to achievement in that women were able to secure a meaningful and influential space for themselves. Narratives of empowerment highlighted their progressive role albeit implicitly, since empowerment is tempered by socio-cultural beliefs such as religion. It is therefore important to have a nuanced understanding of the particular social phenomenon, that is the context of this study: the perceived notion of empowerment among Meranao women as they positioned themselves in the mainstream notion of empowerment which oftentimes contradicts their socio-economic and cultural realities.

Lastly, the following recommendations are put forward by this study:

1. Gender and development policies in a multicultural society like the Philippines must consider the cultural context of communities, to make such policies effective and efficient in empowering women from various cultures and faith backgrounds.
2. Documentation of lived realities of women in cultural communities can pave the way for a more nuanced and subsequently inclusive strategies mechanism needed in the process of making the Gender and development policies and programs empowering to communities of women and men in the newly-created Bangsamoro Autonomous region.
3. There is a need to expound this study for more conclusive data on the status and narrative of empowerment among other Muslim women communities in the Philippines.



4. Gender mainstreaming in Muslim communities should include the traditional and young women leaders who play a key role in building rapport and creating a multiplier effect in their respective communities.
5. Gender and development workshops ought to have culture-sensitive, peace-promoting and context-specific analyses as part of the standard operating procedure in the conduct of these activities.

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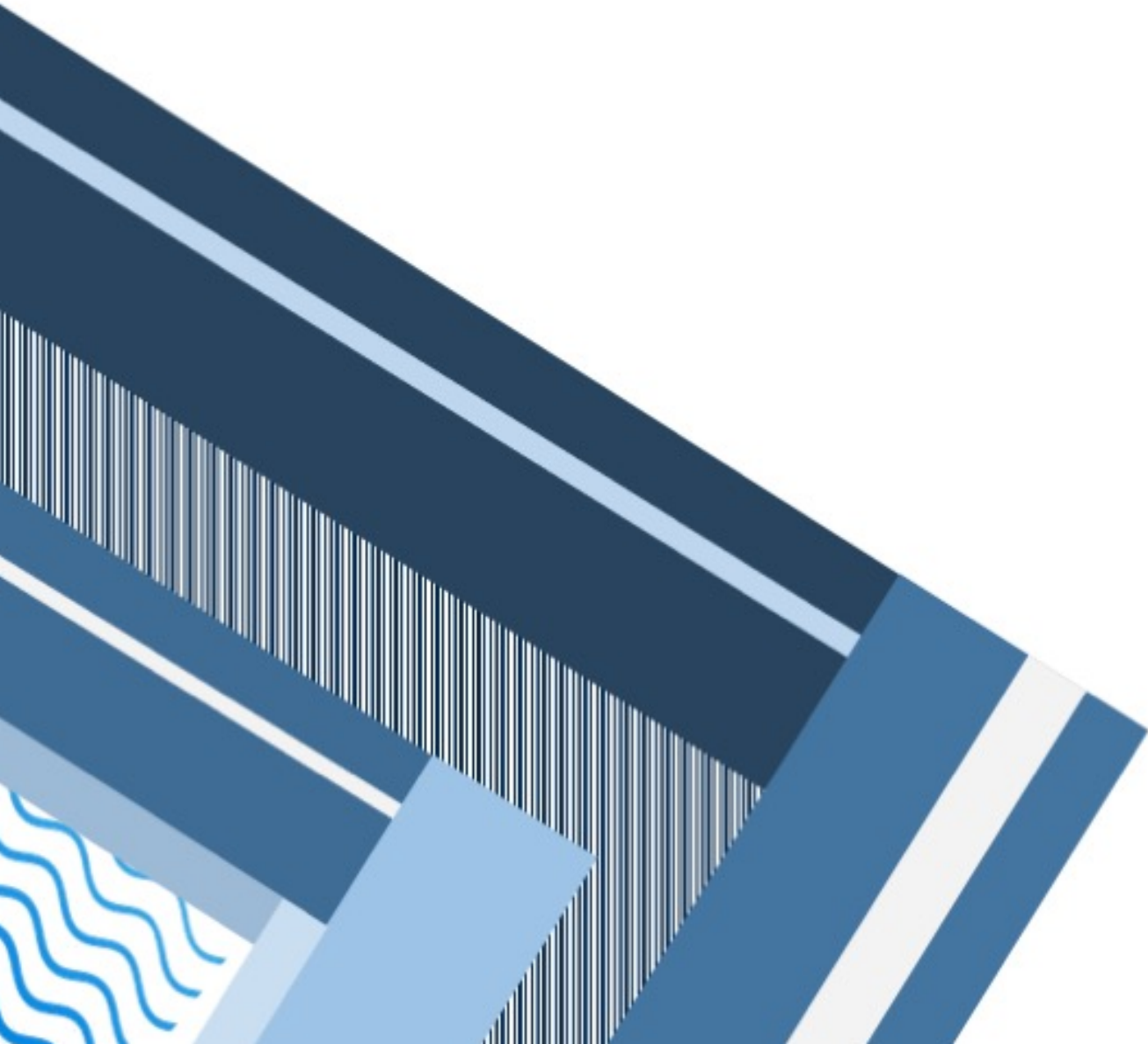


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# WP SERIES 9

## INTERROGATING STATE POWER AND ECONOMIC DOMINANCE





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## Unionism in the University of San Agustin: Points of Conflict and Resolution

Sonia Daquila

*University of San Agustin*

Unionism is the banding of workers who pursue common goals. It is an adherence to certain principles. It includes organizing, negotiating, and other undertakings related to labor movements for the formulation or implementation of agreements known as the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA).

### Background and Purpose

Unionism began at the University of San Agustin as early as 1953. Teachers organized a union under the Philippine Association of College and University Professors (PACUP). It was legitimized by the Court of Industrial Relations (CIR) but it was declared illegal by the Supreme Court on technical grounds. As a result, officers and active members were dismissed.

In 2003, when the University of San Agustin Employees Union (USAEU) affiliated with the Federation of Free Workers (FFW) the USAEU-FFW alliance emerged. For its part, the University of San Agustin (USA) recognized the right of the workers to unionize.

Unionism is provided for by the *1987 Philippine Constitution*, and grounded on the social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII. Both precepts seek to balance and protect the respective rights and obligations of the employers and the employees. Specifically, the *1987 Philippine Constitution* provides that:

*The state shall guarantee the rights of all workers to self-organization, collective bargaining and negotiations, and*





*peaceful concerted activities, including the right to strike in accordance with the law. They shall be entitled to security of tenure, humane conditions of work, and a living wage. They shall also participate in policy and decision-making process affecting their rights and benefits as may be provided by law (Sec. 3, para. 3)*

*The State shall promote the principle of shared responsibility between workers and employers and the preferential use of voluntary modes in settling disputes, including conciliation, and shall enforce their mutual compliance therewith to foster industrial peace. The State shall regulate the relations between workers and employers, recognizing the right of labor to its just share in the fruits of production and the right to enterprises to reasonable returns on investments, and expansion and growth (Art.13, Sec.3, para. 4).*

Correspondingly, *Rerum Novarum* provides that:

*Capital cannot do without labor, nor labor without capital. Mutual agreement results, in the beauty of good order while perpetual conflict necessarily produces confusion and savage barbarity (para. 19).*

Conflict however, is inevitable. In many instances, labor groups resorted to staging a strike and other actions to push their demands. Similarly, in 2003, the old and persistent issues and controversies between the USAEU-FFW and the USA were revived. Negotiations failed, and both parties went to court. Earlier, the quasi-judicial bodies

decided in favor of the USAEU-FFW but the Supreme Court finally, ruled in favor of the USA (*USAEU-FFW vs USA, 2006*). Union leaders and active members were ordered dismissed. The strike that started in 2003, went on for years, gradually dissipating in 2012.

### ***Purpose***

There is a compelling need to understand how this extended strike began, how it escalated, why it was unusually sustained for nine years. Thus, this study aimed to:

1. determine the causes of conflict;
2. recognize the points of conflict;
3. identify the solutions employed to settle the conflict; and,
4. know what lessons were learned by both parties.

### ***Analytical Framework***

Viewing the University as a small version of the larger community, this study employed the principles of Karl Marx to analyze the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of conflict between the USAEU-FFW and the USA. These include the theories on historical materialism, ideology, capital-labor-and profit, hegemony, alienation, and the means and mode of production. (Drake, n.d. *Communist Manifesto*).

In the context of the Marxist's historical materialism, the prolonged strike in the University may be viewed as a continuous struggle between the employers and the employees for the acquisition and use of scarce resources. As posited by Marx, history is just an endless struggle for the control of the means and mode of production. Conversely, a harmonious relationship in the community results to peace conducive to productivity. Despite, the absence of a union or of labor litigations for a long time, however, does not necessarily mean that an ideal relationship between labor and management exists. There may be an apparent harmony because of the effective conditioning of the community's frame of



mind and the ideologies in the form of religion, policies, and politics that sustained dominant power, and the employment of workable ways of settling disputes through social processes such as, good office, mediation or arbitration (Cordero & Panopio, 2010) or by the subtle and effective means of cooptation where the labor leaders or active members are offered some administrative positions to win them over to the side of the employers.

At the University of San Agustin, such a seemingly harmonious relationship with the employees before 2003, was disrupted by the USAEU-FFW raising issues which had been neglected or ignored in the past. Orientation for new employees or neophytes for assimilation of the institution's culture through symbols, publications, convocations, ceremonial activities, celebrations, symposia, religious, cultural, and other related activities could have conditioned and shaped the workers' frame of mind to submissiveness, fatalism, fanaticism, and less aggressive actions in demanding equitable compensation and other benefits. There could have been also apprehension for losing one's job. Marx opined that those who challenge the existing set-up are labeled as "radical" or "communists". Additionally, dominant ideology justifies and reinforces the uneven relationship between the two opposing parties based on the premise that, those who control the means of production also control the belief system. The lopsided setting is perpetuated because dominant ideologies support those who are in power. Through the years the same set-up has remained unchanged.

Under the capitalists' ideology, profit is seen to belong to whoever controls the capital (the infrastructure, the licenses to operate, the equipment, money, and others belong to the employers in the case of a private university). While labor is excluded in the capital, Marx claimed that it belongs to every worker, and the profit margins are largely located in labor.



Additionally, with the advent of scientific discoveries, inventions, and technological sophistication, man has been alienated from himself and from the fruits of his labor. As a consequence, workers no longer have the sense of ownership of their produce (*Rerum Novarum*, para. 10) Like other material goods, teaching has become a commodity and teachers are paid per session, per number of hour, per month. While teaching is an exalted profession, teachers are generally overworked but are lowly paid. Capitalists espouse the idea that profit in itself is morally good and the economic system exerts pressure to the employers to produce more. With labor commodified, exploitation is encouraged, that is, to get as much labor from one another for the least compensation. The end of the capitalist, therefore, is profit while the end of a working man is economic freedom. In the Marxist's framework, an employee is detached from the fruits of his labor. In a materialistic world, man himself is his measure. By and large, there is no satisfaction of the capitalist's greed and that the employers' and the employees' interests cannot be reconciled because as the employers' profits increase, they also indulge in the new and additional vices. For this reason, the employees want to maintain the status quo while the workers fight to obtain their fair share of the profits.

To generate more profit, there has been mass production, surplus, and exploitation of labor, affecting the capitalists and the proletariats' relationship. However, the employers and the employees must survive. So, there has been a struggle to strike a balance between these two sectors, ushering in the emergence of unionism for the protection of the wage-earners from the exploitation of their employers, and the latter from the abuses of their employees. In most cases however, anathema sets in between the employers and the employees. Born out of mutual distrust and suspicions, some institutions prevent the formation of a labor union or cause the dissipation of an existing one. Distrustful of its counterpart, labor likewise employs means that prejudice the employer.

The school, as in the case of the University of San Agustin, is also a workplace that operates on an employer-employee relationship which is the *sine qua non* of a business or of an educational institution. Generally, the employers have the upper hand because they have the economic capacity to sustain costly litigation. Thus, labor usually loses cases in the Supreme Court. The prescriptive Marxism aspiration for equality and elimination of private property, therefore, is utopian and untenable.

## Methodology

In this study, several techniques of data gathering were employed: documentary analysis, interviews and conflict mapping. Documentary analysis was undertaken on the decisions issued by the quasi and judicial bodies. Data were culled from the legal documents and the occurrence of events were arranged chronologically. These were classified into different categories such as causes, fears, interests, and triggers, and then plotted on the Human Needs Theory Conflict-Mapping Tool (Sandole, 1998).

The Multi-Causal Role Model Conflict-Mapping Tool (Sandole, 1998) was also used to trace how the conflict began, what triggered it, how the conflict intensified, how it slackened, and how it was finally resolved. It provides data categories to describe the conflict: *Reasons* are the root causes of conflict that explain how the conflict started and what set it off. *Targets* are what the two opposing parties were fighting for. *Channels* are the socio-economic and political factors that caused disunity. *Triggers* are factors or events that set the groups in motion, heightened the level of conflict or changed one's position. *Catalysts* are events or persons who stepped up or slowed down the intensity of conflict. The catalysts include social processes such as mediation, arbitration, good office, extra-legal means and litigations. *Violence* pertains to psychological attacks such as harassment, discrimination, annoyance, scurrilous statements, slander by deeds,



malicious mischiefs, threats, or intimidation. These categories provide the interconnection of factors which form the holistic scenario (Sandole, 1998).

To verify the validity of the secondary data, key informants (KIs) were interviewed. These informants either witnessed, or were directly involved in the strike. The KIs included the president of the University then; one active officer of the USAEU-FFW (who now teaches in a state University); one active leader (who now holds an administrative post in the University); a member (who now serves as a dean in another institution); and, one graduate student who personally observed the strike. Prior to the individual interview, the key informants signed an informed consent form indicating their permission to be interviewed. The transcripts of their respective interviews were presented to each one for their review and approval.

Triangulation of data gathered through documentary analysis, interviews and conflict mapping, was employed in this study

## **Results and Discussion**

Documentary analysis revealed that University of USA allowed unionism in the University as guaranteed by the State and the Church.

Documents also show that the USAEU-FFW pushed for the exclusion of other expenses charged against the 70% share of the faculty in the TIP, while the USA insisted on their inclusion. Subsequently, the Union's proposal was raised to 80%. With this, the USAEU-FFW wanted to avoid what they perceived as diminution of the 70% of the TIP. In addition, they expressed apprehension of reprisal for their actions. The University officials stood their ground on the legality of their position which for them was in accord with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) provision. The controversy was also occasioned



by the previous 3-year economic benefit agreement in the CBA which was about to end. Thus, both parties negotiated for a new economic agreement but they failed to agree on the implementation of the existing Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) nor in the economic benefits proposed in the new CBA. Notwithstanding negotiations and the “No Strike, No Lock out” provision in the CBA, the USAEU-FFW held a strike on September 19, 2003, and the concomitant movements lasted for nine years.

During the nine-year period, the conflicting parties went to the National Conciliation and the National Mediation Board (NCMB) in Region VI to file their cases. The Union won their case before the labor quasi-judicial bodies but eventually lost in the Court of Appeals (CA). The strike went on and both parties moved for the Secretary of Labor and Employment (SOLE) to issue an Assumption of Jurisdiction Order (AJO). The Union passed a resolution that designated its president as the sole authority to receive papers coming from the SOLE. Subsequently, when the sheriff served the “Cease and Desist and Immediate Return to Work Order”, the Union members declined to accept it on the ground that their president was not around. The sheriff posted the notice on conspicuous places in the University. Still, the strike went on. Eventually, the Union went to the Supreme Court for review on certiorari but the SC declared with finality, that the strike they held was illegal, affirming that the Union officers be dismissed.

Documentary analysis of the court decisions yielded data that describe the sources of conflict. Table 1 presents an analytical matrix showing the data extracted from the Supreme Court decision on the case of USAEU-FFW vs. CA and the USA, G.R. No. 169632, dated March 28, 2006, using the Human Needs Theory Conflict-Mapping Tool Needs (Sandole, 1998).

**Table 1**

*Categorized Data Describing the Sources of Conflict between USA and USAEU- FFW  
Using the Human Needs Theory Conflict-Mapping Tool*

Parties	Issues	Interest/ Needs	Fears	Means	Options
USAEU- FFW	-Exclusion of USA expenses from 70% TIP share -Legality of strike on proposed new economic benefits -Unfair labor practice	-Non- diminution of the 70% faculty's share of the TIP; -Security of tenure; -Improved salaries and better fringe benefits	-Diminution of 70% of faculty's share from TIP -Reprisal and loss of job -Loss of Credibility.	- Negotiation and resolution by the SOLE -Strike -Litigation -Use of mass media	- Negotiation petition to NCMB -File motion to strike - Assumption of SOLE jurisdiction -Petition the SC for review on certiorari -Continue strike and camp outside USA





Parties	Issues	Interest/ Needs	Fears	Means	Options
USA	-Inclusion of other expenses in the 70% of faculty's share from the TIP -Illegality of strike -Unfair labor practice	-Increase in school revenues -Restore order -Stoppage of slanderous attacks to the friars	-Diminution of school revenues -Chaos -Indignities to the friars	- Negotiation for new CBA economic provisions -Litigation -Use of mass media	- Negotiation to prevent the strike -Petition for SOLE to issue Assumption of Jurisdiction Order (AJO)
	-Discrimination of officers, members -Unfounded attack to the University -Prejudiced quasi-judicial bodies	-Protection of the good name of USA -Restoration of order in the USA -Retain / increase enrolment	-Debasement of the USA's stature -Loss of clients -Nuisance in the University	- Implementation of AJO, Court Orders -Dismissal of Union officers -Litigation	-Stoppage of strike -Good office -Dismissal of union leaders -Judicial decision -Use of mass media

Summary statements from these plotted data are made to describe the sources of conflict.

1. The parties did not agree on the apportionment of the 70% faculty share of the Tuition Increment Proceeds (TIP).
2. The agreement on the 3-year economic benefits in the existing CBA was about to end and both parties did not agree on the proposed new economic benefits.

3. Bargaining deadlock took place and the USAEU-FFW filed a “Notice of Strike” while the University moved to prevent it.
4. The University filed a suit against the Union on ground of illegal strike in violation of the “No Strike, No Lock Out” provision in the CBA.
5. The Union appealed on certiorari the CA’s decision to the Supreme Court which affirmed the CA and the University that the strike held by the USAEU-FFW was illegal, and that officers and some active members be dismissed

To provide a holistic view of the conflict between the USA and the USAEU-FFW, the Multi-Causal Role Model Conflict-Mapping Tool (Sandole, 1998) was used to analyze the data embodied in the pertinent documents. Results trace how the conflict began, what triggered it, how the conflict intensified, how it slackened, and how it finally dissipated. The data categories used to describe the conflict included the divergent targets each of the parties pursued, their reasons which served as the root causes of the conflict, the triggers that heightened the conflict, the manifestations of violence, the channels they involved in seeking conciliation, and the catalysts that at one time or another, stepped up or slowed down the intensity of conflict. The connectedness of these factors provides a holistic view of the conflict, helping achieve understanding of its ramifications. The schematic diagram presented in Figure 1 provides the syndrome of factors and the details that describe each one.

The schematic diagram shows the sources of conflict based on the two parties’ divergent claims: Revenues for the University’s sustainability, and added income and fringe benefits for the employees. Approaches employed by the opposing parties were distinct, yet, commonality is seen whether it is called “revenue”, “profit” “increase in salary”, “fringe benefits” or income. In the main, it is money. After a series of negotiations failed, each party coursed their unresolved issues to different channels, which again failed. In their

failure to agree, an impasse took place. Then the Union staged a strike. It used the mass media to drum-up their demands. Pushed to the defensive side, the University went to court.

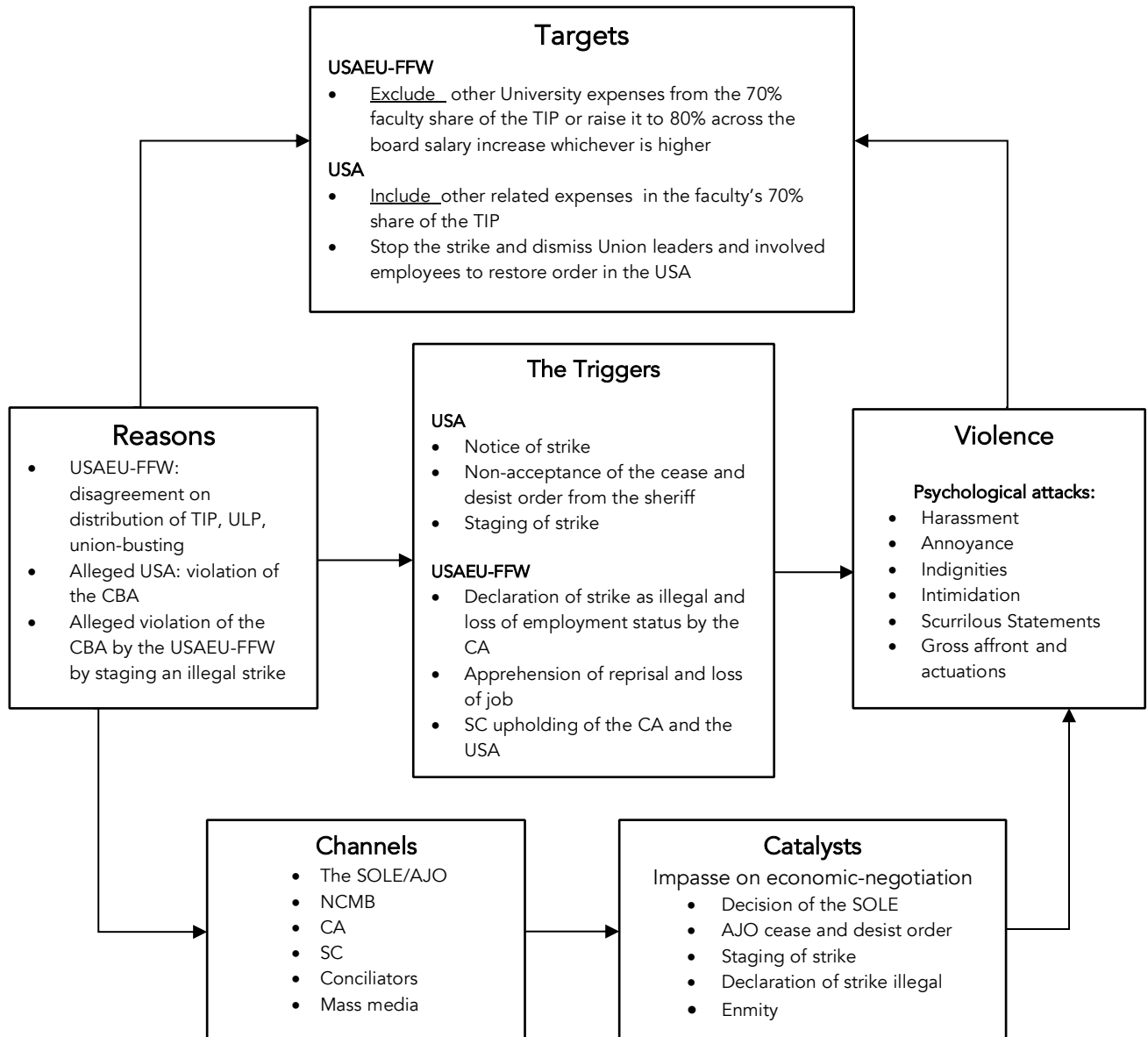


Figure 1. The Syndrome of Factors: Data Extracted from Documents Using the Multi-Causal Role Model Conflict-Mapping Tool (Sandole, 1998).



What served as catalysts on the part of the employer were the staging of the strike, the circulation of scurrilous statements orally or in print, the untoward demeanor of the Union representatives such as leaving unceremoniously in the midst of the negotiation, the holding of mass officiated by non-Catholic ministers and non-Augustinian priests at the gates of the University, the banging of the gates of the University, the swearwords shouted against the priests even in the middle of the night, and nuisance in the University campus.

Most of the secondary data gathered from the documents were affirmed by the interviewees and there were other sensitive issues revealed by the respondents in the course of one-on-one interviews. The legal documents and the testimonies of the respondents revealed a similar pattern. The Union won their case in the lower level of quasi-judicial or judicial bodies, but lost before the Supreme Court. From the one-on-one interviews with the key informants, their body language indicated suppressed emotion when they recalled the past. Nevertheless, informants from both parties claimed they gained wisdom from their experiences.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### *The Causes of Conflict*

Conflict stemmed not only from economic goals pursued by both parties. It sprung from political reasons as well, because both parties manifested the use of power in pursuing their respective goals. Sociological-psychological factors strongly influenced the options taken by each of the parties. The Union perceived the University as oppressive and exploitative, and in losing their legal case, diminished their credibility and self-worth. The University on the other hand, found the Union's actions to be a gross affront to the integrity of university leaders, and posed a threat to academic community.



### *The Points of Conflict*

The conflict points were the triggers that intensified the disagreement.

For the University, the conflict points consisted of:

1. the staging of strike;
2. the non-acceptance of the cease and desist order and the AJO from the sheriff;
3. the circulation of scurrilous information against the University and its officials;  
and
4. the actuations of Union members considered as gross affront to the clergy.

For the Union, the triggers were:

1. non-agreement on the sharing of the 70% of the TIP;
2. the impasse in negotiation;
3. the decision of the CA that declared the strike illegal and dismissal of Union officers; and
4. the SC decision that upheld the decision of the CA and the USA.

The means adopted by the parties to resolve the conflict consisted of:

1. Negotiation;
2. strike and other concomitant movements and actuations;
3. litigation; and
4. extra-legal social processes.

### *What the parties learned from the conflict*

From the key informants, it was gathered that both sides maintained their respective positions on the issues but realized as well, the value and dangers of unionism. For



instance, the University administrator recognized a potential role of the Union when he said:

*The Union could have served as our support system to carry out what we both profess. I am for unionism because it enables us, Augustinians, to see what we might have failed to see... personally, I was hurt, but justice is to be accorded to where it is due, then, compassion.*

One of the two Union leaders said,

*We were pushed to do what we did because we were provoked by some events and we believed that the influence of legal counsels complicated matters. Had it been done in a fraternal and amicable way, without lawyers, it could not have been blown out of proportion... I realized that wily tactics cause only tremendous hurt on both sides. Employers, therefore, must go down to their people, refrain from maintaining their cordon sanitaire or relying on certain cliques. They must communicate to their people regularly, and disabuse their minds that unionism is out to destroy them.*

Similarly, another Union member stated,

*School administrators must hold constant dialogues in a formal assembly, or it would be better if it is in informal ways, for them to establish rapport with their people. They should filter whatever information they receive, get them straight from the ground, and observe due process.*

*One active member who have stayed and still serves the University likewise said,  
The experience had given the opposing parties the opportunity to ponder on their respective weaknesses and defects...  
Unionism is good because it gives voice to the rank and file. It protects them from exploitation by the employers. It becomes bad, however, when trouble escalates and reaches expensive litigations. It wastes time and saps energy...*

In sum, findings show that the main causes of conflict were economic, legal, and socio-psychological. Both parties realized that the long-drawn strike is damaging and the constant and genuine dialogues are necessary.

Conclusively, unionism can be a double-bladed weapon and its usefulness depends on its appropriate utilization on certain situations. More than ever, in the face of the pandemic today, unionism is necessary against unjust labor practices and exploitation and the need to gain support from the employees for the institution to survive.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were formulated based on the findings:

1. In times of disagreement or conflict, it is best to negotiate. Choose a place with an ambiance conducive for amiable discussion. Both parties must agree on specific rules in the deliberation before sitting on the negotiating table.
2. The University and the Union have to schedule periodic reviews of the CBA, to check the implementation of its provisions, the observance of new laws or government issuances, and developments.



3. There should be periodic dialogues such as the holding of *Time with University President*, *Time with the VPAA*, *Time with the Dean*, *Students' Time with the University President*, *Students' Time with the College Dean*, and so on, to address problems in their earliest stage.
4. To prevent conflict, the School may choose applicable approaches from different social processes such as assimilation, mediation, good office or co-optation, among others.

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## Indie Reality: Representing the Philippine Postcolony in Five Cinemalaya Independent Films

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*Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Muntinlupa*

The proliferation of independent or “indie” films in the Philippines in the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has indicated the democratization of filmmaking in the country. This would be easily grasped if one recalls how the significant upsurge of such films since the 2000s had seemingly saved an otherwise dying film industry, marred on the one hand by a serious decline in the number of local films over the years alongside the continuing demand for profit-oriented productions, and, on the other hand, the total dominance of Hollywood films at the box office (Hernandez, 2014; Tiongson, 2013; Tioseco, 2007). With significant developments as the arrival of digital video technology in 1999, the emergence of a new generation of filmmakers and the institutionalization of the practice particularly through the establishment of film festivals, like the annual Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival, (Hernandez, 2014; Sarmiento, 2013; Tiongson, 2013), independent filmmaking could not but set the trend in, and characterize, contemporary Philippine cinema.

Independent films in the Philippines have been commonly described in terms of their production. These are usually produced outside the so-called mainstream film studios, like Viva Films and Star Cinema, which are capable of providing big budgets, easily closing deals with famous actors, and equipping filmmakers with the necessary machinery for their projects (del Mundo, 2014; Hernandez, 2014; Yapan, 2012; Zafra, 2014). Filmmakers of independent productions are then usually left to their own devices or make their films possible through collaboration with other parties and investors (Baumgärtel, 2012a; Hernandez, 2014; Tiongson, 2013; Yapan, 2012). The reception these films have



had is also worth noting. As observers would claim, these films have found a niche market among the young, educated middle-class viewers, a cohort of mostly college and high school students, young professionals, and other film enthusiasts who seem to be particularly interested in an altogether “fresh and nonformulaic” content and subject matter (Hernandez, 2014; Tiongson, 2013; Yapan, 2012). Such films have been highly regarded to take on particular themes and issues that would otherwise be ignored by mainstream commercial cinema. Known for consistently tackling pressing social problems and realities as their recurring general subject matter, these films have been understood to present critical perspectives on society and offer an alternative to filmmaking practices influenced by a dominant global capitalist system (Baumgärtel, 2012a; Hernandez, 2014; Isla, 2010; Tiongson, 2013; Tolentino, 2011). In this respect, although the categorization of films as independent or mainstream has also been highly problematized, independent films have been perceived to advance a certain kind of redemptive and even subversive cinema in that they have supposedly distinguished themselves from commercial cinema standards particularly in terms of their unconventional production style and their socially relevant subject matter. However, they have also hardly been viewed without criticism. The frequent production of films that adopt the neorealist style to feature poverty in its gritty details without being able to transcend such a depiction of life may be said to reveal a limitation (Beller, 2011; Inton, 2012; Tiongson, 2013). Furthermore, the success of such films that had earned critical international acclaim may be recognized not so much as an achievement disrupting a hegemonic capitalist worldview and effecting radical sociopolitical change on a global level but rather as a phenomenon of third-world subjects only ending up satisfying first-world desires (Beller, 2011). Also a major factor behind this problematic situation of independent films is that such films have not fully expanded their reach to a wider audience, rendering them exclusive and not as accessible and potent as how they had been perceived to ultimately make a significant impact in society (Beller, 2011; Tiongson, 2013). Quite the contrary, then, several scholars have



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already forwarded a common critique of independent films in the Philippines, particularly as only being subsumed under capitalist rationality.

In this paper, I make sense of the representation of reality commonly attributed to such films, surely maintaining the indispensable relevance of production and reception. For if there is one thing that is crucial to making sense of the sociopolitical significance of independent films, it is the “reality” that they are purported to represent. In the light of the apparent consensus among film scholars and enthusiasts that such films have undeniably garnered a reputation for their content and substance—and that, indeed, they have stirred up discussions for boldly showcasing reality and generating critical perspectives on such issues and problems being encountered in society, —I am thus interested in how these films represent reality as they exhibit power relations and subjectivity. I particularly look into how they demonstrate and signify, as illustrated by their production processes and reception, the dynamics between figures of domination and the subject. Treading this path allows for one to know, for instance, whether there is something beyond how these films have been explained in many ways as a matter mostly involving economic principles and the workings of capital. That films are able to portray reality must, however, also not be forgotten as a significant political undertaking, and thus opens an opportunity to look further not simply into how the very act of representing reality is being done by these independent films, but how such cinematic reality could yield a crucial commentary on power at play in Philippine society at large. At this juncture, distinctively instructive would be Achille Mbembe’s discussion of what is termed as the “postcolony,” to describe, in a manner that is very much detailed and different from dominant reductionist Western thinking and essentialist African philosophy, a complex system of relationships, significations, and other sorts of social configuration that constitute convivial rather than oppositional power dynamics and subjectivity in Africa as in other non-Western, postcolonial societies (Mbembe 2001, 104). This may be treated



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as an extension of Walter Benjamin's and Theodor Adorno's essential thoughts on art in the context of modern capitalism.

Such a perspective may be thoroughly discussed especially with the landscape provided by Cinemalaya, which has arguably become the most relevant and successful independent film festival in the Philippines. Established in 2005 through the collaboration of different sectors, particularly the government, private sector, and the academe (Cabagnot, 2009; Hernandez, 2014; San Diego, 2014b; Tiongson, 2013), the festival has been regarded to increasingly attract moviegoers through the years, from an audience of at least 8,000 in 2005 to 82,322, ten times bigger, in 2013 (Dimaculangan, 2014). Moreover, it has generally proven worthy of attention as it has also earned praise for consistently being a source of productions that satisfy the taste of both local and international audiences (Cabagnot, 2009). The quality of the films Cinemalaya has since produced has indeed been considered a major success indicator of the festival.

As works of art in general could be more profoundly understood in relation to society (Edman, 1939; Negash, 2004), Cinemalaya films are all the more interesting to examine not merely for their diegetic elements but for their specific historical and political milieu. Cinemalaya was born in a time not just when Philippine cinema was floundering but also when serious national problems were plaguing society and politics. The first five years of the festival from 2005 to 2009 took place during the second term of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as President of the country, when major controversies mostly concerning graft and corruption came under intense public scrutiny. While one may concede that independent films evidently deal particularly with the problematic political regime under Arroyo, one should also consider the Philippine social condition as cinematically rendered by independent films during the following administration that commenced in mid-2010. Benigno Aquino III's assumption into power registered a euphoric atmosphere as it



marked the end of the nine-year Arroyo presidency that was tainted with numerous scandals and controversies. Yet the Aquino presidency itself also had its own set of controversies, especially those pertaining to, perhaps ironically, the anomalous handling of government funds, such as the Priority Development Assistance Fund scam and the highly scrutinized Disbursement Acceleration Program. Against this backdrop of renewed hope negated by persistent, if not worsened, problems in Philippine society and politics, the Cinemalaya independent films selected for analysis in this paper include those that were produced from 2010 to 2014 and help explore the sociopolitical reality as represented by independent films in the context of the Philippine postcolony under a presidency, which, despite its reformist thrust, remained laden with the same serious national political conundrums and arguably also hardly meant a genuine democracy and a better life for Filipinos.

In this paper, then, I endeavor to shed light on independent films and their political significance by addressing how representations of reality in selected Cinemalaya independent films from 2010 to 2014 reveal power relations and subjectivity at work in society. I mainly look into power relations and subjectivity as they are portrayed in, and demonstrated by, Cinemalaya independent films. I specifically aim to, first, assess the selected Cinemalaya entries vis-à-vis the sociopolitical milieu in which they were produced and screened. Second, through interviews, I investigate how the selected films address power relations and subjectivity as seen in how they were created and produced by their filmmakers. Third, through focus group discussions with selected film groups and enthusiasts, I also look into how these films have been received and understood by particular audiences. Finally, I discuss how the way the selected films represent reality as such has significant implications about cinema and precepts being adopted by the larger Philippine society. I therefore aim to contemplate on the general significance of cinema in political studies. In the current context of globalization, most especially, such a critical



approach may then be understood to make room for the creation of alternative and similarly important perspectives on politics (Heywood, 2011; Negash, 2004).

### **A Critical Look into Philippine Indie Films**

There are a number of publications that allow for not just an adequate but a more critical view of Philippine independent films. David (1998) provides a good starting point in *Wages of Cinema: Film in Philippine Perspective* where he notes that “Independent film practice in the Philippines can be productively regarded as an emerging site of contention in film discourse.” He tackles the colonialist nature of early independent films released in the 1970s and 1980s, a number of which were showcased at international film festivals and appreciated by audiences from the West. David’s thoughts on early independent film production in the Philippines provide a critical discussion on the filmmaker’s personal intentions behind his or her craft. In *The Urian Anthology 2000-2009: The Rise of the Philippine New Wave Indie Film*, Tiongson (2013) focuses on the independent films that were mostly produced using digital video technology which arrived in the Philippines in 1999. He provides a general picture of the sociopolitical milieu in which these independent films exist by mentioning the economic, social, environmental, governmental, and cultural issues discussed in the content of the said films, noting that such independent films have been able to stir up “a critical and militant attitude” among audiences, often with the use of a neorealist style in depicting social realities. However, Tiongson also cites several areas in independent filmmaking that have yet to be addressed, particularly the “patriarchal, feudal or neocolonial” status quo despite filmmakers claiming to be independent from such, the limitations of the neorealist style, the lack of a unified voice as to what kind of direction these films would want to guide society, the need to attract more audiences other than the middle-class and, finally, the absence of a cohesive organization that would further promote independent films, and the said challenges currently being faced by independent films in the country (32-



37). The first and second concerns are specifically given focus by Inton (2012) in his exploration of the *bakla* and gay globality identities in mainstream and independent films in the Philippines.

While Tiongson introduces the said new wave of independent films in the Philippines, Hernandez (2014) thoroughly deals with the fundamental questions on the emergence of such films in her book *Digital Cinema in the Philippines, 1999-2009*. She proposes periods of introduction and innovation that may be said to describe digital cinema in the Philippines from 1999 to May 2009. By discussing the ways in which digital films are distributed and exhibited, Hernandez substantiates the political economy of such films in the history of Philippine cinema. While her work is a significant achievement in film scholarship, Hernandez acknowledges the limits of writing merely about technological film history and recommends further inquiry on the subject matter of films. An extensive and methodical discussion of what Hernandez recommends and of what Tiongson briefly mentions about the issues tackled by the contemporary independent films as earlier cited is executed by Sarmiento (2013), who studied 23 out of 64 entries in the main competition category of the Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival from 2005 to 2011. Here he argues that independent films are essentially viable anthropological instruments that contribute to understanding culture as, first, dynamic and historically embedded, and contingent and not deterministic. The study's etic approach, however, merely relied on the researcher's own observations and does not put into account the filmmakers' perspectives and other external factors that may have had any relevance in how independent films are said to depict culture. This gap is addressed in *Neoliberalism and Global Cinema: Capital, Culture and Marxist Critique* where Lim (2011) in her chapter identifies commodification as a recurring theme in Jeffrey Jeturian's films *Pila Balde* and *Kubrador*. She confirms this through her personal communication with Jeturian and draws from Wendy Brown's insights on neoliberal rationality, arguing that these films capture



life as a result not as of purely economic principles defining capitalism but of a “suffusive political rationality, a form of governmentality that reaches beyond the state and the economy to pervade every sphere of life” (279).

Moreover, in *Making Waves: 10 Years of Cinemalaya*, a commemorative book in celebration of the Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival’s ten years since 2005, del Mundo (2014) celebrates the existence of Cinemalaya as “a sort of renaissance in the history of our national cinema” (5). While it is a significant source of raw data containing lists of films, directors and awards, among others, the book basically contains essays that merely recount highlights of Cinemalaya in its first 10 years and does not include academic articles that substantially contribute to scholarship on the festival and the films it has produced. Interestingly, this is what Flaviano (2017) does in her critical discussion of Cinemalaya’s position in Philippine cinema, arguing that the film festival, particularly in the way it provides a space for discourse on and exhibition of local and international films, necessarily opens up an opportunity to more meaningfully reflect on otherwise essentializing and marginalizing ways of thinking about national cinema. Flaviano’s arguments on Cinemalaya as at once a crucial avenue to rethink national cinema, and thus make sense of its political significance, are to a large extent indispensable. There is no doubt that at the heart of every discussion on independent films, and in this case those screened at Cinemalaya, is an attempt to meaningfully explain how such films have a deeper relationship with society in ways that may be perceived as swimming against, or with, the current.

### **Indie Films in the Southeast Asian Context**

It is worth noting that independent films thrive not only in the Philippines but also in its neighboring countries in Southeast Asia. Indeed, in recent years, film scholars have increasingly turned their attention toward the growing practice of independent





filmmaking in Southeast Asia. In the anthology *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema*, which oddly lacks a scholarly discussion, apart from the transcribed interviews with filmmakers, on independent filmmaking in the Philippines, the country which arguably has the most active industry in the region, Baumgärtel (2012a) makes sense of how such independent films have become embraced not so much in their respective countries of origin but more by foreign audiences, demonstrated for instance by the recognition that these films have garnered at film festivals abroad. He essentially points out that, by constructing their imagined worlds, independent filmmakers of Southeast Asia are able to challenge dominant, officially sanctioned ways not only of filmmaking per se but, subsequently, of presenting and discussing aspects of society found within their respective sociopolitical settings.

Likewise, Isla (2010) magnifies the said distinctive ability of independent films to resist hegemonic discourses. For her, filmmakers from member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have been demonstrating their own way of projecting an alternative development in the Region that counters the dominant neoliberal development model of the West. Independent filmmakers from the ASEAN are specifically able to do this by presenting issues and problems that have characterized their countries' national concerns: extreme poverty in the Philippines, middle-class anxieties in Thailand and Singapore, and ethnic issues in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Insofar as they interestingly explain how such independent films from certain countries within Southeast Asia supposedly present distinct issues and realities, Baumgärtel and Isla are able to highlight the undeniable significance of independent cinema on not just a national but a regional scale. For Campos (2016), furthermore, the existence of a so-called regional independent cinema leads to a more meaningful way of understanding the apparently global and complex rather than territorial and confined nature of national



cinema. In *The End of National Cinema: Filipino Film at the Turn of the Century*, he stresses that studying cinema today “no longer presupposes the existence or an essence of national cinema but instead foregrounds the possibilities and problems attendant in continuing to think about and define cinema as being related to, constitutive of, and arising from the nation in the period of accelerated globalization” (14). Ultimately, he argues this realization allows for the fulfillment of independence as the “end” of national cinema (17). In other words, he proposes a way of thinking about national cinema as defying established notions that perpetuate oppression and domination in society. As independent films are by all means part of Philippine cinema, such an insight serves as a guide to making sense of Cinemalaya independent films.

### **Indie Films in the Predicament of Philippine Cinema**

Philippine independent films in themselves, or as they may be interpreted and analyzed separately, seem to already constitute an insightful discussion. However, they definitely belong to a cinema that has deep colonial roots and therefore must not be taken in isolation from their larger historical and political context. It is worthwhile then to consider the extensive research done by Nick Deocampo on cinema in the Philippines from when it was introduced in 1897 during the Spanish colonial period to when it became a tool for the spread of US imperialism during the American regime to when it was likewise used for propaganda during the Japanese occupation. While these periods witnessed how colonizers utilized cinema to maintain their power over subjects, Deocampo stresses how Filipinos themselves adopted and learned to master the art of filmmaking which gradually resulted in the continued existence of cinema in the Philippines (*Gunita: A Brief History of Filipino Cinema* 2017). Deocampo achieves a warranted critical historical assessment, making the ironically unspoken but important point that reflecting on colonialism’s influences, enduring ones most especially, should be a constant element in analyzing Philippine cinema. As he argues in *Cine: Spanish Influences on Early Cinema in the*



*Philippines*, the way in which cinema in the Philippines began during the Spanish colonial period and was thus greatly shaped by it has important implications about the stature of Philippine cinema today. That is, it resulted from foreign practices originating from Europe in particular and even before the Americans arrived in the country (Deocampo, 2003). Furthermore, as he points out in *Film: American Influences on Philippine Cinema*, it cannot be emphasized enough how the more prevalent influences of American colonialism, even after the Second World War with the dominance of Hollywood, made a lasting impact on Philippine cinema (Deocampo, 2011). More than just describing and reiterating the role played by colonialism, Deocampo's insights point to the much larger question of how Philippine cinema today could be approached especially when it comes to understanding its identity, the location and fulfillment of which relies on its resistance and emancipation. As far as this paper is concerned, this question must include in the equation a thorough assessment of independent films.

The extensively studied tradition of filmmaking in the Philippines is also described by Tolentino (2000) in the anthology *Geopolitics of the Visible: Essays on Philippine Film Cultures* as always having been "represented within the imperial and neocolonial framework through a geopolitical rendering of the visible" (VIII). He explains that the logic behind understanding Philippine cinema as existing under the principle of a "geopolitics of the visible"—geopolitics referred to as "a transnational cultural politics that effects the implementation of globalizing forces in the local national landscape, and demonstrates how the local might become a trope for situating past and ongoing globalization drives" (VII)—is that it significantly and in many ways reflects what has become of the national political situation itself of the Philippines today. This is particularly in light of a colonial history under the American rule, in that "masculine imperialist dominance has perpetuated the feminized positioning of the Philippines" (Tolentino, 2000, XI). In a later journal, Tolentino (2011) contemplates on the post-Marcos, post-Brocka Philippine



cinema and describes it as a representation of the country's "vaginal economy" (232). The term refers to the "female sex as the primary instrument of national development," characterized by the involvement of Filipino overseas contract workers into sexualized labor—such as sex work and trafficking—which captures a picture of the country's overall feminized position in the larger neoliberal global economy (229-30). The "vaginal economy" is said to be realized in films through bodies of characters in transit whose transnational experiences audiences, filmmakers, and even the state identify themselves with (232). An essential point that this paper may take into consideration from Tolentino (2011) is that a critique of the "vaginal economy", as a manifestation of the dominant neoliberal capitalist system in today's global context, is achieved through independent films. In the Philippines, Tolentino points out, this was well demonstrated by director Lino Brocka when he challenged the Marcos regime with films that presented the destitute situation of Filipinos under an authoritarian government. In more recent years, specifically under the controversy-stricken administration of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and in light of the global economic crisis of 2008, Tolentino interestingly notes that the exposition of the "vaginal economy" continues with the production of independent films, vibrantly as the Philippine film industry saw itself recovering from a decline in the late 1990s. The underscoring of the sexualization of Filipino labor proves insightful when looking into the general economic situation of the Philippines as a background for the themes of independent films that emerged in the 2000s.

To substantiate Tolentino's conjectures, Beller (2011) evaluates particular films in the Philippines, China, and Hong Kong in the context of globalization characterized by the prominence of digital technology in film production. Beyond merely featuring digital technology as a new technique in the processing and production of images and effects in filmmaking, he interestingly posits that this technological development also relates more to the cinema's capacity as a field to account for the workings of a social, economic,



and political configuration brought about by the operations of a larger capitalist system. But in contrast with the assumption that films are able to successfully show resistance to, or criticize, oppressive social structures through the representation of reality, Beller points out that the production of realist films has only been subject to exploitation in the light of international festivals where many Filipino directors have showcased their films. Beller's discussion is particularly crucial to the problem that this paper seeks to grapple with. His critical take on a film's ability to be a catalyst for social change also opens new opportunities for scholars to further look into the veracity of usual claims about the matter.

### **Framework: Indie Films and the Postcolony**

The seemingly perpetual problem on the political significance of Philippine independent films brings into light the ideas of critical theorists Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno on works of art in the context of modern capitalism. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" first published in 1936, Benjamin (2007) contemplates on the social and political implications of the mechanical reproduction of art which, in turn, could ultimately serve revolutionary goals and lead to the emancipation of the masses from capitalist exploitation. The film as a mechanically reproduced work of art, for Benjamin, particularly appeals the most to the masses primarily because it makes them engaged with the very apparatus—the moving camera—used in the process of producing it. This, in effect, shows how not the film itself but the participating spectator develops a certain consciousness about "entirely new structural formations of the subject" of a particular image or shot (236-37). Also significant to the discussion of how the film aesthetically projects reality is that the movement of images brings about what Benjamin calls the *shock effect*, that which takes place when the "spectator's process of association in view of these images is indeed interrupted by their constant, sudden change" (238). Finally, what importantly makes this entire visual rendering process in film interesting, specifically



helped by the said *shock effect* resulting from the mechanical operation of the camera, is that the spectators, Benjamin asserts, are in a *state of distraction*. Such a viewing orientation, in contrast with the kind of contemplation demanded by other works of art, accordingly forms habits that would necessarily translate to their actual social mobilization.

While Benjamin sees the value in elaborating on the potential of mechanically reproduced art to incite mass mobilization, Adorno chooses to focus more on how the absolute domination of the capitalist system in the production, distribution, and administration of cultural commodities is exhibited by the culture industry. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, a major work of the Frankfurt School critical theory first published in 1944, Adorno and fellow philosopher Max Horkheimer, generally castigating the Enlightenment for failing to truly liberate human beings from their imprisonment within mythological truth and consciousness claimed to be overcome by scientific reason, explain the culture industry as essentially that capitalist machinery which manipulates the production of cultural commodities, most definitely including films (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002). They are meticulous enough to point out—and this is crucial to understanding the politics behind the culture industry—that such a production is not done simply out of a natural demand by the masses in the light of significant technological advancements but primarily by an economically and politically interested force that dominates the system. Following this, even seemingly deviant forms of art, those that seek to keep distance from, and vehemently oppose, established practices in the culture industry, are themselves said to give in and be compromised just the same. Interestingly, Adorno (1991) points out in his essay “Culture and Administration” that when one talks about culture, one also ought to talk about the idea and process of administration, despite the incompatibility of the two. He draws from Max Weber’s understanding of bureaucracies as oriented toward expansion, “Precision, speed, clarity, documentary ability, continuity,



discretion, unity, rigid subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal expenses are unique to bureaucratic organization" (Weber as cited in Adorno, 1991, 109). Moreover, while on the one hand the culture industry standardizes all its products, the masses on the other hand are made to conform to consume its products and live according to such a schema (Adorno, 1991).

In the case of Cinemalaya independent films, however, it is imperative to know how films can cinematically render reality characterized by the Philippine postcolonial condition, something which Benjamin and Adorno do not explicitly address in their writings mostly on Western society and culture. Yet explicating how Cinemalaya independent films represent reality with a postcolonial framing is particularly crucial, given the complexities of the current Philippine political context, and can even be a tricky business considering the complicated theoretical and conceptual underpinnings postcolonialism espouses and, at the same time, confronts especially in the age of heightened globalization. Postcolonialism as an approach to politics is a thoroughly interesting discussion because it has been, among others, an utter contradiction. At first glance, it is quite straightforward about its premise of essentially debunking and opposing the imperialist project. However, with the intensification of modern capitalism, the persistence of inequality on a global scale, and the continuing oppression of the colonial subject even "after colonization," postcolonialism is also going through a major rearticulation and redefinition, an inevitable part of which deals with fundamental questions on its relevance, its supposed opposition to paradigms mostly from the West, and even its temporal meaning in light of recent developments. In other words, there seems to be a repudiation of postcolonialism as commonly formulated among postcolonial theorists themselves, who now acknowledge that it is interested instead in understanding ambiguities, identities, differences, positionalities, and heterogeneity (Shohat, 1992; Dirlik, 1994).



The problem with such critical commentaries, however, is they tend to insist on rehashing an oppositional view of power relations, ironically the very reason why postcolonialism is being reevaluated in the first place. Rather than relive the underlying principle once thought to be the way to decolonize, it appears theorists and scholars alike would do well to appreciate postcolonialism as in many ways an intricately flexible concept. This is exactly how Hall (1996) explicates the “post-colonial” as particularly something that does not really adhere to thoroughly structured, often binary and therefore counterproductive, perspectives but instead serves as a serious exercise of “thinking at the limit” (255). In short, postcolonialism goes on to serve as a useful and powerful approach because it bothers to understand the complicated character of modern society while still endeavoring to provide a more sensible alternative to grand narratives, “a re-phrasing of Modernity” (250). In this sense, it is surely not a conventional paradigm and no less commanding and relevant as an approach because it is finally able to responsibly describe the postcolonial condition.

Subsequently, it only makes sense to examine Philippine independent films in view of such a perspective, as the literature evidently regards these films as having an undeniable political significance and a simultaneously valuable and questionable social transformative character obviously in terms of their fundamental function of representing reality. But, most importantly, it is more intriguing to understand these films against the backdrop of modern Philippine democracy in the post-Marcos era, the pinnacle of which was supposedly during the presidency of Benigno Aquino III which ended up contradicting itself and failing to deliver the promise of reform and emancipation at once attributed to postcolonialism.

For this reason, I find it specifically appropriate to employ the thoughts of African philosopher and political scientist Achille Mbembe, who, in his collection of essays in *On*





*the Postcolony*, presents a sensibly distinct kind of theorizing about African societies. In “Time on the Move,” Mbembe (2001) reconfigures the understanding of postcolonial theory as merely a particular denouncing of power by establishing a philosophical understanding of what he terms as the “postcolony” in order to provide an alternative perspective about Africa. Understanding the postcolony involves a particular perception about the *subject*. As Mbembe posits that subjectivity and temporality are closely related, he refers to the subject as “the forms of ‘living in the concrete world’” and “the subjective forms that make possible any validation of its contents—that objectify it” (17). With such a conceptualization of temporality and subjectivity, Mbembe evidently offers a radical way of thinking about postcolonial societies. This, I argue, is something very important when making an analysis of Cinemalaya independent films insofar as they are understood to critically discuss issues and problems in the Philippine sociopolitical context.

Key theoretical insights on the postcolony crucial to the analysis of representation in Cinemalaya independent films are elaborated on in “The Aesthetics of Vulgarity.” Mbembe (2001) closely examines aspects of society that exhibit “the grotesque and the obscene” which indicate the banality of power in, and essentially characterize, the postcolony *and all such systems of domination for that matter* (102-03). Mbembe’s notion of the postcolony suggests, first, an understanding of a *particular system of signs that results in the creation of simulacra*. Second, the postcolony is where *political improvisation, excess, and the formation of identities* are exhibited to unimaginable proportions. And third, it is “made up of a series of corporate institutions and a political machinery that, once in place, constitute a *distinctive regime of violence*” (102; italics mine). This is realized by exploring how state power first creates meanings which are to be institutionalized and injected into the people’s consciousness. Focusing his analysis on Cameroon, where he was born, Mbembe locates various instances of the extravagant display and deployment of power by and in the body of the ruler who signifies the



*commandement*—the modality of authoritarianism which is, very importantly, also represented by its agents as well as among the ruled themselves. Mbembe argues that conventional interpretations of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled as something basically of resistance or reinforcement are outdated and inadequate, if not totally pointless. Instead, he describes this relationship as a “convivial” one, in that both the *commandement* and its subjects “share the same living space” (104).

Having already discussed the fundamental characteristics of the postcolony in the previously cited chapters, Mbembe (2001) interestingly adds in his analysis the similarly significant and meaningful aspect of reality as it is represented through signs and images in the postcolony. In “The Thing and Its Doubles,” he does not simply describe how the postcolony is symbolically expressed but also problematizes the notion that graphic signs and images supposedly represent reality. An image, he postulates, is not so much a matter of merely capturing presence or a way to make conclusive claims on what is real as it is about “its ‘likeness’—that is, its ability to annex and mime what it represents, while, in the very act of representation, masking the power of its own arbitrariness, its own potential for opacity, simulacrum, and distortion” (142). The symbolic representation of sovereign power and subjectivity in Cameroonian cartoons, he describes, shows a “process of mutual brutalization” where the subject also becomes an embodiment of power (167).

Thus, the framework (see Figure 1) first stresses that critically analyzing such films entails a consideration of their significance as cultural objects produced and received in the Philippine postcolony.

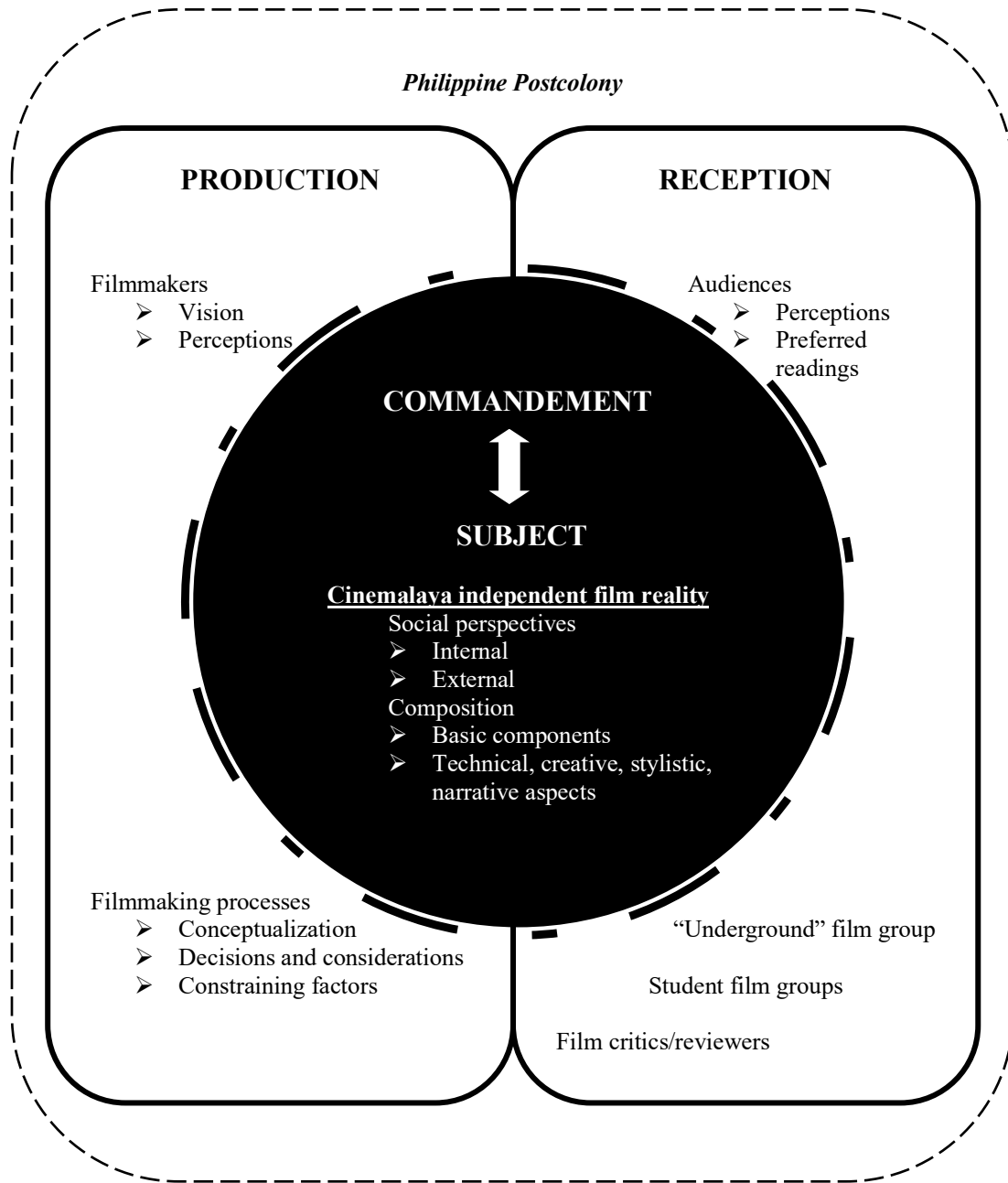


Figure 1. Consolidated analytical framework

The study primarily analyzes how social realities in the Philippine postcolony are represented in Cinemalaya independent films. As these films have been generally known



to discuss pressing social issues and problems, it is of particular interest to look into how power relations are depicted. As Mbembe (2001) again explains, the dominated subjects of the postcolony are portrayed in these films as having a convivial relationship with authority. The white double arrow in the discussion of *Cinemalaya independent film reality* signifies this relationship. Moreover, the field covered by the *production* phase intersecting *Cinemalaya independent film reality* suggests the agency of filmmakers behind their craft, as particularly implied by their personal visions and perceptions. Also very crucial here are the actual processes involved in making the selected films, from conceptualization to the filmmakers' personal decisions and considerations to the constraining factors that affected production. Finally, the other field covered by the *reception* phase also intersecting *Cinemalaya independent film reality* suggests how selected audiences, specifically those generally considered as film enthusiasts, make sense of such films.

## Methodology

This exploratory study pursues a qualitative orientation by looking into depictions of social reality in selected entries for the annual Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival from 2010 to 2014. I accordingly analyze data extracted from filmmakers, experts, and particular audiences primarily through in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. These are supplemented with data from secondary sources. As its point of departure I define independent films as films produced outside major film studios and depicting pressing social issues and problems in the Filipino context. In this regard, I analyze entries for Cinemalaya, as the festival has been a rich source of independent films of interest. Cinemalaya has also arguably become the most relevant and successful film festival in the country in terms of its increasing audience every year and the international recognition that its films consistently achieve. Although entries for Cinemalaya have in various instances been generalized to present Philippine social

realities, I select films using a nonprobability sampling method, particularly a nonproportional quota purposive sampling approach (Trochim, 2005). One entry was chosen per year from 2010 to 2014 (see Table).

**Table 1**

*Sample of Cinemalaya independent films from 2010 to 2014*

Year	Film	Director	No. of selected films
2010	<i>Halaw</i>	Sheron Dayoc	1
2011	<i>Bahay Bata</i>	Eduardo Roy, Jr.	1
2012	<i>Diablo</i>	Mes De Guzman	1
2013	<i>Transit</i>	Hannah Espia	1
2014	<i>Bwaya</i>	Francis Pasion	1
			Total = 5

This study generally utilizes an inductive reasoning process where the analysis of selected Cinemalaya independent films begins with specific observations and identifies patterns that eventually allow for the development of broader conclusions (Trochim 2005). Furthermore, this paper necessarily employs ways in which visual materials can be understood and studied specifically according to Gillian Rose (2001) in her book *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*. Before discussing the different approaches to studying the visual, Rose finds it appropriate to first propose at least three things to remember in order to achieve what she calls a “critical visual methodology” that understands visual materials not only in terms of how they appear but also as they are constructed by different social and technological practices (15-16).



Fundamental to the literature on visual objects in general are what Rose (2001) refers to as the “sites at which the meanings of an image are made,” which specifically are the following: first, the site(s) of the *production* of an image; second, the site of the *image* itself; and third, the site(s) of *audiencing* (16). While ongoing debates on where analysis should focus have seemingly separated these sites, Rose also suggests that it is possible to cover different sites depending on the kind of study one wishes to pursue. On this note, she also mentions that three so-called modalities—*technological*, meaning the apparatus used to show and enhance an image; *compositional*, as in the form and content of an image; and *social*, pertaining to the larger social, political and economic factors surrounding an image—allow for a deeper understanding of images analyzed at every site as earlier noted. I therefore investigate particular concerns regarding Cinemalaya independent films as they are analyzed at the said three sites of production, the image, and audiencing. The analysis of the selected films specifically involves relevant ways of studying visual materials. These include compositional interpretation, which is essentially a matter of developing what Rogoff calls “the good eye” (Rogoff as cited in Rose 2001, 33) apart from having an organized description of the *mise-en-scène*, montage, and narrative structure (Rose, 2001), and inevitably some semiological analysis, which largely focuses on understanding visual materials in terms of signs, each composed of the signifier and the signified whose interrelationship and syntagm help to reveal overarching ideological factors, and as seen in representations of bodies, manner, activity, and props and settings (Dyer as cited in Rose, 2001).

### **Power and Subjectivity in Five Cinemalaya Indie Films**

The five Cinemalaya films analyzed in this paper capture convivial power relations and the postcolonized form of subjectivity in their cinematic rendering of sociopolitical reality. Their representation of Philippine sociopolitical realities could be understood as showing how power is possessed and utilized by official authority just as well as supposedly



“dominated” or governed subjects. This perspective would sound perhaps insignificant until one realizes the detailed and sensible interpretation it presents against simplistic and uncritical ways of discussing power dynamics in the Philippine postcolony. Crucial to this is also how the films may be reflective of the largely problematic political narrative of the Philippines during the Aquino administration.

The production of the selected films indeed accounts for their representation of reality. The filmmakers, as in the directors, firm in their pursuit of a realistic and socially relevant work yet undeniably affected by constraining factors like finances and market demands, are able to conjure up such intricate depictions, in effect also demonstrating a more interesting kind of subjectivity themselves. This is important in understanding the production of indie films as also significantly political and not just an economic process.

Such a view of how reality is represented is reinforced by the local and even global reception of the selected films. A significant amount of reviews and perceptions about the films indeed refer to the pressing issues and problems addressed by the films in a more complicated than conventional manner. This indicates that particular audiences are able to sustain the discourse of the Philippine postcolony, which is arguably important when coming up with a critical assessment of not just indie films but of society at large.

### **A Critical Understanding of Reality**

The chief argument I advance in this paper is that, in accordance with the political theory of Achille Mbembe on the postcolony, indie films allow for the recognition of much more complex power dynamics in their representation of sociopolitical issues and problems. To be sure, making a comprehensive discussion of films relies first and foremost on one’s own observations and interpretations, despite some ways in which viewing as a primary method of research may be organized or structured by focusing on the composition of



visual materials, for instance, or by extracting meanings from signs through semiology. As emphasized by Rose (2001), one must always keep in mind to strive for a critical visual methodology in studying images. This entails the careful consideration of details, the context, and the vantage point one takes when dealing with visual materials. The specifics of this methodology notwithstanding, the point is that the role the researcher plays as an observer and viewer is crucial to a decent analysis. Thus, I mainly come from a position which finds it problematic how indie films have been placed within the purview of rather dualistic and enclosed frames. That is to say that conclusive opinions have been made about the social significance of such films without any real in-depth analyses particularly on power and subjectivity in their content and substance. I also deem it necessary to have a critical take on the sociopolitical milieu in which indie films have been produced. This is for the simple reason that undeniably there are contextual factors—provided in this case by the Aquino regime—behind the depiction of social reality in films. Ultimately, the general desire to bother to look into indie films is anchored on the assumption that such films have not really been appreciated appropriately enough to reach a more critical understanding and assessment of the Philippine predicament from not just a local but a global perspective, given the scope of the social issues tackled by the films.

Such a thorough analysis of the selected Cinemalaya films should yield more critical insights on power and subjectivity. The films very interestingly address power relations in a more complex manner. Characters are consistently portrayed as multidimensional actors in their extremely difficult sociopolitical contexts. Moreover, their relationship with official power and authority in its various, even seemingly invisible, forms could best be perceived of as in fact a convivial one. In this complex relationship, subjects, who might all too conveniently be judged as totally oppressed and enmeshed in their impoverished conditions, are actually able to creatively exercise power itself, even assuming multiple identities, not necessarily for their emancipation but perhaps simply as an exhibition of



how in the postcolony the supposed figures of official power—the *commandement*—and its subjects are both disempowered and brutalized in the process (Mbembe, 2001). In *Halaw* (2010), this could be said of Hernand’s deceptive attempt to work on behalf of the Philippine government to facilitate human trafficking (see Figures 2 and 3). Given the nature of illegal migration, *Halaw* evidently deals with what would be construed as a kind of “underground” activity involving characters. From beginning to end, it is apparent how the film details a whole phenomenon of undocumented Filipinos going to Sabah, which in effect allows the narrative to transcend a simplistic retelling of illegal migrants choosing to enter a foreign land because of extreme poverty in their home country. Instead, it offers a certain perspective: the general social condition in which subjects find themselves at a disadvantage, brought about by what may be deemed a highly politicized economic and legal order which results in the insignificant reduction, if not worsening, of poverty and unemployment, has also made it possible for the existence or rather simulation of such a parallel system and process of going about things, such that there is the exhibition of a kind of power play where the very signs and instruments of state power itself are utilized and appropriated by subjects in order to achieve their ends.



**Figures 2 and 3.** Presenting himself as a representative of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Hernand promises two young ladies in Mindanao they would be sure to land jobs in Malaysia. (Screenshots courtesy of Sheron Dayoc.)



*Bahay Bata* (2010) then tackles Sarah's madness brought about by her alienating profession as a nurse at Fabella, a government-run hospital. As Eduardo Roy, Jr. provides a seemingly generic explanation for *Bahay Bata* as a "pro-choice" film, the label as such is to be inevitably operationalized in the way Sarah's actions are done with a very specific portrayal in a certain social context. What is missing in such a categorization is how Sarah's action is triggered by a perceived urgent need for drastic measures to solve a serious situation of poverty, in the film as in actual events in Philippine society. In effect, a supposedly empowering decision to break free from and change a harsh environment is reduced into an unfortunately rash and violent resolution. In one remarkable scene, she is seen walking slowly, staring into the distance and not uttering a single word, as though she were a lunatic (see Figure 4). One would therefore find it difficult to dub *Bahay Bata* as a subversive independent film despite its boldness to take on a sensitive and relevant issue. But this assessment should not be surprising after all, as Roy himself acknowledges how the hospital staff in the film, while they are representatives of a public health institution, are likewise essentially oppressed subjects. He agrees that, "*Yes, oppressed din sila* (Yes, they are also oppressed)," also citing other scenes that show the same idea.<sup>1</sup> Such a perspective then on power and subjectivity is what may or even should be gleaned from *Bahay Bata*, as against how the film may be either viewed in shallow terms as simply a realistic and good illustration of poverty in the Philippines or noted for supposedly advocating as well as admonishing ideas, principles, and even persons involved in the issue of reproductive health.

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<sup>1</sup> Eduardo Roy, Jr., interview by the author, February 3, 2015, transcript, (translation mine).



**Figure 4.** While it may be read as an expression of resistance, the scene where a frustrated Sarah, played by Diana Zubiri, leaves Fabella may also be more of a confirmation of the character's depravity due to extreme and difficult social realities. (Screenshot courtesy of Eduardo Roy, Jr.)

Aling Lusing's schizophrenia in an otherwise tranquil provincial setting in *Diablo* (2012) is also worth discussing. As the film establishes some basic things about provincial life today in order to introduce an old woman's life alone in a house too spacious for her—so as to properly assess her family's status specifically by tackling her sons' conflicted identities—it subsequently manages to recapture Aling Lusing's situation from one that is supposedly uncomplicated to one that is convoluted and demented, even. Thus, as a result of life's difficulties, she is at once observed as this restrained, quiet, and highly religious local. Yet a closer analysis would interestingly reveal that her generally controlled self may be understood as rather a conglomeration of the subjectivities exhibited by her own sons: Oscar the ascetic's deep spirituality is comparable to her Catholic devotion as emphasized in her daily rituals and the many carved images of saints displayed in her



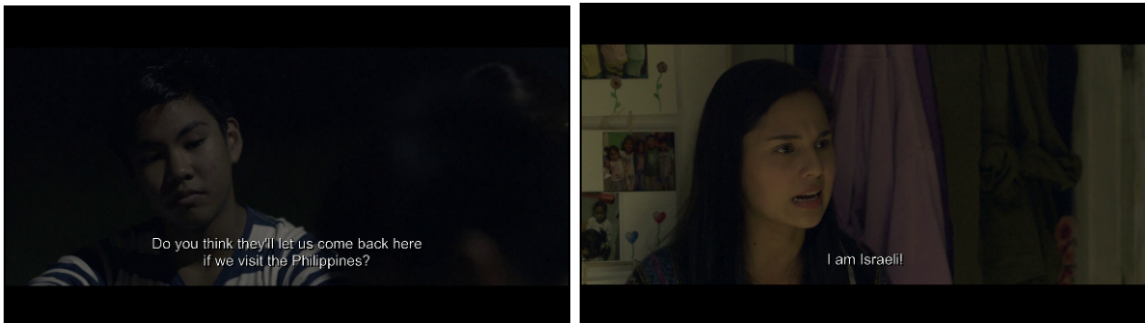
house; her generally contained frustration about life also matches Ruben the poor farmer's inner hatred and dissatisfaction; and while as a mother she definitely knows about the wrongdoings of Alberto the capitalist, she still tolerates him and gives him money. In short, the film suggests that circumstances in life, which may be attributed to the workings of the current modern capitalist society, have made Aling Lusing someone who takes in the form of multiple identities—both in a very personal and social manner, for that matter, as the conflation of her and her sons' subjectivities indicate how social problems trickle down to the very basic unit of society (see Figure 5). At the same time, there is a further defining dimension in Aling Lusing's complex character. In the film, a question is asked at least twice, "What, or who, is the demon?" This is repeatedly heard from the voice of a man, a preacher of the gospel, on the old radio which Aling Lusing always listens to before going to bed at night as well as when she wakes up in the morning. One could surmise that she does this to distract herself from acknowledging at the back of her head that she is being haunted by a dark figure while she sleeps at night. Yet for all its conjuration of darkness and horror, the shadow suggests Aling Lusing's own capacity or tendency to imagine and create such an appearance of evil, considering her predicament as a troubled mother. Hers then is a subjectivity that demonstrates creativity and excess not only in the material and tangible sense but also crucially in the psychological sense. Subjects in the film are therefore another set of more dynamic, nuanced, creative and highly complex than totally destitute and oppressed people.



**Figure 5.** The reflection of Aling Lusing, played by the late Ama Quiambao, combing her hair in the mirror is seen in contrast to her sons' framed photos placed on her dresser. (Screenshot courtesy of Rhea De Guzman.)

*Transit* (2013) details the plight of transnational Filipino identities being continually suppressed in the Israeli state. The glaring irony among the characters here is that the discrimination they are supposedly suffering, which indeed they are, also highlights their extant integration with Israeli society. Moreover, one must again consider how Filipinos have significantly adopted Israeli culture, especially in the case of Filipino children born in Israel who do not speak Filipino and are even clueless about the Philippines (see Figures 6 and 7). Interestingly, this is where the film also shows Filipino parents imposing particular ways and traditions believed to characterize the Filipino identity on their children. Subsequently, this aspect of their lives abroad may be conceived as how subjects assert themselves in spite of oppression. Janet always makes an effort to teach Yael things she deems every Filipino woman should know. Another instance is Joshua, who has started getting more interested in Jewish traditions, being constantly reminded

by his father Moises that they are Filipino. If there is one thing then that must be gleaned from such insights on how Filipinos have been integrated with Israeli society, it is that they underscore the centrality of mastering not only sociocultural relations but power relations to survive as postcolonial subjects.



**Figures 6 and 7.** Another layer to the complex matter tackled by Transit is how children of OFWs like Yael struggle to understand and embrace their rather remote “Filipino” identity as they have already been accustomed to life in Israel. (Screenshots courtesy of Hannah Espia.)

Finally, Divina’s hysteria is caused by a dysfunctional state just as much as by nature’s predatory tendencies in *Bwaya* (2014). Divina may easily come off as the poor mother who lost a child, what with her hysterical reaction upon learning about what happened, but her desperate cries and momentary insanity could also be a demonstration of her militant and resistant attitude against her helplessness, which again should account for her capacity to express sentiments against the lack of support she received from the local government and the media, among others. Her husband Rex, meanwhile, appears silent for the most part, but behind his seemingly cold reaction to the situation at hand and reserved demeanor is a firm resolve to search for her missing daughter (see Figures 8 and 9). If anything, these subjects further reveal something of essence about the Agusan Marsh community, not just as an impoverished and eccentric setting but also as a clear product of larger violent social structures. Indeed, *Bwaya* evidently traces the apparent



manifestations of this conjecture with Divina's much pronounced frustration about sociopolitical arrangements that supposedly exist for the community's welfare and her complaints against external groups or individuals who, for her, had done her family injustice by exploiting Rowena's story for their own interests. Yet the film also makes sure not to betray viewers by being confined to showing how subjects in a certain unjust society seem to assert themselves and, for that matter, exercise power for nothing. There certainly is more to *Bwaya* than a bunch of potent and, at the same time, pointless postcolonized subjects, especially as one could construe from a scene where Divina winds up having an encounter with the reptile that presumably killed Rowena. In spite of its sad story, *Bwaya* gives space for subjects to contemplate and assert themselves toward humanity's actualization in the seemingly self-destructing postcolony.



**Figures 8 and 9.** Divina's hysteria is the exact opposite of Rex's silence following the crocodile attack on their daughter. (Screenshots courtesy of Francis Pasion.)

Clearly, these indie films exhibit more complicated and nuanced sociopolitical realities about power dynamics than just "life as it is" or mere poverty. This kind of cinematic representation allows for a deeper reflection on Philippine society at large. Interestingly, the selected films are all the more worth studying because of the political context provided in particular by the Aquino regime, which may be assessed as likewise exhibiting the vagaries of the postcolony. As such, this sort of congruence between power dynamics as taking place in society and as rendered on screen by indie films only proves the



inevitable, if not inherent, relationship between film and politics. In the Philippine context, it can be said the postcolony is so pervasive as to set conditions for the production of cultural forms like indie films that serve as a significant reflection of its configurations. Thus, the contradictions of the Aquino regime, as seen especially in the blatant inconsistencies and expediencies of its reformist *daang matuwid* agenda, have in one way or another resulted in the kind of representation of reality found in indie films. Indeed, the fusion of state violence from above, as exhibited by various political scandals, and parallel economies from below, as demonstrated by rampant criminality, are to the Aquino regime as the discursive, visual, and symbolic forms of complex, convivial postcolonial power relations and subjectivity in the various facets of everyday life are to the five selected Cinemalaya indie films.

Again this means that, as in how “the image—or...representation—is never an exact copy of reality” (Mbembe, 2001, 142), indie films of course do not simply replicate sociopolitical realities that characterize the Philippine postcolony. Rather, they make possible the generation of more meaningful and critical insights on society and politics, or in short, of *simulacra* (102). In that case, the selected Cinemalaya films themselves, by way of their graphic and rather saturated depictions of the poverty, violence, criminality, carnality, bestiality and all imaginable excesses of the human being, are able to identify the manifold loci of power in the Philippine postcolony. This is the sort of analysis warranted of scholars and viewers alike, so as to come up with a sensible understanding of reality as in the multiple trajectories and the entanglement of the current Philippine sociopolitical predicament.

These points would not make any further sense of the veracity and efficacy of indie films unless one looks into another major detail. On this note, it would not be much of a stretch to observe the tendency of the selected films to have no closure. This is again easily





observed in *Halaw* (2010), whose scenes of subjects being threatened on Malaysian territory are repeated several times. In *Bahay Bata* (2011), the shot of a pregnant woman walking toward the hospital is reversed by that of Sarah leaving. *Diablo* (2012) may be said to feature different angles of Aling Lusing's solitude. *Transit* (2013) cleverly incorporates shots of airports. Finally, in a couple of scenes, *Bwaya* (2014) gives primary regard for the mythical essence and origins of life in the Agusan Marsh. This common technical feature of the selected films may be trivial at once, but it is also what makes them interestingly potent signs which could serve as commentaries on power. Besides, it should not be denied how these films, as their directors would explain, project reality in a relevant and urgent fashion. Thus, while this kind of circular motion and may be seen as the films' revelation of constant self-destruction and implosion, it may also signify the capacity of the postcolony to bend dominant linear rigid and irreversible notions of sociopolitical processes, which has yet to be realized. Besides, just as the postcolonial thinking is largely about "humanity-in-the-making" (Mbembe, 2008), indie films, from their technical aspects to their specific depictions, are by all means palimpsests of never-ending images and signs of intense power relations and subjectivity.

### Independent Filmmaking in the Postcolony

The production processes involved in the creation of the selected indie films are just as thoroughly interesting and revealing. Hence, the next main point is that taking production aspects, such as conceptualization, the filmmakers' intentions, technical considerations and financial and festival constraints, among others, into consideration is indispensable in understanding how indie films represent reality. Mainly guided by the principle of the found story, the directors of the selected films commonly profess the importance of capturing a realistic account of specific issues and problems being experienced by Filipinos. However, they are also undeniably and significantly constrained by their limited finances and by capitalist market forces driving Cinemalaya as a film festival.



On the surface, critical theory could provide insights to make sense of this. As Walter Benjamin (2007) would perhaps claim, the potential of film to render reality in different and more interesting ways may be said to make a significant social impact, if not a clear political statement, thereby allowing for the utilization of the means and modes of production for the achievement of social transformation. On the contrary, Theodor Adorno (1991) would be quick to dismiss seemingly independent and radical works of art as in many ways coopted by the dominant capitalist interests of the culture industry. While true in many aspects, these perspectives should not be taken as stark conclusions to the *raison d'être* of indie films, especially in the Philippines. Rather, they should be situated in a wider view that considers indie films and their production as not just operating in a purely economic sense. That is to say that given how filmmaking itself is not isolated from the same complex sociopolitical configurations characterizing the Philippine setting, the production of the selected indie films demands an analysis that acknowledges its existence as part of the postcolony.

In light of this, the production processes involved in the selected indie films as recounted by their directors reveal a crucial implication about representation. As I have learned from my interviews, the most interesting detail about the films in terms of production seems to be, not only the pronounced priority of the directors to show reality nor their limitations when it comes to the budget, but also what may well be considered their creativity in addressing such issues and challenges in filmmaking, which again is in no way indifferent from the sociopolitical dynamics of the Philippine postcolony. Therefore, it would not be surprising to say that in the production of indie films, the directors themselves, not just the fictional characters story-wise, likewise emerge and position themselves as subjects of the postcolony. This could well serve as a plausible theoretical foundation for why and how the directors respond to constraints as basic as the budget on the one hand and as strict as the institutional demands of Cinemalaya on the other. Hence, that indie films are



not able to subvert capitalist filmmaking is not simply due to economic reasons. It may well be because of more political factors behind filmmaking in the country which then result in a particular subjectivity which in turn creates the kind of distorted yet powerful representation of reality in film. Indeed, the extent to which the directors craft their films is not only a matter of how they manage their finances or simply yield to capitalist logics. The manner in which they envision their films and actually shoot social reality in response to their personal experiences of specific issues and problems in Philippine society and politics, particularly as perpetrated by the state, speaks volumes about their postcolonized subjectivities.

Sheron Dayoc, for instance, does not forget to mention the poor situation of illegal migrants as due to the inadequacies of the Philippine government. The same applies, obviously, to how Roy understands the plight of mothers as well as nurses in *Fabella*. Mes De Guzman is consistent with how the ironies and hypocrisies of rural society may be a reflection of the national predicament. Hannah Espia shows the lack, literally, of government support for Filipinos in Israel. And Francis Pasion may be said to allude to the state in tackling the extremely difficult and eccentric way of life in the Agusan Marsh. Following this, that the kind of imaginary at work behind the production of film emanates from official power and authority as in *Cinemalaya* as well as the state, it certainly makes sense to think that indie films show a critical view of reality not so much to defy oppressive structures as to reinforce them, in all their excesses, again as a testament to directors as subjects demonstrating an internalization and mastery of power comparable to “authoritarian epistemology” (Mbembe, 2001, 128). This is the principle behind the struggles, personal experiences, bargains, sacrifices, and all other efforts it took the filmmakers to produce their indie films.



In hindsight, however, this is not to say that these filmmakers are bound to fail in their pursuit of a cinema that would correspond to a society espousing the values and principles they seem to promote in their films, values which mostly profess human dignity and a deeper level of democracy. For while the directors firmly express their intention to expose reality in all its contradictions and complexities, they do so in a manner deviating from a focus on a singular embodiment of power characteristic of Cameroonian cartoons where the autocrat is omnipresent as to define a hallucinatory mode of writing (Mbembe, 2001). Instead, they point criticism toward multiple forms of the *commandement*, signaling a more comprehensive, structural and possibly emancipatory, not hallucinatory, recognition of social issues. In a similar way, this suggests that authorship, as in the production and creation of indie films, has to be situated in the specific dynamics of the postcolony. The significant role of research undertaken by the directors in the making of their films, for instance, assures that their objective to inculcate or at least show relevant content is not out of touch with realities on the ground, thus making their films proximate to raw, nuanced, and lived experiences and away as much as possible from ostentatious and irresponsible tendencies. While these directors for the most part would often leave the reception of their films to audiences, they ultimately whimper about the systemic issues hounding Philippine cinema and society. Roy shares why he makes films like *Bahay Bata* despite limitations on many fronts,

*Kaya nga tayo gumagawa ng pelikula at hindi tayo tumitigil kasi nangangarap ka na darating 'yung panahon na 'yung pelikula mo ay hindi lang iilan ang manonood dahil ang pelikulang ito ay ginawa para sa nakakarami. As a filmmaker gusto ko rin na ma-appreciate ng hindi lang iilang manonood 'yung pelikula. 'Yon, umaasa ako at nangangarap. (That's why we keep on making indie films because we are hoping that someday these films would reach a wider audience. As a filmmaker, I want my films*



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*to be appreciated not only by a few. So I continue to hope for the better.)<sup>2</sup>*

Likewise, Espia's outlook on *Transit* is also crucial for an analysis of whether indie films provide room for subjects to surpass their ordeal. In this regard, one may take a cue from the film's evident biblical references. The characters of Moises and Joshua are the more obvious adaptations of the corresponding figures in the Old Testament. Beyond how the Philippines is a "nation in transit," in light of the presence of numerous Filipinos around the world, is its continuing transformation into, and its people's search for, a "promised land." Espia further explains, "That's why it's Moises and Joshua. And we have the Moises who will lead the people out of slavery but will never see the Promised Land. And then we have the Joshua who is the hope of the nation, in reference to the younger generation who might be able to see our land transform into this 'promised land' filled with milk and honey."<sup>3</sup> *Transit* therefore makes a parallel account through the fate of Joshua. To conclude therefore that this character ends up in total misery would be uncritical, given the vast universe of possibilities still ahead of him. Producing indie films is therefore an endeavor that involves the very specific ways in which filmmakers position themselves in the face of challenges whether in the form of capitalist forces encouraged by Cinemalaya itself or of the sociopolitical problems characterizing the regime.

### Talking about Indie Films

Furthermore, this kind of analysis would prove even more worth considering with a close examination of how audiences perceive and interpret the selected films. As I have gleaned from critics through a survey of their reviews online as well as from film enthusiasts through focus group discussions, the selected films seem to consistently

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<sup>2</sup> Roy, Jr. interview by the author.

<sup>3</sup> Espia, interview by the author.



solicit opinions more insightful than expected. While undeniably there are reviews and responses quick to criticize the films mainly for their slow pace, raw appearance, and esoteric themes, there are more interesting ones, regardless of whether they are negative or positive, which eagerly talk about their actual content and substance.

Indeed, this could be explained basically as viewers being used to the aesthetics of a particular kind of cinema, one that keeps them at least engaged and awake as most mainstream commercial films perhaps do, that they easily retract once they encounter indie films. Under the same logic, viewers who find themselves into indie films may also be understood as belonging to a certain niche market which in effect makes the said films only part of the same capitalist film industry. Or it could be that viewers indeed find such indie films appealing that they form perceptions that could be of social significance altogether.

Much like how the production of the selected films would be inadequately understood without contextualization, I argue that before anything else the aspect of reception should also be sensitively framed within the Philippine sociopolitical setting, not just as a result of an already existing mechanism. Given this, it is quite astounding how audiences are to a significant extent able to sustain the discourse of the postcolony in their interpretations of the five films, therefore confirming the central argument that the representation of reality in indie films reveals more complex power relations and subjectivity. For instance, the kind of global concern that *Halaw* has achieved warrants attention in the sense that local and foreign critics may be said to touch on subjectivity in their specific analyses of the characters caught up in the situation tackled in the film. Describing how Hernand and Mercedes, for example, both work their way through the whole process by means of deception and charm, respectively, Stefan S (2012) notes how Dayoc “crafts an amalgamation of characters, each personifying the typical caricature one

would find onboard a boat that's illegally crossing borders under the cover of darkness of night." For Adrian Mendizabal, a media studies graduate student from the University of the Philippines who was mainly responsible for the creation of the Facebook group "CINEPHILES," the characters may be understood as trying to break free from their poverty but are not emancipated in the end. He explains that "they're trying to be, productive, *'yon, pero hindi siya* (but not) totally. [Their action] doesn't give them full autonomy" from their oppressive situation, considering the fact that their efforts do not result in any radical structural change.<sup>4</sup>

Likewise, *Bahay Bata* registers an image of more dynamic human stories than of bleak poverty is a consensus especially among local critics. "It sounds like dreary stuff," writes Philbert Dy (2011) as published on *ClickTheCity.com*, "but the film handles everything with both sympathy and a dark sense of humor." He also notices how "the film's austere style has its drawbacks," as the earlier cited reviews would argue, but points out that, "in bursts, it makes for some truly captivating cinema." And this may well be explicated by Tessa Maria Guazon (2012), a member of the Young Critics Circle – Film Desk, who comes up with an elaborate illustration, for instance, of the situation of patients and hospital staff alike during Christmas in *Fabella*,

*Ward life is recorded in vignettes, women joking about 'holding in' the birth of their children because cash prizes were given to babies born on Christmas and New Year's Eve. Adolescent girls chatter with delight about how they met their husbands and boyfriends while working breast pumps to feed their babies in incubators. Hospital staff drew lots for their forthcoming Christmas party, gleefully told that a cash prize awaits winners in the dance competition. We learn that Sarah is made pregnant*

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<sup>4</sup> Adrian Mendizabal (film enthusiast) in discussion with the author, February 7, 2015.



*by her married lover. While fellow nurses dream of rounds in a Canada ward, Sarah remains undecided about her application. Christmas is to come and the nurses bemoan the fact that they had been on Christmas Eve duty for two consecutive years.*

As for *Diablo*, the perceived demon points to a rather intricate social arrangement in which human subjects transform into shadowy identities as they are nonetheless subjugated by oppressive social structures. The individual members of a particular Filipino family in the province and their interactions and conflict between and among each other may be said to illustrate the dynamics of Philippine society at large, as Bern Torente, a member of UP Cinema, claims, "*Sa tingin ko yung general notion of it is yung buong pamilya is a representation of society. Kasi yung anak na isa, siya yung religious fanatic. Yung nanay, siya yung conservative. Tapos yung isa naman na pineperahan siya, siya yung kapitalistang mga taong ganon.* (I think the general notion of family as featured in the film is how it is a representation of society. One of the sons, for example, is a religious fanatic while the mother is someone who upholds conservative values and tradition. And then there is a son fixated on extracting money from the mother. He may be likened to a greedy capitalist in real life.)"<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Armando Dela Cruz, founder of the online review site Film Police Reviews, blurs the line between the social and the familial, "I guess if you want to relate this to the system, basically *ito yung paghihimay ng pinakamaliit na institusyon natin* (this is an examination of the family as the smallest institution in society) and how within that institution, *meron pa ring corruption* (there is still corruption)."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Bern Torente (film student) in discussion with the author, February 9, 2015, (translation mine).

<sup>6</sup> Armando Dela Cruz (film enthusiast) in discussion with the author, August 14, 2015, (translation mine).





For all the confusion and ambivalence it seems to invoke, identity in *Transit* as discussed by local and foreign viewers themselves ultimately refers to the interesting kind of subjectivity ensuing from complex power relations. Writing for *IndieWire*, Carlos Aguilar (2013), another foreign critic, believes,

*Thought provoking and carefully constructed to expose the complexity of the matter at hand in an encompassing fashion, Espia's film delves into a defining part of the modern Filipino identity, one that affects those abroad and in the island nation. Giving each of the participants a particular voice paints a broad picture which questions the morality of the policy at the center of the story. With a proficient ensemble cast and a meticulous attention to its narrative structure, Transit is a poignant exploration of national identity in the increasingly globalized world we all live in today.*

In view of how such local and international audiences make sense of *Transit*, the Filipino identity is to be understood as stemming from sociopolitical configurations that shape, govern, and hence define subjects, in this case configurations characterized by the execution of rigid and clear-cut legal formulations of nationality or citizenship put forth by totalitarian forces that end up catalyzing human capacities. To reiterate, the Filipino identity here mainly consists of the multidimensional subjectivity arising from complex power dynamics in the postcolony.

Indeed, many viewers perceive the crocodile in *Bwaya* beyond its literal and physical form, attributing to it relevant social structures and entities that may be observed in the general configuration of the Agusan Marsh. The media, notorious for supposedly exploiting the story of Rowena, as has been highlighted, is the most obvious



manifestation of the *bwaya*. The local government, itself disorganized, almost entirely unreliable and simply lacking in resources, may well be considered a major factor behind the impoverished community in the Agusan Marsh, as Karl Barit, a UP Cineastes' Studio member and film student, explains, "*ginamit yung metaphor ng bwaya, na parang sila rin binubuwaya nung mga LGU nila doon. So medyo clear din naman sa Bwaya yung mga context na sociopolitical.* (The film uses the crocodile as a metaphor for the seemingly predatory local government unit in the Agusan Marsh. So it's quite clear *Bwaya* tackles the sociopolitical context of the story.)"<sup>7</sup> The floating public school, ironically "an institution that is tasked to nurture and care," as Vinny Tagle (2015) describes in his article for *The Manila Review*, may also be considered at fault for simply being incompatible with the complicated situation of the community. Tagle clarifies that the school "wasn't really directly responsible for Rowena's death even if she was on her way there the day she was attacked" but maintains "Pasion subtly hints at its predatory nature nonetheless: Prior to the incident, Rowena and her mother scramble to find enough money so she can pay her school fees and be allowed to graduate." The list could go on, but among the many things which may be considered and aside from what has been cited, critics seem to stress a very interesting way one should understand the significance of the *bwaya*: that as a matter of fact it represents the human being.

Yet this finding is crucial not only for the credibility of this study, but also for a necessary evaluation of dominant appraisals of indie films. It seems one major problem with much of the scholarship on contemporary indie films in the Philippines is that such films have been reduced to merely representing social issues in a bleak manner for the most part. Hence, indie films are confined within perspectives that subscribe mainly to tenets of neorealist filmmaking or to rather dismissive critiques of poverty porn. As a result, indie

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<sup>7</sup> Karl Barit (film student) in discussion with the author, February 9, 2015, (translation mine).



films are not appreciated to the fullest, not necessarily in a positive sense but in a more critical way. Consider also how UP film scholar Rolando Tolentino describes these films,

*Things will go on. Kasi nga (Because), as in real life as we know, in actual life, hindi naman talaga mababago nang (you cannot really change in) major ways ang buhay natin (our lives). We will just proceed with whatever baggage we have. Or 'yung predicament natin, 'yung socioeconomic conditions siguro (our predicament, as in our socioeconomic conditions) which we're enmeshed in, it will not really shift. Walang (There's no) life-altering shift, as in most of these films ah. They just proceed. So ito 'yung style na nag-develop. (This is the style that developed.)*<sup>8</sup>

On the contrary, the reviews and opinions I have cited generate a more substantial way of making sense of the selected indie films. Against such one-dimensional assessments, they are interestingly able to articulate in a detailed manner how these films deal with complex and brutalizing power relations and subjectivity in the postcolony, characterized by figures of authority and their agents coexisting with subjects who themselves deploy power as they take in the form of multiple identities. In other words, such nuanced perspectives on indie films register a kind of reception able to significantly absorb a depiction of reality in terms of the twists and turns of the postcolony. As such, these conversations are then important not only because they shed light on a fresh understanding of indie films but also because they present potential implications about sociopolitical transformation at the very least by tracing and addressing power and subjectivity in very specific areas of Philippine society and politics at large. At the same time, these insights altogether highlight the crucial capacity of indie films to open

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<sup>8</sup> Rolando Tolentino, interview by the author, January 30, 2015, transcript.



possibilities for the articulation and interpretation of social reality. That “it’s up to the audience” according to the filmmakers themselves further signals how indie films are useful and powerful works of the postcolony.

### Indie Films and the Global Postcolony

An analysis which puts the spotlight on the vicissitudes of the postcolony must necessarily grapple with how the selected indie films as they represent reality could also lead to a reassessment of sociopolitical issues and problems from a global perspective, as indeed the postcolony “cannot be conceptualized outside a world that is, so to speak, globalized” for the same reasons pertaining to the fact that, as I have pointed out, much of the theoretical and empirical work on it has been oppressively inadequate (Mbembe, 2001, 9-11).

The five Cinemalaya films allow for a much deeper and more critical understanding of sociopolitical reality not only from a local or national but a global point of view. Arguably, each of the films tackles a specific subject matter not without reference to its connections to international and transnational sociopolitical processes and dynamics, again proving the idea that indie films are able to paint a picture of globalization, which Scholte (2002) defines as “the spread of transplanetary—and in recent times more particularly supraterrestrial—connections between people” who are “more able—physically, legally, culturally, and psychologically—to engage with each other in ‘one world’” (14). *Halaw* (2010) indeed features a crisis involving not only Filipinos from Mindanao but all conflicted peoples—refugees, asylum seekers, migrants—wanting to seek greener pastures elsewhere. *Bahay Bata* (2011) exposes the extremely poor situation of public health institutions in the Philippines so much so that health workers are easily convinced to also grab opportunities abroad. *Diablo* (2012) may be said to juxtapose modernity and tradition in the motivations of its characters and in the troubled atmosphere of the



province. *Transit* (2013) captures the plight of Filipino laborers and their families overseas, highlighting the difficulties they encounter especially under oppressive political regimes. Finally, *Bwaya* (2014) signifies the thoroughly disadvantaged position of remote communities despite so-called development and progress as purportedly pursued on a global scale.

The five selected films also seem to have glaring thematic similarities which allow for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the postcolony. One is the rather curious take on the plight of Filipino women in various aspects of society. *Halaw* (2010) delves into how female prostitutes are in essence victims of human trafficking. *Bahay Bata* (2011) obviously shows the suffering of many poor mothers whose lives are in danger in a country that is struggling to address reproductive health. *Diablo* (2012) serves as its filmmaker's tribute to the matriarch of a family in the province, revealing the literally silencing feature of a highly patriarchal society. *Transit* (2013) suggests that being a female Filipino overseas is yet another layer that further complicates the status of many already suffering Filipino women across the globe. And *Bwaya* (2014) sheds light on the sentiments and frustrations of a mother under the poorest of poor conditions. These could only point out the centrality of feminist and gender-sensitive perspectives in critically assessing and addressing the Philippine postcolony in the context of globalization.

Interestingly, another common factor among the selected films is the ubiquity of religious and spiritual elements in the social and political fabric of the postcolony. *Halaw* (2010) deals with this, albeit in an implied manner, in the general discussion of illegal migration involving impoverished people from Mindanao. The other films, however, arguably make a more conscious effort to underscore its significance. *Bahay Bata* (2011) boldly contrasts the jubilant atmosphere of Christmas with the pain and extreme poverty experienced by



patients in Fabella. *Diablo* (2012) explicitly touches on the ironies that come with the centrality of religious principles behind ways of living in the province. *Transit* (2013) incorporates the religious elements of conflict and identity, appreciating Jewish and Christian traditions and alluding to certain biblical events and characters. And *Bwaya* (2014) inevitably gives particular focus on myth and spirituality and how these have a special role in understanding the Agusan Marsh community. As the films make apparent, religion and spirituality are intrinsic to the dynamism of power relations and subjectivity in the Philippine postcolony.

All in all, these films are a dense amalgamation of the current global predicament, which appears smooth sailing at face value but is actually in many convoluted ways seriously problematic, violent, and oppressive. To extend this assessment, a more profound and critical understanding of the films should perhaps also pay attention to how the eccentricities of the postcolony as such have after all this time been brought about by neoliberal conditions of “global economic interdependence rooted in the principles of free-market capitalism” purportedly geared toward fulfilling the well-being of society (Steger and Roy, 2010, 11-12). But as the films show rather emphatically, the reality of the postcolony is nowhere near the neoliberal ideal, if any, as again illustrated by the countless ways Filipinos are mired in poverty, in the Philippines and beyond. This by all means can be said of the Philippines under Aquino’s *daang matuwid* agenda, whose projects, programs, policies and other ventures, pursued in neoliberal terms, certainly benefited only a few to the detriment of many. Yet as the films likewise demonstrate, the persistence of unequal and oppressive social, economic, and political relations under neoliberalism results not so much in conventional arrangements as in convivial power relations between authority and its subjects.



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## Conclusion

At a glance, this paper may appear as though addressing an inquiry that is rather basic. How do indie films show reality? More specifically, how do they represent reality as illustrated by power relations and subjectivity in the Philippine context? Considering the general impact they have had on Philippine cinema especially since their grand reentrance in the 2000s with the help of digital technology, which made possible among others the democratization of an otherwise expensive filmmaking tradition, indeed a lot of discussions and intellectual effort have been made to understand independent films. But while the current literature has been able to touch on the sociopolitical significance of such films in several ways, especially in terms of how they have purportedly revolutionized filmmaking for emancipatory ends or have only wound up being reified by capitalist interests, there still seems to be a need to actually study indie films in a more detailed fashion.

This paper therefore extends the literature by taking a few steps back and putting five Cinemalaya entries from 2010 to 2014 in perspective primarily by digging deeper into how they represent sociopolitical reality. Drawing from Achille Mbembe's political theory on the postcolony as a crucial extension of Walter Benjamin's and Theodor Adorno's thoughts on works of art in the capitalist mode of production, I have argued that the five films represent reality such that they project complex power relations and subjectivity.

This argument would become more sensible when first understood in light of the apparently tortuous political landscape of the administration of Benigno S. Aquino III. In the beginning, this Aquino regime seemed to revitalize Philippine democracy with its reformist *daang matuwid* agenda, mainly going after corrupt politicians and ensuring the growth of the economy. But a thorough review of this regime would reveal otherwise, as numerous political controversies and scandals involving Aquino himself only exposed the



Philippine state's manipulative and questionable deployment of power and authority. Likewise, such a contradictory regime mirrored the plethora of social issues and problems which placed power at the disposal of the people themselves. In this regard, indie films may prove to be reflective of the political regime in which they were produced.

To reiterate, such a configuration is seen in how in each of the films the *commandement* as in the mode of sovereignty and its instruments apply coercive means toward subjects who then submit to authority in a fetishistic manner as to internalize power and alter the ways it can be used even by assuming multiple identities. As a result, however, there is no absolute domination for both are mutually brutalized in such a convivial process. Reality is represented as such in *Halaw* (2010), where many Filipinos in Mindanao due to their poor conditions would rather choose to risk their lives and defy established borders by participating in illegal migration; in *Bahay Bata* (2011), where nurses and patients alike bear the brunt of the country's deteriorating health system; in *Diablo* (2012), where provincial life is complicated and compromised by the pervasive and extractive forces of modernity; in *Transit* (2013), where Filipinos in Israel form a conflicted identity as they experience discrimination which may well be brought about by the lack of support from the Philippine government, and; in *Bwaya* (2014), where the crocodile attack on a young spirited Manobo girl may be said to unravel the distinct social dynamics of the community in the Agusan Marsh as well as its problematic distant relationship with the state.

This paper has also pointed out how the production aspects of indie films significantly factor in how reality is cinematically represented. While in this regard the filmmakers' main intention to capture events and issues as realistically and authentically as possible as well as the inevitable economic constraints of filmmaking are of importance in understanding how indie films are produced, it is crucial to also take note of how the filmmakers themselves act as dynamic subjects of the postcolony, to an extent where





even the said main factors behind production may be considered only secondary. A deeper understanding then of how indie films represent reality is that the configurations of the postcolony tackled diagetically or story-wise may indeed be rooted in the subjectivity of the filmmakers. This illustrates the essential role that filmmakers have behind the representation of reality in films.

Furthermore, this paper has also confirmed its main argument by carefully taking into account the reception of the films. More than simply expressing basic reactions of appreciation or dissatisfaction, critics and viewers alike are actually able to generate meaningful insights about the substance of indie films. Indeed, a considerable amount of reviews and responses likewise recognize in the films the dynamics of the postcolony. Aside from supporting the argument of this study, such a nuanced reception is also significant because it suggests the existence of a conversation or at least a particular sphere among viewers, both local and foreign, which carries and sustains the discourse of the postcolony addressing issues and problems in society at large.

Ultimately what all of these findings and insights on the five selected Cinemalaya indie films strongly suggest is a rather distinct way of defining indie films and understanding how they represent reality. And it is simply that there is no closing the definition of indie films just as there is no simplifying the Philippine postcolonial situation. As their production and reception, aside from their content, demonstrate, indie films are instead to be understood as where positionalities are at work, an exercise in articulating and rearticulating representations of reality involving complex power relations and subjectivity within the politics of identity in the capitalist mode of production. The indie film is therefore not a closed category but a positional and tensional one.



In view of all these, this paper has stressed that indie films allow for a necessary reconsideration of the principles, values and precepts being adopted by Philippine society especially in the context of globalization. The selected films in particular show how the many portrayals of violence, poverty, and excesses of the postcolony are brought about by the neoliberal arrangement of things, not really toward the realization of a better society but instead the further complication of the human condition.

This paper would also not be complete without touching on the eschatological status of indie films. In light of Mbembe's detailed account of power relations in the postcolony as something that leads to the mutual brutalization of authority and its subjects, it may therefore be said that indie films represent reality in the same manner. And by doing so, they are able to demonstrate power, not so much to subvert domination as to confirm, or be a manifestation of, it. That is, for now, at least, since the postcolony is not to be taken as a finished process but a negotiated arena. At the very least, the identification of various loci of power made possible by indie films, in their curious negotiations of gender and religion in society and politics, for instance, could be indicative of its maturation for or as a mark of radical social transformation.

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## Clientelism as Constraint to Co-production in the Philippines

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### Introduction

Dominant features of Philippine politics such as patron-client relations have penetrated Philippine public administration and have effectively shaped it. Despite the fact that scholars have established a dichotomy between politics and public administration, such a dichotomy is not at all discernible as the discipline of public administration is not insulated from politics (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2008).<sup>1</sup> Essentially, the dichotomy situates the study of political processes within the ambit of politics, while the inquiry into the management of the State and the formulation and execution of policy is within the sphere of administration (Reyes, 1979). However, in the Philippines, the discipline and practice of politics and public administration feel no sense of insecurity or separation towards each other. The infiltration of Philippine politics into public administration is central in this analysis and will be extensively discussed in this desk research.

This preliminary desk research is an attempt to interrogate how dominant features of clientelism in Philippine politics impedes co-production. It argues that the very nature of clientelism works against co-production and that in highly clientelistic polities it is unlikely for co-productive engagements to succeed. The paper formulates three hypotheses,

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<sup>1</sup>Woodrow Wilson (as cited in Brillantes & Fernandez, 2008), in his classic work entitled *The Study of Public Administration* published in 1887 pointed out the dichotomy between politics and public administration. He argued that public administration emerged out of the mother discipline of political science and that many of its concepts and principles are borrowed from other social science disciplines, it exists as an entirely separate and independent discipline. Brillantes and Fernandez (2008), however, noted that the dichotomy, which has spurred debates among public administration scholars, is superficial or non-existent at all.



which are stand alone arguments and could be individually pursued as starting points for a more detailed inquiry.

While there are studies investigating costs that go with co-production arrangements like the absence of mechanisms to guarantee accountability and conflicts that adversely affect group processes, there is scant research on political relations that serve to constrain co-production (Williams, Seong, & Johnson, 2015). The inquiry, however, zeroes in on the dominant feature of patron-client relations in local Philippine politics and will not anymore extend to other perceptible patterns of political relationships like Benedict Kerkvliet's (2013; 1986) class politics, John Sidel's (1999) bossism and the use of political violence, and the patrimonial oligarchic politics of Paul Hutchcroft (1998).

The paper is divided into four sections. The first section is the introduction. It briefly highlights the central research question, the main argument of the paper, and the methodology. The second section operationalizes the two dominant concepts in the paper-co-production and clientelism. The third section puts to the fore the three hypotheses and preliminarily advances its arguments. The last section contains the summary and concluding notes of the paper.





## Operationalizing Co-production and Clientelism

### *The Nature of Co-production*

Before we begin to examine how dominant features of clientelism in Philippine local politics hinder or constrain co-production, it is prudent to examine the nature of the co-production paradigm.<sup>2</sup>

Ostrom (1996) clearly puts forth an unambiguous definition of co-production. She defines it as “a process through which inputs used to provide a good or service are contributions by individuals who are not in the same organization” (p. 242). Jacobsen and Anderson (2013), refining Ostrom’s seemingly broad definition, defines it as a process “involving the mixing of co-productive efforts of regular and consumer-producers. This mixing may occur directly, involving coordinated efforts in the same production process, or indirectly through independent yet related efforts of the regular producers and consumer-producers” (p. 709). Bovaird, Van Ryzin, Loeffler, and Parrado (2015) suggest that this is the process of contributing resources by the end users of the service themselves in order to elevate the quantity and quality of the service being delivered. In the same vein, Bovaird and colleagues (2015) point out that co-production is a condition where

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<sup>2</sup> The co-production paradigm developed by Elinor Ostrom and his cohorts in the Indiana University Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis in the 1980s is a radical way of looking at public service delivery. Prior to the formulation of the paradigm of co-production, the dominant belief in the 1970s is that public services were best delivered by a professional staff of a bureaucratic agency. This belief was supported by several myths about public goods. For example, in an article published in 1993 [which](#) focused on the collective approach to governance in the local level, Elinor Ostrom (1993) cited the reality that whenever communities are confronted with the question of what must be done by the community when faced with certain collective issues- the answer was that it should approach the government and seek solutions from it. This perspective emanates from the warped viewpoint which suggests that communities and individuals are vulnerable and inept entities and beings. There is, therefore, the myth that there is just one producer of services within a given territory. Second, there was the belief that public officials were, at all times, at the disposal of whatever their superior tells them. And third, there was the viewpoint that the production of service did not anymore require the participation of those who would get to use or receive it. The prevailing belief was that compartmentalizing and institutionalizing relationships between the policy-makers, service providers, and the end users of public services will ultimately result in the enhancement of accountability in public service delivery (Lamba, 2010). However, at that time there was no compelling empirical basis to support this standpoint (Ostrom, 1996).



“professionals and citizens make better use of each others’ assets, resources, and contributions to achieve better outcomes or improve efficiency” (p. 5). From these definitions, clearly, co-production is a unique way of conceptualizing public services which carry along the possibility of a radical transition in the manner that public services such as health, education, housing, and many more are delivered (Boyle & Harris, 2009).

At the core of the co-production paradigm is the recognition that citizens are not anymore non-participative clients, but are active co-producers of public goods and services (Fledderus, Brandsen, & Honingh, 2013).<sup>3</sup> The paradigm introduced a veering away from the state-centered public service delivery perspective and challenges the age-old approach of putting the consumer of public services on a collision course with the provider of the service (Needham, 2008). Prior to the 1980s, public services was always viewed as an activity handled by a professional group or team of individuals who are bound by the duty to accomplish results in pursuit of the interest of the public. However, Pestoff (2009) notes that the delivery of public services proved to be extremely difficult in the absence of citizen or end-user participation. In many instances, the customer does the task to be accomplished by the service delivery professional (Bovaird et al, 2015). The involvement of these non-public sector entities results in effective public service delivery (Williams, Seong, & Johnson, 2016). Through time, public administration practitioners and scholars came to realize that it is more advantageous for service delivery to require the inputs of the users of the service in order to make them more effective (Bovaird et al, 2015). Unarguably, co-production transcends citizen participation as citizens are not only involved in the process of decision-making but are involved in executing public policy

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<sup>3</sup> Alford (2014) explains that fundamental in the whole co-production framework is the idea that consumption of public goods and services is not the only area where citizens can participate. Citizen participation can also take place in the production of public goods and services.

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(Ostrom, 1996). These virtues make co-production an essential dimension in the existing literature of citizen participation (Jacobsen, & Anderson, 2013).

But while co-production appears to be a very promising emerging praxis in Philippine public administration especially in ameliorating the delivery of public services, enduring patterns and continuities in local Philippine political relations impede its success. One scholar points out that despite the many discernible changes in Philippine politics after Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law in 1972, and even after the overthrow of the former dictator via a people power revolution, still, there is a “sad constancy” of a state of politics and economy that remains presided over by a relatively narrow and resistant circle of families (Timberman, 2015; McCoy, 2017). Studies have shown that the interest and goals of these families and ties to these political formations are incongruent to collective developmental goals and objectives. Paul Hutchcroft (1991) observes that despite more than 15 years of authoritarian administration and several years of democratic restoration under Cory Aquino, the politics and economy of the country has exhibited continuities rather than discontinuities.

### ***Clientelism and Other Features and Continuities in Local Philippine Politics as Constraints to Co-production***

The Philippines has a formal mechanism of decentralization incorporated in its constitution and enshrines local autonomy as a State principle. In 1991, Congress passed the Local Government Code (LGC) which provided a legal framework for local autonomy. It contained provisions which specified functions, revenue-sharing schemes between the national and the local government, revenue generation instruments, and platforms for civil society engagement and participation in the process of governance. In great measure, avenues for co-production have been made available with decentralization and civil society participation (Brillantes & Cuachon, 2002). But despite the fact that an



enabling condition has been made available for co-production, which could potentially enhance the delivery of public goods and services, political realities in the Philippines especially in the local government units where the interaction between the state and civil society frequently takes place constrain co-productive ventures. For example, Abinales (1998) notes of the existence of "strongmen" who, at the local level, exercise immense power and influence given their tremendous hegemony over estate as well as over the state apparatus in the sub-national level. Dominance is held by these strongmen through an intricate web of networks of supporters and command over major enterprises and economic activities. Abinales argued that the existence of these strongmen contributes to the forging of a weak Philippine state. Temario Rivera (as cited in McCoy, 2017) points out that the obstinacy of a weak Philippine state makes it cumbersome to carry out sovereign policies free from the influence of narrow interests of powerful groups particularly the ascendant families, clans, and kinship complexes. These ascendant families and clans are the small sector of elites that riddle the country's political system. They are the powers that hijack elections using their tools like fraud, vote-buying clientelism, and use of coercion and violence. They subvert the electoral process by dictating its outcome thereby erasing any semblance of it being free and fair. Once they gain access to the political office, they use the powers in their acquired position to solidify their control of the office by accessing state resources and utilizing these for clientelistic activities. Using the powers and prerogatives of their office, they pursue rent-seeking ventures, extend favors and concessions to economic elites, and increase their power and wealth (Tuazon, 2016).

### ***The Nature of Patron-Client Factional Relations***

Contemporary scholars of Philippine politics like Quimpo (2012), Kerkvliet (1995), and Kimura (2018), suggest clear patterns of patron-client relations established during the Spanish colonization and enduring up to the post-war period. This pattern of exchange



relations, anchored on the reciprocity between two individuals of unequal status and wealth- the wealthy and landed patron and a poor and economically-deprived client, expanded and formed a network of vertical pyramidal ties. Quimpo (2012) explains that this vertical dyadic pattern forms the basis of organizing the base of support of the two contending political parties (the Liberal and the Nacionalista) - with each party constructing an elaborate vertical network of patrons and clients from the provincial level all the way down to the towns and villages. It is, however, worth noting that the patron-client factional framework cannot account for all relationships in local Philippine politics. But needless to say, it remains to be the dominant framework of analyzing political relations despite the modernization and transition of societies from agrarian to industrial with the penetration of capitalism into agriculture (Kerkvliet, 1995).

James Scott (1972, p. 93), describes the relationship between the patron and the client as:

*A case of dyadic (two-person) involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status uses his own influence and resources to provide protection, or benefits, or both for a person of lower status who, for his part, reciprocates, by offering general support and assistance including personal services to the patron.*

To Scott, patron-client relations is an effective way of uniting people who are not in any way connected by kinship, and was an important element in forging "vertical integration." The reciprocity existing in the dyad is such that each party is able to provide something that is highly valued by the other. A patron is able to secure clients mainly on his ability to provide valuable assistance to the latter. This is driven mainly by the patron's ownership of real property, special skills and knowledge of the patron such as lawyering



or medicine, or the patron's possession of influence on account of his being a political figure or a member of the magistrate. Meanwhile, the client exchanges labor services and support, military services (private army), and political services like voting and playing the role of canvassers in periods of intense political competition especially when the patron is a candidate for a political position. Contemporary comparative analysis of clientelism takes notice of its specific targeting of "spending and regulatory provisions" to clients by patron-politicians in order to generate support and remain in power. The exchange relations between the supporters and the patron is sustained and institutionalized for long periods of time through the provision of particular goods in exchange for support (Grzymala-Busse, 2008).

In the Philippines, elections from the national down to the village level is largely shaped by a network of patrons and clients. These networks form the factions. A local faction, formed mostly by kinship, marriage, *kumpadre* ties, and reciprocity, is a cluster of families or an aggrupation of local leaders of equal standing and united as one formation or cluster (Lande, 1964; Lande, 1967). Grossholtz (1964), expounds that the factions were built around a local landed family who have a large following by virtue of "economic threat" and loyalty. These factions functioned as reliable voting blocs and were depended upon to deliver decisive votes by national politicians (Lande, 1967).<sup>4</sup> Putzel (1999) points out that these political clans and families and their factions construct networks linking them to their leaders and supporters for the distribution of particularistic benefits and patronage. This elaborate network allowed the delivery of local votes for national positions during national elections. The solid votes are then traded for clientelistic endowments after the political elites have secured national positions (Hutchcroft, 2003).

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<sup>4</sup> Julio Teehankee (2018) spells out that the potency and power of political clans and families in the country emanate from their capacity to deliver decisive political victories to candidates in the provincial, regional, and national levels during elections.



Overall, what the studies of Lande (1964; 1967; 1968) and Grossholtz (1964) prominently mentioned here, clearly bring to the fore the fact that party solidarity and the continued alliance of a local politician to a national party was anchored on the principle of exchange and not on any collective or shared goal. The same could be said of the factions in the village, municipal, and all the way up to the provincial level. Philippine political parties were therefore seen as generally weak and that patronage relation played crucial roles in local as well as national politics, particularly in the formation of factions and personal followings.

This patronage-driven and non-competitive party politics in the country is a unique feature of Philippine local politics, which is the consequence of the premature consolidation of local power (Blair, 2000).

### **Preliminary Hypotheses on the Disconnect and Incompatibility Co-production as an Approach to Public Service Delivery in the Philippines**

In the context of Philippine public administration, which has long been infiltrated by politics, the very nature of clientelism itself works against the paradigm of co-production. To recall, co-production is primarily meant to upscale public service delivery by involving the citizens as generative partners in producing them within a decentralized framework. It departs from the state-centric perspective of public service delivery and emphasizes collaboration and cooperation between the state and citizens. This means that there are collective goals that need to be achieved. Achieving these collective goals and providing solutions to collective action challenges will require programmatic policy formulations. These programmatic policy packages designed specifically to address the challenges are provided by political parties or the programmatic leadership and deliberately pursued, thereby indirectly and indiscriminately benefiting voters regardless of whether they supported the leadership or not (Kitschelt, 2000). What frustrates the attainment of these



collective goals are the political realities in highly clientelistic societies wherein the relationship between a political leader and the constituency are galvanized by material rewards and the principle of material exchange instead of the collective or shared programmatic goal(s). Lande (1967), notes that Filipinos have a particular interest in the real and tangible. They give little regard to abstraction and grand theorizing. Thus, their political loyalties are offered to those who could provide immediate material benefits. This moves politicians to use state resources and privileges to meet these needs in order to buy political support and stay in power.<sup>5</sup> Grzymala-Busse (2008) argues that the distribution of particularistic rewards is meant primarily to manufacture dependence among their cluster of supporters. Vertical ties like those that exist and endure in highly clientelistic polities are distinguished by dependence. Mutuality is faint, hence, relationships are constrained by their capacity to forge reciprocity, a collective sense of responsibility, and trust among members (Boix & Posner, 1996). This dilemma thwarts any attempt by the private sector or any well-meaning reformist in government to initiate co-production. What is even more damaging is the corruption that is built into clientelism itself. Kitschelt (2000) notes that while corruption exists in numerous polities, it operates directly through the exchange relationship in clientelist societies.

Similarly, Agpalo (1996a) points out that what moves voters in the Philippines in all levels of government administration are the “personalistic, concrete, material, and non-ideological ends.” Simply put, voters are drawn and aroused by politicians who extend favors to their supporters. Agpalo (1996c) referred to these short term particularistic and personalistic needs as the people’s *desiderata*, which the politician must meet to remain in power. In a study by Yilmaz and Venugopal (2010) on the discretion and accountability of local governments in the Philippines, the scholars found that local chief executives are

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Kreuzer (Kreuzer, 2012) points out that politicians from dominant political clans and dynasties channel state resources and projects to their districts and localities not only as a form of pre-election patronage, but also a display of their capacity to deliver.





hesitant to surrender certain organic and discretionary powers such as determining how the financial resources of the LGU would be spent. This hesitance is rooted in the fear that they might lose access to valuable resources which they are able to freely tap for patronage purposes.

The adherence to patronage and clientelism is reinforced by the wide disparity in the economic capacity of the people. For example, in the classic example of vote-buying, Stokes (2007) points out that poverty and sharp social income inequalities increase the rewards and utility of this clientelistic activity. This is because when incomes are low, voters can be bought cheaply. Poor and cheap voters are attractive targets for politicians actively engaged in finding clients. David Wurfel (1963) early on observed this and notes that in Philippine politics the distribution of material benefits and rewards to secure votes and political support is more important than ideology and party platform and program. This pathological behavior in Philippine politics is primarily driven by the backward and underdeveloped economy and the poverty it spawns among the population.

Second, co-production normally requires legal support or legislation to undertake it. While it is true that the Local Government Code of the Philippines clearly provides avenues for citizen participation, institutionalizing them in the bureaucracy requires legislative action. Achieving this is seen to be difficult in a highly clientelistic political environment. This is a problem in local governments in the Philippines mainly because as observed by Lande (1964) at a time when there were two dominant political parties in the country, it was difficult for the party in power to implement programs and legislation that would benefit a particular category or class of people primarily because the people expect their leaders to satisfy their needs. There is no incentive to pursue legislation as this is not what people expect their leaders to do. Manzetti and Wilson (2007) find empirical evidence from clientelistic countries that support the finding of Lande. The



scholars note that the poor who normally get targeted by clientelist politicians are primarily concerned with their needs getting met. They do not expect anything from government programs since they believe these don't work. This has the effect of disincentivizing parties from coming up with a legislative agenda or a programmatic platform considering that it is not what people need and it is not what will keep them in power. Thus, in highly clientelistic societies, synergistic activities like co-production are less likely to have a chance of gaining traction. As a matter of fact, evidence gathered by the studies of Lande and Grossholtz point out that political parties steer away from party programs and focus only on rent distribution to cement support and loyalty. In addition, legislation is seen as a pointless exercise given the strength of patron-client relations. Despite the fact that Lande and Grossholtz's work was written more than five decades ago, there has been no significant perceptible change in the way party politics works in the Philippines. Such political reality is part of the package of political continuities in the country (Timberman, 2015). Moreover, the political parties and the party system in the Philippines is poorly institutionalized. This is clearly pointed out by Allen Hicken (2018) who notes of parties and the party system in the Philippines as suffering from truncated levels of institutionalization. Political parties and party systems that have attained elevated levels of institutionalization display solidity in the procedures and arrangements of party competition. Actors in the political parties of institutionalized party systems value programmatic policy and sound platform as primary basis for inter-party competition. But sadly, this is not the case in the Philippines, where the political parties are mere platforms constructed by elite political families competing for state resources and power. They are institutional symbols of the networks of patrons, clients, followers, and factions, and are assembled basically to win elections instead of functioning as podiums for collective interest aggregation and articulation (Manacsa & Tan, 2005). Blair (2000) argues that political parties in the country are weak and are mere extensions of the political



personalities that control them. The loyalty of the party members is to the politicians who extend patronage and not to the party.

Third, the goal of co-production is to improve public service delivery with the active participation of the main users of these services. These public services include education, healthcare, peace and order, social welfare, infrastructure, and many more (Williams, Seong & Johnson, 2015). In the Philippines, pursuant to the Local Government Code of 1991 several functions of the national government have been devolved to the Local Government Unit. Healthcare (hospital and field health services), public works, tourism (site development and promotion), social welfare service, environment (community-based forestry), education, and agriculture are some examples of basic services and functions that have been devolved to the LGUs (Brillantes & Moscare, 2002). These devolved functions are all avenues for co-production with the private sector. This preliminary study argues that co-production utterly fails in conditions where the political leadership uses these devolved functions as a form of material reward and patronage to command loyalty. As argued by Grzymala-Busse (2008), clientelist politicians have the propensity to keep these devolved functions and services at their control and discretion. This tendency is buttressed by two compelling reasons. First, control of these services and functions guarantees continued support from the clients who are well informed that any dissipation of support would warrant the withdrawal of these benefits. Second, control of these services puts the politician in a position to easily claim credit for the services extended. In the Philippines, it is common for local chief executives to use infrastructure projects such as public school buildings, rural health facilities and roads as a form of reward for delivering votes to secure election victory. Patronage-based and clientelistic bureaucracies, therefore, are not conducive for co-production as the public sector to find it a challenge to surrender some of its organic control over public services to the private sector through co-production especially if these services are used as



sources of material rewards and incentives to solicit loyalty and consolidate political power.

Interestingly, a recent study finds that LGUs are not open to civil society and NGO participation and engagement for fear that they might not be able to dictate or impose upon them. Similarly, NGOs are also reluctant to engage with LGUs for suspicion that they might be co-opted. Meanwhile, civil society representation in the various Local Development Councils set up by the Local Government Code is controversial. A study in 2001 finds that 33% of CSO representatives are hand-picked by the local chief executive. The Local Government Code provides ample space for engagement and participation for civil society organizations in the governance process. Under the law, 25% of the membership of the local development councils are to be filled by NGOs and CSOs (Yilmaz & Venugopal, 2010).

The scenario above is precisely what Grossholtz (1964) refers to when she alludes to patronage as the "oil of politics." Philippine politics has indeed successfully percolated Philippine public administration, and will continue until the country attains what Agpalo (1996b) refers to as political development. Agpalo argues that political development is a change process characterized by a transition from a state of want to a condition of full flowering and fruition of the rule of law, civility, and social justice-elements which are not totally operative in clientelistic societies.

### **Concluding Notes**

In conclusion, this scholarly exercise achieves three things. First, it provides a clear picture of the nature of the co-production paradigm as a form of governance reform articulation which emerged in the 80s immediately following the reforms of the New Public Management. Co-production empowers citizens as it treats them as equally capable and



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generative partners with conventional producers of public services. Second, this paper highlights the political reality of the prevalence of clientelism in local Philippine politics and marks it as a robust continuity. And third, this preliminary study argues that clientelism, as a dominant feature of local Philippine political relations, is a constraint to co-production. As such, the preliminary inquiry advances the following arguments:

First, clientelism frustrates co-production mainly because of the incongruence of the relations that binds the citizens and government in clientelistic societies with the expected relationship between citizens and the government within the framework of co-production. While co-production builds on collaboration and shared objectives, clientelist societies give premium to short term particularistic material exchange to forge partnerships. In a country where poverty is a sad constancy, short term material rewards far outweigh long term collective benefits.

Second, while the Philippines adopts a decentralized set-up with the passage of the Local Government Code, which has provided ample space for civil society engagement with various governance processes, efforts at co-production in the local governments require legal backing by way of legislation or ordinance. Institutionalizing an arrangement which has the potential to weaken clientelistic bonds and break the people's dependence on their patrons is difficult to pass without solid political party support. In a country where the political party system is weak and uninstitutionalized, this proves to be very difficult.

Third, the Local Government Code devolves several functions of the national government to the local government units. These functions are pathways for co-production with the private sector and the citizens given the government's limited resources. However, in societies where the political leadership has the proclivity to use its resources (including public services) as a form of reward for political loyalty and as an effective tool to



consolidate political power, efforts at co-production are unlikely to gain traction. Indeed, there is a large measure of truth in what Hedman and Sidel (2001) point out in so far as the current dispensation is concerned. The scholars observe that clientelism in the country, along with its patronage-based network, has developed not only into a system for delivering election victories but has also advanced into a rigid system that defeats decentralization and what it can achieve in so far as delivery of public services is concerned.

Finally, the hypotheses developed here are imperfect propositions that need to be verified through deeper and more detailed inquiry. This is a humble attempt in probing an unexplored domain in the co-production paradigm in the Philippines.

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## Bank Behavior and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' Implementation of Republic Act 10000 (Agri-Agra Law)

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### Background

The Philippine Government has been, and continues to be, interested in the state of agriculture in the country. One manifestation of which is the government policy on agricultural credit. In 1975, and in "consideration of the magnitude of the credit needs" for agriculture especially of the agrarian reform beneficiaries<sup>1</sup>, then President Ferdinand Marcos issued Presidential Decree (PD) 717<sup>2</sup> which mandated "all banking institutions, whether government or private" to "set aside at least twenty-five per cent (25%) of their loanable funds for agricultural credit in general, of which at least ten per cent (10%) of the loanable funds shall be made available for agrarian reform credit to beneficiaries."

Although agriculture's contribution to national GDP declined from 30.34% in 1975 to 9.66% in 2018, its growth remains to be "of strategic importance" to the country's "food security" and "poverty alleviation efforts" (Balisacan & Hill, 2003, p. 200). Almost 30 years after, or in 2009, Philippine Congress promulgated Republic Act (RA) 10000, otherwise known as "The Agri-Agra Reform Credit Act of 2009" due to the regulated banks' glaring non-compliance to PD 717. RA 10000 retained the 25% mandatory credit allocation requirements for Agri (15%) and ARB (10%) but added (a) alternative modes of

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<sup>1</sup> PD 717 refers to agrarian reform beneficiaries as "tillers, tenant-farmers, settlers, agricultural lessees, amortizing owners, owner-cultivators, farmers cooperatives and compact farms" recognized under Presidential Decree No. 27, the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law and Republic Act No. 9700 or the "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Extension with Reforms"

<sup>2</sup> PROVIDING AN AGRARIAN REFORM CREDIT AND FINANCING SYSTEM FOR AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARIES THROUGH BANKING INSTITUTIONS issued on May 29, 1975.



compliance<sup>3</sup>—ranging from banks’ purchase of eligible bonds to lending to the National Food Authority (NFA)—and (b) specific provision for penalty for non-compliance, the value of which is equivalent to 0.5% of the difference between the minimum direct compliance percentage and actual level of compliance which shall be paid by the uncomplying bank; the proceeds of which shall be given to government crop insurance institutions, among others. With the alternative modes of compliance and provision on penalty for non-compliance, RA 10000 was intended to promote regulatory compliance on the part of banks in order to meet the government’s objective of aiding the country’s Agri-Agra sector through credit. As a regulatory policy on financial institutions and on the financial system, the *Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas* (BSP)—the country’s central bank—is one of the identified implementing agencies alongside the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), among others. RA 10000 primarily expects the BSP to monitor the compliance or non-compliance of supervised banks to the mandatory credit allocation requirements, and publish the same on a regular basis. On its face, RA 10000 is the main tool of the BSP to implement the law.

Of all banks, the compliance that matters the most is those by Universal and Uommercial Banks (UKBs)—the big banks, so to speak—which account for almost 97.0% (around P285.8B) of the 25% minimum required credit allocation from all regulated banks. Aside from loanable funds, 2017 full-year BSP data likewise shows that UKBs constitute 91% of total assets in the Philippine banking industry—an indicator of superior earnings and capitalization, among others; also, 91% of deposits which suggests superior scale in terms of nationwide deposit-taking operations and richer funding mix, among others.

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<sup>3</sup> Specific provisions on alternative modes of compliance are presented in the definition of terms part of this chapter.

While UKBs are in the best position to comply versus smaller banks given the former's superior financial war chest, data from the BSP shows their puzzling state of non-compliance:

**Table 1**

*Historical data of compliance by UKBs to RA 10000, 2012-2017*

Universal and Commercial Banks						
ITEM	Dec-12	Dec-13	Dec-14	Dec-15	Dec-16	Dec-17
<b>A. Total loanable funds</b>	1,046.84	1,568.71	1,933.37	2,671.07	3,315.06	3,869.03
<b>B. Minimum amount required to be allocated</b>						
1. 10% Agra	104.68	156.87	193.34	267.11	331.51	386.90
2. 15% Agri	157.03	235.31	290.01	400.66	497.26	580.35
3. Total	261.71	392.18	483.34	667.77	828.76	967.26
<b>C. Compliance with 10% Agra</b>						
1. Direct Compliance	11.41	13.62	14.58	17.03	18.61	16.97
2. Alt. Compliance	0.77	0.46	5.042	5.19	5.94	14.21
3. Excess Agra Compliance Utilized for Agri	-1.48	-0.19	-0.47	-0.64	0	0
4. Total	10.70	13.90	19.15	21.58	24.55	31.18
5. % of Compliance	<b>1.02</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>0.99</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>0.81</b>
<b>D. Compliance with 15% Agri</b>						
1. Direct Compliance	75.43	80.76	122.66	149.93	192.88	227.82
2. Alt. Compliance	132.75	170.68	172.30	223.12	229.68	271.58
3. Excess Agra Compliance Utilized for Agri	1.48	0.19	0.473	0.64	0	0
4. Total	209.66	251.62	295.4	373.69	422.56	499.4
5. % of Compliance	<b>20.03</b>	<b>16.04</b>	<b>15.28</b>	<b>13.99</b>	<b>12.75</b>	<b>12.91</b>
<b>E. Total Compliance</b>						
1. Direct Compliance	86.84	94.38	137.2412792	166.97	211.49	244.79
2. Alternative Compliance	133.52	171.14	177.3389216	228.31	235.62	285.79
3. Total	220.36	265.52	314.58	395.28	447.11	530.58
4. % of Compliance vs. 25%	<b>21.05%</b>	<b>16.93%</b>	<b>16.27%</b>	<b>14.80%</b>	<b>13.49%</b>	<b>13.71%</b>

Source: Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

The table on historical compliance shows that UKBs, on an aggregate level, have not complied with the 25% total requirement to lend to Agri-Agra. Worthy of note also is the declining trend of aggregate compliance—from 21.05% in 2012 to 13.71% in 2017. While the loanable amount extended in compliance of RA 10000 grew from P220.36B in 2012 to P530.58B in 2017, the increase was not in proportion to the spike in minimum 25%



required (in proportion to growth in total loanable amount) from P261.71B in 2012 to P967.26B in 2017, resulting in a decline in compliance over a six-year period.

## Problem

*What went wrong?* The policy is there yet the intended outcome of compliance from the big banks is absent, as shown the compliance data presented upfront. However, an in-depth analysis of banks as an institution is absent, likely due to the confidentiality barriers that restrict investigation by scholars. But more importantly, the next big step is to study the proximate actor and variable that are still largely unexamined based on prevailing literature: *How does the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' (BSP) implementation strategy<sup>4</sup> promote compliance to the mandatory credit allocation requirements of RA 10000 on the part of universal and commercial banks (UKBs)?* To attempt to answer this question, two corollary questions need to be addressed:

1. What are the strategies of the BSP in promoting compliance to the mandatory credit allocation requirements of RA 10000 on the part of UKBs?
2. What incentives and disincentives do the mandatory credit allocation requirements of RA 10000 have which influence UKB's behavior in improving regulatory compliance?

To put more depth on the analysis, a case study-UKB (hereafter referred as "Luzvimin Unibank" or "Unibank") is proper. A private bank listed in the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE), the Unibank<sup>5</sup> has a storied past, including having been at the forefront of banking

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<sup>4</sup>Strategy is operationally-defined as the ideas—roles, norms, and values, whether codified or not—that inform and guide BSP's implementation of RA 10000 towards realizing the intended policy outcome of regulatory compliance to RA 10000. In this study, the "strategies" were discovered, understood, and analyzed by studying various BSP policies, related documents and publications, surrounding events, as well as insights from the interviewed BSP Monetary Board Member.

<sup>5</sup> SEC-registered name and specific details on the case study-UKB are confidential due to data privacy policies. *Unibank* is a generic term referring to universal and commercial banks and shall operationally used hereafter as referring to Luzvimin Unibank.



innovation, technology, and corporate social responsibility in the Philippines—including its establishment of a dedicated specialized agricultural lending team to support the bank’s lending to the underserved sector. The Unibank has a rich history and close relationship with the country’s agricultural sector (its pioneer branches were setup outside Metro Manila) and is continuously reaching out to markets outside key centers of the country.

### **Significance of the study**

This study is significant for at least two broad groups: (1) the Executive and Legislative Branches (specifically, the Congress and the implementing agencies including BSP) and (2) scholars of political economy. For the former, the findings and analyses in this study may somehow help in the ongoing efforts to revisit RA 10000, particularly on areas of implementation strategy that could be enhanced to improve intended outcomes. For the latter, this study illustrates in a local context some key political economy concepts such as market and government failure as well as rationality.

### **Related Literature**

Discussed in this section are three items: (1) why study agricultural credit and the role of banks on it; (2) why focus on policy implementation strategy; and (3) responsive regulation and behavioral approach as viable framework.

#### ***Why study agricultural credit and the role of banks on it?***

##### *Role of credit in agriculture*

There is no dispute that agriculture, as an industry particularly in the Philippines, matters. The more important question is on how relevant is credit with respect to agriculture as an economic activity. “Like all other sectors, agricultural credit supports agricultural



production through two channels<sup>6</sup>: meeting short-term working capital needs and long-term investment needs in the sector” (Chavan, 2013, p. 59). As capital is intimately-related to the factors of agricultural production, credit, therefore, is critical in farm production as it supports capital formation. Capital and technology—which banks could provide in the form of credit or loan—are critical in agriculture’s transformation from being traditional to modern and industrial in nature, as discussed in the works of Schultz (1964), Lundahl (1987), Akram (2013), and Pechlaner (2010). “Indeed, not having access to credit has been shown to significantly lower the value of farm production” (Briggeman, Gunderson, and Gloy, 2009, p. 1406). The other side of the equation, of course, is supply or availability of credit. The vitality of credit in agriculture, and its very nature as a scarce resource, puts banks as important actors and subjects in the discourse on agricultural credit. “Banks transform the deposits mobilised from surplus sectors into credit for the deficit sectors” (Chavan, 2013) and, in recent years, commercial banks have emerged as the major purveyors of agriculture credit (Mehrota, 2011).

In sum, banks—as providers of credit which is an essential commodity in modernizing and industrializing agriculture—matter. However, empirical data presented upfront shows the failure of banks to respond accordingly to the signal of demand sent by the underserved Agri-Agra sector.

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<sup>6</sup> Funding requirement for working capital or liquidity answers for farmers’ coverage of short-term (maturing or due within 12 months) obligations or payables, e.g., for purchase of inventory or farm inputs; payment for selling, general, and administrative expenses as well as operating expenses, among others. Short-term funding requirements are catered by financial products and services such as, but not limited to, revolving promissory note lines, check rediscounting or bills purchase lines, and short-term loan facilities. Long-term loans, on the other hand, are credit facilities which have tenors beyond 12 months and generally up to five (5) years or so, depending on the nature of the underlying transaction or project. Long-term loans on agriculture are normally structured and extended to finance investments and capital expenditures such as, but not limited to, acquisition of land and/or farm equipment, construction of agricultural infrastructure, whose return on investment will not immediately be realized. The nature and purpose of credit, then, is to produce, accumulate, and distribute capital.



### *Credit rationing as market failure*

Datta-Chaudhuri (1990) describes market failure as “the inability of a market economy to achieve certain desirable market outcomes in resource use.” Market failure, then, refers to the inability of the market—with the price mechanism at its core—to self-correct and result in optimal or maximizing outcomes, as suggested by classical economists. Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz and Andrew Weiss asked in *Credit Rationing in Markets with Imperfect Information* (1981): *why is credit rationed?* The borrowers who signal willingness to pay higher interest in exchange of credit accommodation do not necessarily attract supply of credit from banks since such signal is also an indication of higher risk of default or not being able to make good of one’s repayment obligations. This is the empirical problem which served as basis for intervention by governments in market activities, as in the case of agriculture, ranging from priority sector lending down to provision of credit enhancements in the form of collateral support or guarantees to the underserved sector.

Government intervention, then, in the form of regulation is justified by regulation theory. For Krueger (1990), aside from provision of “social overhead capital” (infrastructure) to facilitate development, government’s role, especially in developing countries, includes compensation for market failures. Ergo, RA 10000 is meant to correct the problematic allocation of credit in the market.

### ***Why focus on policy implementation strategy?***

The prevailing literature, albeit limited, on agricultural credit in the country in general, explains the issue based on (a) supply-demand analysis, which lacks nuance on RA 10000 as well as how its implementation affects compliance and (b) regulator- and beneficiary-centric types of analysis, especially the Department of Agriculture (DA) and Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and the Agri-Agra sector (Cuevas and Sumalde, 2017), leaving

the regulated agents—especially big banks—unexamined, if not dismissed as mere profit-seeking, social welfare-indifferent actors. And as established earlier, the UKBs or “big banks” matter the most since it is by their compliance behavior that the ends of RA 10000 could be met.

However, the compliance data are already there, presented upfront in this study. Hence, as earlier stated, the next logical step is to examine the proximate actor and variable: the BSP—the key regulator of these banks—and its implementation strategy which come into contact with the regulated banks. This, coupled with the need to gain more in-depth understanding of bank behavior, will cast light on what could have been the gap between RA 10000 and non-compliance to it as an outcome.

### ***Responsive regulation and behavioral approach as viable framework***

*The imperative to go beyond rational choice in understanding agents, regulation, and outcomes*

*Can rational choice—and its deeply materialist ontology and epistemology—fully comprehend how agents—more so market actors such as banks—behave and produce outcomes, i.e., regulatory compliance? Literature point to the contrary, as explained by Karl Polanyi (ontology) and various constructivist thinkers such as Cameron & Palan (2000) (ontology and methodology).*

Polanyi spoke of the market’s “embeddedness”. In brief, ontologically, society preceded and is broader than the market, the latter being a creation that is subsumed or embedded in society. While the market and its surrounding norms and concepts (e.g., utility maximization; “invisible hand”) can be “dis-embedded” from society, Polanyi argues that an absolute, total dis-embedding is impossible. This is related to Michael Sandel’s distinction between market society and non-market society—both are separate and



distinct, but co-exist. Markets—including firms—are comprised nonetheless of individual, social beings whose market identity is only one of many non-market identities, e.g., an individual is also shaped by his or her familial links, culture, religion, social circles, pursuits, among many others. Thus, it is ontologically flawed for rational choice—a creation of 19<sup>th</sup> century utilitarian and classical economic thinkers in England—to claim that agents, firms, and society behave and can be explained solely on calculative, maximizing terms. Neoclassical economics—the recognition of market failure—and the growing appeal for “behavioral economics” within the discipline of economics are recognitions of the explanatory limits of pure rational choice. Thus, in this study, regulatory implementation and compliance (or non-compliance) are not necessarily pure maximizing behaviors and outcomes—there has to be a scholarly openness for non-economic explanations even to the most economic of behaviors.

*Is constructivism scientific?* In terms of epistemology and methodology, informed by deep constructivist heritage, constructivist IR scholars such as Cameron & Palan (2000) have also argued for the “science” of constructivism—that even natural sciences use “association” and interpretation to make sense of the material world. Thus, the understanding of firms and of firm behavior requires a going beyond figures into analyzing text and messages enclosed in scattered documents and agents. Constructivism is interested in understanding (1) norms (how they develop, diffuse, and not diffuse) as well as (2) key actors (e.g., norm entrepreneurs and epistemic communities who are carriers, diffusers, and absorbers of norms). Methodologically, constructivism requires eclectic techniques: from analysis of texts, messages, and perceptions from key actors—whether spoken, codified, or discernible from their actions.

Constructivist approaches such as *responsive regulation* calls for the need to understand agent’s world-view in making sense of reality. Understanding the location of constructivist

theories within the broader scholarly community of regulation research helps in appreciating the appropriateness of applying said big theory in the context of banking regulation. Law and economics have traditionally claimed authority over regulation studies. Since regulation was conventionally a species created by government legislation, the development of regulation studies within legal scholarship is not difficult to comprehend. Law would define regulation “in terms of legal rules backed by penalties for noncompliance” (Drahos, 2018, p. 1). “Regulation was about authoritative rules issued by the state. For some lawyers the meaning of regulation was confined to the rules of delegated legislation” (Drahos, 2018, xxvi). “Delegated legislation”, however, expanded the scope of regulation from being exclusively supplied or issued by the state into involving third-party, non-state actors. “Empirically, regulation has pluralised in important ways” (Drahos, 2018, xxvi). Responsive regulation, then, which is deeply interdisciplinary, is imperative in addressing the pluralization, diversity, and changes in the regulatory landscape that cannot be completely comprehended by one discipline alone.

#### *Responsive regulation and behavioral approach as anchor framework*

The central argument of responsive regulation theory is this:

*Regulatory policies affect the behavior of regulated actors. The behavior of regulated actors affects the outcomes of regulatory policies. To understand the behavior of agents is to investigate the ideational (e.g., interests) and material (e.g., resources, physical constraints) nature of the regulated actors themselves, i.e., to employ a behavioral approach.*

Ian Ayres and John Braithwaite, whose work is “probably the most influential version of responsive regulation” (Nielsen and Parker, 2009), said in *Responsive Regulation: Transcending the Deregulation Debates* (1992, p. 4):



*Responsive regulation is distinguished (from other strategies of market governance) both in what triggers a regulatory response and what the regulatory response will be. We **suggest** that regulation be responsive to industry structure in that different structures will be conducive to different degrees and forms of regulation. **Government should also be attuned to the differing motivations of regulated actors.** Efficacious regulation should speak to the diverse objectives of regulated firms, industry associations, and individuals within them. Regulations themselves can affect structure (e.g., the number of firms in the industry) and can affect motivations of the regulated [emphasis supplied].*

*We also conceive that regulation **should** respond to industry conduct, to how effectively industry is making private regulation work. **The very behavior of an industry or the firms therein should channel the regulatory strategy to greater or lesser degrees of government intervention** [emphasis supplied].*

Differently stated, responsive regulation is *not* about the regulated actors' or industry structure's power to shape regulation.<sup>7</sup> It is about that regulator-regulatee relationship which comes into play with or affects the compliance, motives, and norms of regulated agents and is observable in the form of the regulated actors' behavior. Aside from emphasis on analyzing regulated actors, at the center of responsive regulation—being

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<sup>7</sup> This is worthy of note since while an area of agent-structure studies also looks into the ability of regulated agents to shape policy or regulatory structure, responsive regulation is specifically interested on the triggers and effects of regulation (structure) to regulated actors (agents), and thereafter making sense of such "relationship" in eventually revisiting regulation. This focus is also appropriate for the banking and finance sector which is heavily regulated and monitored by financial regulators and lawmakers.

interdisciplinary, free from the trappings of legalism and neoclassical assumptions—is the analysis of “behavior” of actors with which the banking and financial sector actors are not void of. However, responsive regulation literature capitalized on theory-building and did not provide sufficient indicators to measure or observe behavior. Since responsive regulation calls for interdisciplinarity, the same tradition on understanding behavior is imperative, to which Khan’s (2018) *Behavioral Approach* is responsive.

Ashraf Khan (2018), Senior Financial Sector Expert at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), presented in *A Behavioral Approach to Financial Supervision, Regulation, and Central Banking* categories of behavioral elements,<sup>8</sup> including (a) norms and (b) behavior of others.<sup>9</sup> As “decision-making mostly takes place at a subconscious level”, said paper “links decision-making in the financial sector to those areas of the mind that are emotional and irrational” (Khan, 2018).

Norms “are most commonly defined as rules or expectations that are socially enforced. Norms may be prescriptive (encouraging positive behavior; for example, “be honest”) or proscriptive (discouraging negative behavior; for example, “do not cheat”)” (Horne, January 11, 2018). Khan (2018, p. 6) provided three (3) sets of norms:

*Three sets of norms are relevant: social, legal, and market norms.*

*Legal norms are those that are positive law, consisting of written laws, jurisprudence, and case law. Social norms are less tangible, and are part of the realm of values, morals, ethics, and ideas of*

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<sup>8</sup> Not all regulated agents and corporations are the same. Thus, while there exists various works on the application of behavioral or non-rational categories in understanding regulatory compliance, Khan’s indicators on behavior hold more weight as they are specifically tailored for application in the banking and finance regulatory and industrial settings.

<sup>9</sup> While Khan also touched on “bias” as another category of behavior, this will be excluded in the study primarily due to the data gathering limitations brought by data privacy restrictions of the respondent-firm. Nevertheless, “bias” could also be blended in “norms” and “behavior of others”; hence, this is still somehow touched by this study.



*community. Market norms deal with economic supply and demand—the marketplace where goods and services are offered and sought.*

In addition, social norms refer to “those norms that govern a society’s behaviors and the behavior of individuals in that society, and are internalized through social interaction” (Khan, 2018, p. 8). Social norms can also be traced to one’s moral faculty; the compliance of which may be out of some sense of moral obligation (intrinsic), and are often formalized into legal norms (Khan, 2018). Market norms, on the other hand, “are focused on facilitating transactions and contributing to the maximizing of individual utility—the relative satisfaction of the individual” (Khan, 2018, p. 16). Finally, “legal norms are mostly an embodiment of state-imposed social or market norms” (Khan, 2018, p. 10). Stated otherwise, legal norms can be traced to some *a priori* social or market norms. Legal norms can also be characterized as having sanctions (criminal, civil/private, and/or administrative) for non-compliance. However, “there are those legal norms of which the underlying norm cannot be traced. Some of these norms can be described as administrative burdens, or red tape” (Khan, 2018, p. 11).

For Khan (2018), however, the three (3) categories of norms run the risk of oversimplification and may overlap each other. The former should be taken more of a caveat rather than outright rejection of said categories which serve as a general guide or starting point and do not impede discovery of new or more nuanced discussion on norms. The latter is comprehensible given how the generation of one norm (e.g., legal norm) is somehow influenced by from another norm (e.g., social and/or market norm).

Khan (2018, p. 21) provided three (3) forms to distinguish how behavior of others influences one's individual behavior:

*These are (1) internalization, (2) identification, and (3) conformity.*

*The main difference between these is the level of "intrinsicness": how much of the norm is experienced as "feeling right on its own" rather than because of an external reason (even though that external reason might be an intrinsic one itself).*

Behavior of others as a category is meant to add or complement those of norms in explaining behavior. The three categories of behavior of others are defined as follows:

*Internalization can be defined as subscribing to a norm that (regardless of whether it may or may not have been imposed by others) would be described by a person as an intrinsic norm, a norm that "feels as if it is my own." It is the content of the norm that matters for the person acting upon it, not so much the how or when the norm was imposed (or by whom) (Khan, 2018, p. 21).*

*Identification is the conscious, willful following of the witnessed behavior of others. That is, the viewer can subscribe to the witnessed behavior, and thus views it as behavior he/she should (and will) exhibit him/herself (Khan, 2018, p. 21).*

*Conformity* relates to the situation in which we accept a norm to not differ from the group, and the perceived risk of detection. Peer pressure and herding are good examples. Both identification and conformity have the same result: certain behavior



of others influences the viewer to actively adjust his/her own behavior (Khan, 2018, p. 22).

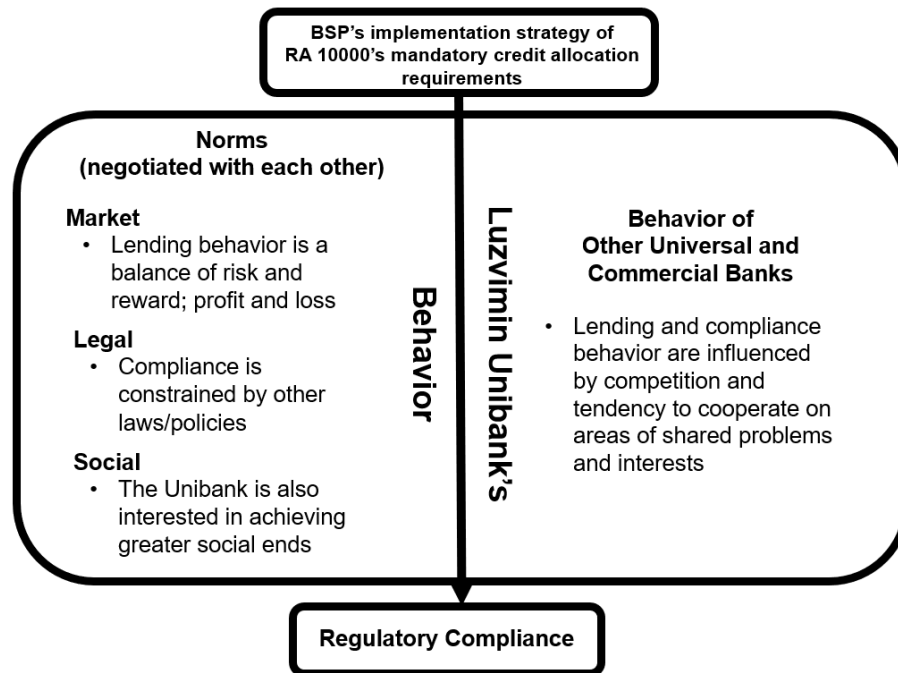


Figure 2. Operational framework based on Ayres & Braithwaite's responsive regulation theory with Khan's categories on behavioral elements of the financial sector

In sum, the above illustration of the framework depicts the imperative to make behavior—both in the form of implementation strategy by the BSP and of compliance behavior by regulated banks—endogenous to the analysis. Behavior could not only be based on market norms. Currently, materialist approaches such as quantitative economics are limited to market-based explanations to behavior, which may be inadequate. Thus, a “going beyond” could help contribute new answers or perspectives, or at least offer a break from the usual tools in explaining phenomena rooted in quantitative economics.

## Data Gathering & Key Findings

The study is descriptive in nature and employed qualitative ways in data gathering. The BSP and the Luzvimin Unibank (case-study) were the focus of the study, given that obtaining data from other banks is impossible. Key informants were interviewed, with in-depth, one-on-one sessions carried out. Key documents were also studied to gain understanding on BSP and Unibank rules and decisions. There were 20 key respondents interviewed, one of which is a very senior BSP official; whereas, the 19 informants from the Unibank were engaged in both marketing and credit risk mitigation, with a mix of executive, senior, and middle management officers. Due to confidentiality constraints, no further information could be divulged as regards the Unibank's nature of documents examined, background and identity of persons interviewed, and the exact manner of data gathering. Only data obtained from the BSP could be presented hereafter.

### *BSP implementation strategy*

This part deals with data relevant in understanding the strategies of the BSP with respect to promoting compliance to the mandatory credit allocation requirements of RA 10000 on the part of UKBs; to be presented in two parts: (1) nature of the BSP's regulatory power as afforded by RA 10000 and related policy instruments and (2) its strategies to promote regulatory compliance.

### *Supervisory power of the BSP*

Aside from core monetary regulatory powers (i.e., provision of policy outputs that affect the areas of lending interest rates, inflation, exchange rate, foreign currency reserves, printing of money, and the like), the BSP is also tasked to supervise the operations of banks (e.g., UKBs) as well as those of Non-Bank Financial Institutions (NBFI) with quasi-banking operations (e.g., lease financing and lending companies that take in placements



from lessees or borrowers). Commonly referred to as *supervisory function*, the BSP's (n.d.) powers are as follows:

Under the New Central Bank Act, the BSP performs the following functions, all of which relate to its status as the Republic's central monetary authority:

**Liquidity Management.** The BSP formulates and implements monetary policy aimed at influencing money supply consistent with its primary objective to maintain price stability.

**Currency issue.** The BSP has the exclusive power to issue the national currency. All notes and coins issued by the BSP are fully guaranteed by the Government and are considered legal tender for all private and public debts.

**Lender of last resort.** The BSP extends discounts, loans and advances to banking institutions for liquidity purposes.

**Financial Supervision.** The BSP supervises banks and exercises regulatory powers over non-bank institutions performing quasi-banking functions.

**Management of foreign currency reserves.** The BSP seeks to maintain sufficient international reserves to meet any foreseeable net demands for foreign currencies in order to preserve the international stability and convertibility of the Philippine peso.

**Determination of exchange rate policy.** The BSP determines the exchange rate policy of the Philippines. Currently, the BSP adheres to a market-oriented



foreign exchange rate policy such that the role of *Bangko Sentral* is principally to ensure orderly conditions in the market.

**Other activities.** The BSP functions as the banker, financial advisor and official depository of the Government, its political subdivisions and instrumentalities and government-owned and -controlled corporations.

In the context of RA 10000, the aspect of BSP's supervisory power that is operationalized is "financial supervision" wherein the BSP affects how financial institutions conduct business according to external regulatory imperatives which, in this case, refers to the mandatory credit allocation requirements as enclosed in RA 10000.

The BSP Monetary Board Member<sup>10</sup> interviewed in this study said that with respect to RA 10000, the **BSP is "tied with that [RA 10000] law [emphasis supplied]"** and that "our [BSP] strategy is to implement that law [RA 10000] as it is."

RA 10000 is not in itself self-executory; it requires implementing agencies to convert the principles and broad declarations therein into measurable and enactable guides to behavior on the part of regulated agents. The key policy instrument for the BSP in operationalizing RA 10000 was its promulgation of implementing rules and regulation (IRR)<sup>11</sup>: Circular 736, Series of 2011, issued on July 20, 2011.

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<sup>10</sup> Said BSP Monetary Board Member, personally interviewed by the researcher last May 16, 2019, did not give written consent to allow audio-recording and disclosure of identity. Nevertheless, said MB member is a widely-known expert in the area of agricultural economics.

<sup>11</sup> While an inter-agency IRR, signed July 14, 2011, among BSP, DA, and DAR is in place, it is the BSP Circular No. 736 that is the internal IRR or policy mechanism that is within the control of BSP in implementing RA 10000.



With Circular 736, the BSP—as regulator—achieved the following objectives: (1) identify the covered (or supervised) actors of the regulatory policy instrument; (2) identify which acts constitute compliance—and whether it is direct or alternative—from those which do not; (3) identify the roles of the BSP with respect to (a) provision of relevant data to the supervised actors; (b) the manner by which the BSP will measure regulatory compliance, and (c) the manner of computation and collection of penalty for non-compliance, and (4) identify the changes in the regulatory environment pre- and post-RA 10000. The first two (2) have been spelled out by the RA 10000 and were simply replicated in verbatim in the IRR<sup>12</sup>; the two (2) latter objectives, however, were where BSP had to provide input in order to result in overall clarity—which is critical in pursuing the strategy of implementability—in rolling out RA 10000.

As already stated, RA 10000, as opposed to PD 717, added alternative modes of compliance which shifts the exposure of banks from Agri-Agra borrowers (i.e., direct) to financial intermediaries (e.g., rural banks) or government agencies (e.g., NFA). As these financial instruments and activities are more commercial in character rather than intrinsically monetary and central banking roles, the BSP inevitably has a dependency to third-parties—in this case, to other supervised banks and financial institutions as well as with the Department of Agriculture (DA) and government banking institutions LBP and DBP—for the issuance and exercise of said instruments and activities. Below is an illustration of such minimal discretionary room left for the BSP:

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<sup>12</sup> See conceptual and operational definition in Chapter 1 of the study.

**Table 3**

*Provisions with respect to alternative modes of compliance to Agri-Agra*

RA 10000	BSP Circular 736 <sup>13</sup>
<p>Subsec. X341.5 Allowable alternative compliance. The following alternative modes of compliance to the mandatory agriculture and agrarian reform credit shall be allowed:</p> <p>1. 25% mandatory agriculture and agrarian reform credit</p> <p>(a) <b>Eligible</b> securities (gross of allowance for probable losses but net of unamortized premium or discount) that are issued after 20 April 2010:</p> <p>(i) Investments in bonds <b>issued by the DBP and the LBP</b> that have been <b>expressly declared as eligible by the DA, or by an agency duly-authorized by the DA</b>, the proceeds of which shall be used exclusively for on-lending to the agriculture and agrarian reform sector,</p> <p>(ii) Investments in other debt securities that have been <b>declared as eligible by the DA, or by an agency duly-authorized by the DA</b>, the proceeds of which shall be used</p>	<p>[Regarding agrarian reform bonds:] To date, the <b>Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC)</b>, the agency duly authorized by the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) <b>to certify</b> eligible securities, is finalizing the Accreditation Guidelines for eligible securities. The <b>ACPC shall officially inform the BSP</b> once these Guidelines are issued and when bonds/securities have been declared eligible [emphasis supplied].</p> <p>[Regarding list of eligible debt securities:] To date, the <b>Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC)</b>, the agency duly authorized by the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) <b>to certify</b> eligible securities, is finalizing the Accreditation Guidelines for eligible securities. The <b>ACPC shall officially inform the BSP</b> once these Guidelines are issued and when bonds/securities have been declared eligible. <b>The BSP is coordinating with the ACPC</b> on this matter. The <b>BSP will disseminate information</b> on certified eligible securities through a Circular Letter to All Banks (CL) as soon as ACPC provides the list [emphasis supplied].</p>

<sup>13</sup> Retrieved from the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) shared by the BSP Supervisory Data Center (SDC) and is publicly available at the BSP website: [http://www.bsp.gov.ph/regulations/faq\\_736a.asp](http://www.bsp.gov.ph/regulations/faq_736a.asp) (accessed June 6, 2019). Interestingly, RA 10000 and Circular 736 are one of the few policies to which a published and well-detailed FAQ page have been generated by the agency.

RA 10000	BSP Circular 736 <sup>13</sup>
<p>to finance activities identified under Section 23 of R.A. No. 8435, as defined under Item "f(viii)" of Subsection X341.1, or (iii) Paid subscription of shares of stock in the following institutions, subject to existing rules and regulations governing equity investments of banks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) <b>Accredited</b> rural financial institutions (preferred shares only),</li><li>(2) Quedan and Rural Credit Guarantee Corporation (Quedancor), or</li><li>(3) Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (PCIC).</li></ol> <p>[Emphasis supplied]</p>	<p>[Regarding investments:] <b>Banks are encouraged to coordinate with DAR and/or DA</b> as regards the financing requirements of the agrarian reform and agriculture sector. <b>Both agencies are also in the best position to provide possible referrals</b> to other financial institutions which are engaged in lending to said sectors for purposes of establishing partnerships and/or ventures.</p> <p>Regarding BSP's publication of list of accredited rural financial institutions (RFIs), the BSP has been recorded to have released and updated such as needed. Interestingly, as in BSP Circular Letter No. CL-2017-006<sup>14</sup>, the letter ends with a caveat in bold and capitalized texts which read: <b>"THE ACCREDITATION DOES NOT SERVE AS AN ENDORSEMENT OF THE SOUNDNESS OF THE ABOVE LISTED [referring to the accreditation list] FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS."</b></p>

The procedural side of BSP's supervisory function—data supervision, aggregation, monitoring and measuring compliance, basis of collection of penalties for non-compliance—is provided by BSP Circular 736 as well as BSP Memorandum No. M-2011-052 or the *Amendments to Prudential Reports Relative to the Implementation of the Mandatory Agrarian Reform and Agricultural Credit under R.A. No. 10000*. In brief, BSP-supervised banks are required to submit to the BSP, on a quarterly basis, a duly-completed Financial Reporting Package (FRP) as mandated by BSP Circular No. 512

<sup>14</sup> Retrieved from <http://rbap.org/2017/01/bsp-cl-2017-006-accredited-rural-financial-institutions-for-the-purpose-of-implementing-the-agri-agra-reform-credit-act-of-2009/> (accessed June 6, 2019).

dated February 03, 2006. The FRP has a specific template (in Excel format) prepared by the BSP which should capture the state of a supervised bank's financial statements (mainly balance sheet entries) on a per-quarter basis. BSP M-2011-052 updates the FRP to include RA 10000 entries and its particulars: figures of direct mode of compliance (booked as receivables under assets); figures and composition of indirect modes of compliance (e.g., debt securities and investments in SDAs which are also booked in the asset side of the balance sheet), if any; breakdown of the type of loan bookings, as indicated below:

**Table 4**

*RA 10000 compliance reportorial requirement under the Financial Reporting Package*

Particulars	Amount							
	Agrarian Reform Credit				Agricultural Credit			
	Short Term <sup>15</sup>	Medium Term	Long Term	Total	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Total
[Name of borrowers]	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

While medium- (loan tenors of two to five years) and long-term (loan tenors exceeding five years) are generally distinguished only by the tenor, short-term loans vary depending on type and purpose. Short-term credit facilities include vanilla loans payable within one year normally for bridge-financing; revolving credit facility which is for financing working capital, raw materials, operating expenses, and other recurring expenses yet payable in 30, 60, 90, to 180 days; import or domestic letter of credit specifically for bank-to-bank importation of equipment and raw materials, and domestic

<sup>15</sup> The lack of breakdown on the mix of short-term facilities deprives the reader of the information needed to understand for which "productive uses" the loans are being used. As most of the requirements of agri-agra are for immediate, short-term needs (e.g., acquisition of inputs through a revolver; importation via letter of credit or telegraphic transfer; bridge-financing via short-term loan), there is no data to explain if more loans are being used for importation of, say, milled rice than for purchase of inputs for local supply of *palay*; ergo, insufficient data to correlate use of credit to "boosting the productivity" of the agri-agra sector.





bills purchase facility for check clearing. Given that most requirements for agriculture fall under short-term loans (acquisition of inputs, working capital), the absence of a breakdown in the composition of short-term credit exposure leaves the reader blind regarding this dynamic. In addition, while collection of compliance data is done on a quarterly basis (recording FRP figures as of month-end of each quarter), the collection by BSP of the penalty for non-complying banks is done annually and paid in arrears while banks which have deliberately made an erroneous reporting will be charged of additional penalty and shall face administrative sanctions, as provided by RA 10000 and Circular 736.

Worthy of note is that between PD 717 and RA 10000 was a period of regulatory relaxation in the form of various government securities and compliance alternatives which were availed by banks in lieu of the provisions provided by PD 717. Some of these government securities and alternatives are as follows:

- Extension of development loans for **educational institutions, cooperatives, hospitals and other medical services; socialized or low-cost housing and local government units without national government guarantee**, Sec. 9, RA 7721 (An Act Liberalizing the Entry and Scope of Operations of Foreign Banks in the Philippines and for other Purposes) [emphasis supplied];
- **Mandatory investment** of all unused Agri-Agra allocation funds in **socialized and low cost housing**, Sec. 11(b), RA 7835 (An Act Providing for a Comprehensive Integrated Shelter and Urban Development Financing Program by increasing and regularizing the yearly appropriation of the major components of the National Shelter Program, including the Abot-Kaya Pabahay Fund under Republic Act No. 6846, Augmenting the authorized capital stock and paid up capital of the NHMFC and the HGC, identifying

other sources of funding and appropriating funds for the purposes) [emphasis supplied];

- **Purchase or underwriting of ERAP Bonds<sup>16</sup>** by the banking sector as compliance by it with the provisions of PD 717, Executive Order (EO) No. 83 (Strengthening the Enforcement of the Agri-Agra Law and Launching the NDC Agri-Agra Erap Bonds for Rural Development), issued December 25, 1998.

On why the government relaxed the mandatory credit allocation requirement to Agri-Agra, the BSP Monetary Board Member said that the banks were really having a “hard time” complying with PD 717 thus it was “relaxed”, but that, still, the banks were still “largely non-compliant” due to the “risks” surrounding agricultural lending.

### ***BSP’s financial inclusion education and advocacy strategy***

In July 1, 2015, the BSP published and launched the *National Strategy for Financial Inclusion* which is, in brief, aimed at realizing the overall vision of a “financial system that is accessible and responsive to the needs of the entire population toward a broad-based and inclusive growth, particularly, to ensure that this financial system also serves the traditionally unserved or marginalized sectors of the population” (BSP, 2015).

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<sup>16</sup> Per EO 83, P50.0-billion worth of Erap Bonds were issued. However, starting 2000, the government has endeavored to come up with an exit mechanism to make such “bonds” “quasi-equity” in form. Turns out that while the Erap Bonds were issued with a specific maturity (exit) date (this is generic to bonds, or evidence of indebtedness, since debts are expected to be repaid after a certain period), the proceeds from said bonds were used as equity in various agri-agra projects. This is a mismatch since equity, or ownership, has no maturity date until it is voluntarily pulled-out or restructured. Retrieved from <https://www.philstar.com/business/2000/02/14/100759/govt-mulls-exit-mechanism-erap-bonds> (accessed June 5, 2019).

The NSFI (BSP, 2015) provides:

*In 2006, the United Nations (UN) established the Advisors Group on Inclusive Financial Sectors to advise the UN system and member states on global issues related to inclusive finance (p. 3)...[I]n 2009, the G20 leaders, amid the global financial crisis and economic downturn, recognized the reinforcing policy objectives of **financial stability, financial inclusion, and consumer protection** [emphasis supplied]. This recognition is also evident in the growing number of countries adopting some aspect of a financial inclusion agenda under the **purview of the main financial regulator** [emphasis supplied] (p. 4).*

*...While these Principles [for **Innovative** Financial Inclusion] are those espoused by the G20, they were **established with the support** from the AFI [Alliance for Financial Inclusion]<sup>17</sup>, the **network of developing countries** committed to increasing access to the unserved [emphasis supplied] (p. 4).*

*...[T]he G20 launched a financial inclusion peer-learning program focused on supporting the development of national strategies for financial inclusion across the globe. The WB also developed knowledge products on how to develop the coordination structures for financial inclusion strategies (p. 4).*

These international and local norms and empirical contexts which inform NSFI are funneled into three (3) key strategies/strategic statements, namely: (1) policy, regulation and supervision; (2) financial education & consumer protection, and (3) advocacy programs (BSP, 2015). Nonetheless, NSFI's realization of these strategies will be informed

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<sup>17</sup> The Philippines is part of the AFI.



by G20 Principles for Innovative Financial Inclusion, such as, but not limited to, (1) diversity which refers to “**market-based incentives** [emphasis supplied] for delivery of sustainable financial access” as well as (2) “knowledge” which refers to “evidence-based policy” which considers “an **incremental test-and-learn approach** by both regulators and service providers [emphasis supplied]” (BSP, 2015, p. 15). These strategies will be applied in identified underserved sectors such as “low-income and marginalized, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), overseas Filipino and their beneficiaries, **agriculture and agrarian reform sector** [emphasis supplied], the youth, women, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, among others” (BSP, 2015, p. 2).

The link between, and application of, NSFI to RA 10000 and the agri-agra sector’s need for greater access to financial inclusion in the form of credit is BSP Circular No. 908, Series of 2016, or the *Agricultural Value Chain Financing Framework*. Issued in March 14, 2016 by then OIC BSP Governor Nestor A. Espenilla, Jr. (deceased) in behalf of the BSP Monetary Board, Circular 908 reads:

*[Section 1, added to Section X350/4350Q/4350N of the Manual of Regulations for Banks or MORB/Manual of Regulations for Non-Bank Financial Institutions or MORNBF] **Statement of policy.** The Bangko Sentral supports the promotion of agricultural value chain financing<sup>18</sup> as an effective and organized approach to channel financing to the agriculture and fisheries sectors and **promote financial inclusion.***

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<sup>18</sup> The same Circular 908 defines “value chain” as “a set of actors/players, e.g., producers (farmers/fisherfolks), traders, suppliers, processors, aggregators, who conduct linked sequence of value-adding activities involved in bringing a product from its raw material state to the final consumers.” “Value chain finance” is defined as “financial flows to those actors/players from both within the value chain and financial flows to those actors/players from the outside as a result of their being linked within a value chain.”



By **encouraging** the linking of various actors/players in an agricultural value chain, **credit risk**<sup>19</sup> of participating smallholder farmers/fisherfolks can be **reduced** [emphasis supplied]...

The Agricultural Value Chain Financing Framework (AVCF Framework) is a decision-making-enhancing exercise of BSP's policy-making power in two ways: (1) for those banks which already "indirectly" and "unknowingly" do AVCF, the Framework will improve the banks' tagging or reporting of compliance to RA 10000 and (2) for those banks which are not yet into AVCF, the Framework provides information and guide on implementing AVCF from solicitation of prospective borrowers, credit underwriting, credit risk mitigation (through various loan disbursement options), and disaster contingency mechanisms to protect the banks' books and the distressed borrowers' financial health.

According to the BSP Monetary Board Member, most banks—mostly the UKBs or the big banks—have been doing AVCF for the longest time and that the AVCF Framework is, in a way, an innovation to hopefully boost compliance through proper tagging and reporting of loans to Agri-Agra. Below is a hypothetical example based on the Monetary Board Member's explanation:

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<sup>19</sup> Circular 908 reduces credit risk (risk of non-payment or default) is mitigated provisions on (1) loan disbursement and (2) disaster contingency mechanism. Loan disbursement shall be based on the borrowers' role in the value chain, and can either be of the following: (1) cash disbursement; (2) loan proceeds transfer to suppliers; (3) anchor firm (institutional buyer)-triggered loan release. Simply put, these provide the lending bank options to lower chances that the loan proceeds are misappropriated or used contrary to the interest of the anchor firm or to the viability of the entire value chain. The provision on disaster contingency mechanism provides that "in light of the vulnerability" of the agri and fisheries sectors, banks are enjoined to develop "built-in contingency mechanism" to "provide timely relief to a borrower to facilitate recovery". An example of this could be a loan restructuring program that can be activated in the event a disaster affecting loan repayment occurs. The benefit of designing this mechanism is that it shall "not automatically trigger adverse loan classification and past due loan recognition" and that "any new financing granted under such schemes will also not be adversely classified" but shall be subject nonetheless to strict monitoring.

**Table 5**

*Demonstration on how the AVCF Framework promotes compliance through identification of various actors involved in the value chain*

<p><b>Borrower:</b> Super Wow Rice Milling Corp. (SWRMC)</p> <p><b>Credit facility granted by Luzvimin Unibank:</b> P500.0M revolving promissory note line (RPNL)</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Finance working capital requirement</p> <p><b>Background on SWRMC:</b> SWRMC is the biggest rice miller in Extreme North Luzon. The Luzvimin Unibank relationship manager is personally aware that SWRMC also serves as lender to small rice farmers (ARBs) since there is no Luzvimin Unibank branch or any other formal financial service provider near the area. The banker estimates that at least P100.0M of the P500.0-M RPNL is regularly being used for short-term lending to these farmers.</p> <p><b>Outstanding/unpaid balance (amount recorded as compliance):</b> P440.0M</p>	
Pre-AVCF Framework	AVCF Framework
<p>Since the borrower is SWRMC, the P440.0M outstanding balance is reported only as part of the 15% compliance to lending to agricultural sector (SWRMC being an agricultural firm). Since the Unibank has neither data nor approved credit facilities for the farmers who may have availed indirectly from the Unibank's credit facility through SWRMC, whatever indirect lending to the farmers cannot be reported as</p>	<p>Assuming the Unibank applies the AVCF Framework—wherein it will lend not only to SWRMC but to the value chain, i.e., P500.0-RPNL for both SWRMC and the farmers who supply <i>palay</i> to the miller—the Unibank will be able to monitor movements in loan utilization—and improve reporting of compliance. The likely compliance reportage will be: the Unibank reports P340.0M compliance to the 15% requirement for the agricultural sector; P100.0M compliance to the 10% requirement for the ARBs. In succeeding credit facility renewals, the credible data can be used by the banker as basis for increase in credit facilities.<sup>20</sup></p>

<sup>20</sup> With the example, it seems that the immediate effect of AVCF Framework as a decision-making-enhancing strategy is that banks will spread thinly the amount to appropriate actors in the value chain but without any growth in actual lending, i.e., pre- and post-AVCF Framework still records an aggregate lending of P440M. However, the mid- to long-term effect of AVCF Framework is that if banks already know the other actors in the value chain, they, over time, would be able to improve provision of credit to the other actors, penetrate the entire value chain, and thus increase the absolute amount of compliance.



compliance to the 10% requirement for the ARBs.	
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In brief, the Framework is decision-making-enhancing since it is not meant to impose or force upon banks the adoption of AVCF; instead, it provides clear and actionable guides to AVCF for banks to assess viability and extent of application.

***BSP’s strategy of understanding the supervised banks***

As discussed by the BSP Monetary Board Member, the AVCF Framework has been also a product of long listening sessions with bankers on various gatherings and is not solely the work of BSP’s in-house analysts and policymakers. The BSP regularly sends representatives in events organized by UKBs—the Unibank’s included, especially when it organized in mid-2010s its pilot agri-financing summit which shall be explained in the succeeding parts of this chapter—to share the BSP’s efforts in promoting compliance to RA 10000, usually weaved to the advocacy of financial inclusion and, in turn, solicit bankers’ feedback on ways to move forward.

The BSP Monetary Board Member also said that the BSP—as regulator and supervisor of the banking industry—is regularly invited by Congress for the latter’s members to understand the state of compliance to RA 10000. The BSP has consistently and regularly reported to Congress the quarter-on-quarter compliance figures. Interestingly, said Monetary Board Member said that when BSP explains to Congress that banks, especially UKBs, are having difficulties complying to the law due to the surrounding credit risk barriers, Congress, in turn, consistently blamed banks: “*eh kasalanan ng mga bangko*” (non-compliance to RA 10000 is the fault of the banks).



## Analysis

*How does the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' (BSP) implementation strategy promote compliance to the mandatory credit allocation requirements of RA 10000 on the part of universal and commercial banks (UKBs), specifically the Luzvimin Unibank (Unibank)?*

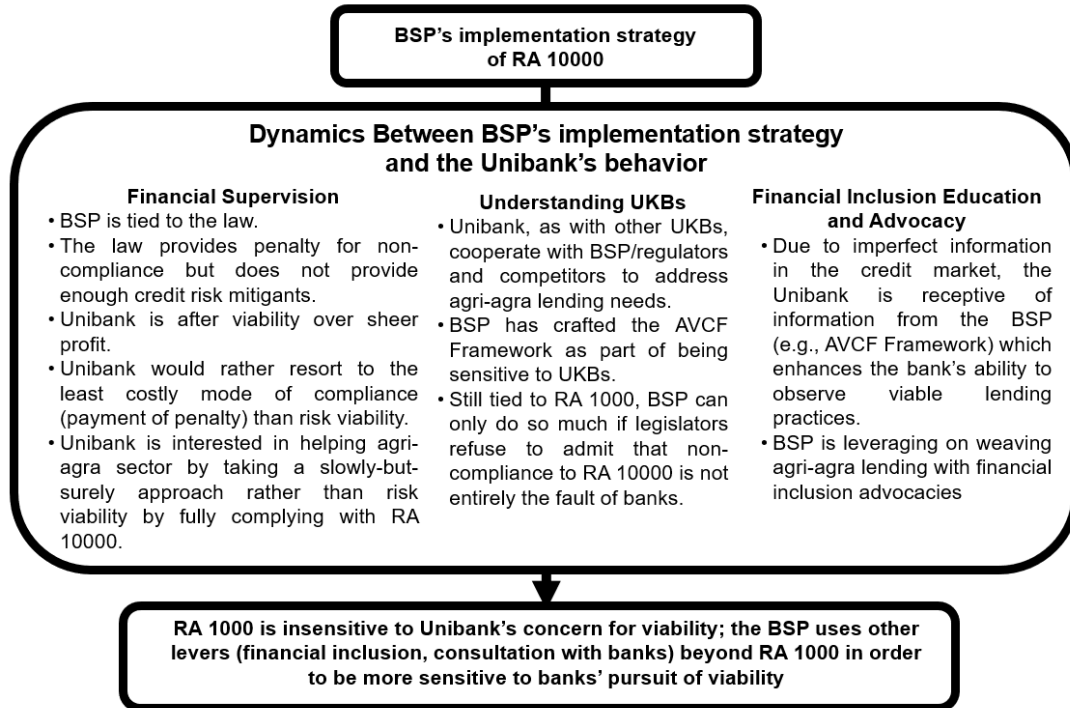
Based on data gathered, the short answer to the question is this: *the BSP, as regulator, uses other levers—such as financial inclusion and industry consultation initiatives—beyond RA 10000 to become sensitive to the banks' pursuit of viability through institutional capacity-building and thereby promote regulatory compliance; however, tied to the law, making RA 10000's contents sensitive to banks' pursuit of viability is already outside of BSP's control. Thus, a legislative review of RA 10000 is imperative and this study provides recommendations on how to make the law more sensitive to banks' pursuit of viability.*

The bases and nuances of said answer are discussed according to six (6) core political economy themes: (1) the law as a constraint in itself to producing intended outcomes; (2) using other levers: balancing between policy implementation and protection of the financial system; (3) the need for legislative review: the whole-of-government's indispensable role in "sending the signal" of Agri-Agra's viability to the banks; (4) clash of bank identities: centralized and financial lending versus decentralized and relationship lending; (5) clash of norms: liberal economic norms versus illiberal economic norms, and (6) clash of methods: methodological individualism in banking versus methodological collectivism of the law. These findings are embedded in the study's framework, namely: (1) BSP as regulator and its implementation strategy; (2) the Unibank and its norms, and (3) regulatory compliance to RA 10000.



*BSP as regulator and its implementation strategy*

*The law as a constraint in itself to producing desired regulatory outcomes*



**Figure 4.** Illustration of the answer to the main research question

The principal source of BSP's regulatory mandate to promote the intended regulatory outcome—the banks' compliance to the 25% mandatory credit allocation to Agri-Agra—is the law, RA 10000, and nothing else. The law provides as well the duties and tools by which the BSP will implement the policy: to monitor, on a regular basis, the compliance of the banks and to collect penalties for non-compliance and distribute the same accordingly. Differently stated, BSP's implementing capability to produce the desired policy outcomes is defined and bounded by the very provisions of RA 10000. As the Monetary Board member-respondent said—the BSP is tied to RA 10000.



Data also suggests that with RA 10000—specifically the provisions on alternative modes of compliance such as on purchase of bonds and investments—BSP is left with a dependent relationship characterized by either (1) waiting from the DA/DAR (as well as from government banks LBP and DBP) for the issuance of the instruments or (2) being constrained with the existing roster of rural banks which are eligible for accreditation according to established BSP guidelines (and whose criteria for accreditation is not based on “soundness” but on compliance to minimum corporate and banking requirements<sup>21</sup>, e.g., completion of all necessary SEC and banking licenses); only after which can the BSP revert to the regulated banks with the updated information in order to enhance their decision-making with respect to complying with RA 10000. Moreover, there is the institutional recognition of the highly-specialized nature of agriculture as a market for lending, to which the BSP would rather refer banks to DA/DAR for informational assistance as well as resort to further investigation on the viability of Agri-Agra borrowers since, ultimately, compliance, whether direct or indirect, is incumbent upon banks. This is a constraint to both BSP’s and UKBs’ behaviors since absent any viable bond, investment instrument, or valuable information, there is nothing for the BSP to implement and there is nothing for the UKBs to alternative comply with.

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<sup>21</sup> “For a bank to become an accredited RFI, it must pass the qualification criteria under Subsection X341.8 (B) of Circular No. 736: (1) The bank’s total loan portfolio must be greater that its total investments and (2) its average credit exposure to agri agra must be greater than its exposure to other economic sectors. These shall be computed based on average of the last four quarters preceding the bank’s application for accreditation. This pre-supposes that the bank has submitted on time a complete and acceptable Financial Reporting Package (FRP) in the last four quarters prior to the time of its application for accreditation. A qualified bank shall be issued a Certificate of Accreditation (CoA) which bears the name of the bank, a unique Accreditation Reference Number and the date of accreditation”, according to the published FAQ accessible here: [http://www.bsp.gov.ph/regulations/faq\\_736a.asp](http://www.bsp.gov.ph/regulations/faq_736a.asp) (accessed June 5, 2019). These are indeed not indicative of financial “soundness” since greater total loan portfolio versus total investments (e.g., equity) and loan portfolio mix according to industry type are silent as regards allowance for probable losses, ratio of non-performing loans, asset mix, operational efficiency, interest income and margins, bank’s debt-to-equity ratio, which will better explain profitability, liquidity, solvency, repayment capacity, among others, as measures of “soundness”.



*Has the BSP done its role in implementing RA 10000 as far as financial supervision is concerned?* Data point to the affirmative. The BSP has generated an IRR to lend RA 10000 to implementability; monitored the bank's compliance, and collected fines for non-compliance therein. Data likewise suggest that the BSP has demonstrated effective implementing competencies with other policies (e.g., on monitoring and promoting banks' compliance to capital adequacy standards, anti-money laundering rules, among many others) to which the banks' have been relatively compliant. Said policies have lent themselves to being complied. *If BSP's implementation of other policies did promote regulatory compliance, why is this not true for UKBs with respect to RA 10000?* This brings the focus of problematizing from the BSP's implementing competencies to the very letter and spirit of RA 10000. Data presented various reasons why RA 10000 does not lend itself to produce its intended regulatory outcome: the law is unresponsive to the UKBs' interest for pursuit of financial viability; the law is plainly after loan volume (outcomes) and not concerned and equipped with logically-necessary accessory policies on mitigating credit risk (sound means); the 25% target is too high and is even not representative of the mix of the country's GDP; the law provides for equally-legal alternatives (either alternative modes or mere payment of penalty) which entices banks to exercise discretion—in pursuit of viability—resulting in the resort for the least costly mode of legal compliance, i.e., payment of penalty, among others. Just like no amount of collateral can substitute a bad credit risk, no amount also of implementing and compliance-promoting skill can substitute a law whose inherent quality bars itself from being complied.

However, the BSP went out of the confines of RA 10000 and crafted and implemented complementary policies—i.e., AVCF Framework; understanding the banks' constraints, and endeavoring to promote awareness among banks—to further promote regulatory compliance to RA 10000. These courses of actions can be operationally referred to as “alternative policy levers” used by the regulator constrained by default or existing policy



tools to achieve intended outcomes. Data shows that in contrast to RA 10000, banks, especially UKBs, are absorptive of information which reduces uncertainty and imperfect information in the lending market (e.g., banks intend to lend to Agri-Agra but are not as cognizant of the surrounding risks as well as techniques to mitigate them), since information absorption is in line with the banks' pursuit of making better credit judgment that is ultimately tied to pursuit of viability. UKBs are likewise cooperative with the BSP, other regulators, and even competitor-banks to address the uncertainties and constraints surrounding Agri-Agra lending. However, information takes time before being converted to reality or positive change. This is demonstrated by the social behavior of the Unibank in favor of going into high-risk sectors: incrementalism, making limited bets, slowly-but-surely activities. And when the banks are ready and have seen viability on the sector, e.g., poultry industry due to proper mitigation of credit risks, the banks will naturally supply credit therein. Stated differently, while BSP's implementation strategy of diffusing information which improves banks' assessment of viability, no amount of information absorption by UKBs—no matter how perfect and well-diffused—will immediately result in regulatory compliance to RA 10000 since the law itself is after production of immediate, sizeable outcomes—year-on-year lending of 25% of loanable funds to an underserved sector which is representative only of approximately less than 10% of the Philippine economy.

***Using other levers: balancing between policy implementation and protection of the financial system***

While the BSP is charged with the supervisory function to implement statutes produced by Congress and other relevant policy-making bodies of government, data shows that the BSP has a distinct duty—other than monetary policy-making—of its own: to protect the Philippine financial system. The clash of BSP's duties shapes its implementation strategies. Presented elsewhere were various historical and economic norm



developments which shaped central banking of today: the 2008 financial crisis has called upon central banks to implement discipline on the financial sector to avoid a repeat; the narrative of “financial inclusion” as shaped by G20 norms has shaped BSP programs in a way that whatever developmental ends there are should be promoted not by imposing on banks, but by giving them the information to make sound and “viable” choices. On the other hand, RA 10000 expects the BSP to trigger banks to set aside 25% of their loanable funds and lend to the underserved Agri-Agra. Data show that the law will be better complied if banks compromise credit standards. On its face, this appears to be contradiction and puts the BSP in a difficult situation: ensuring that banks be disciplined when granting loans on the one hand, while impliedly encouraging them to compromise credit standards on the other. However, in the greater scheme of things, the role of the BSP as protector of the financial system is necessary and also enabled it to somehow innovate and use other levers, i.e., financial inclusion advocacy, in promoting regulatory compliance to RA 10000 without rejecting sound credit practices.

***The need for legislative review: the whole-of-government’s indispensable role in “sending the signal” of Agri-Agra’s viability to the banks***

The more the study narrowed down on regulator-firm dynamics, even further down to specific internal workings of the firm, the more the study points back to the whole-of-government as an indispensable (although seemingly invisible) group of actors in improving regulatory compliance to RA 10000 via sending the signal of Agri-Agra’s viability for lending by banks, especially by environment-sensitive UKBs. And although the concept of “viability” can be reduced to the attendance of “willingness and ability to repay” by the borrower, “viability” is also embedded in and shaped by the regulatory environment, wherein BSP is just one of many government agents who comprise a family of regulators and policy-makers.



The data gathered provide clues on what influences and sends these “signals” that trigger banks to determine the “viability” of Agri-Agra: the Unibank’s willingness to lend to the poultry industry was triggered by the “signal” of new, credit-risk mitigating poultry house technology that can be financed in tandem with credit guarantors; the Unibank eventually extended credit to a social enterprise who was able to mitigate credit risk with a low-cost farm house that can ensure production of fresh vegetables even during lean and rainy season. Conversely, “negative signals” also discouraged the Unibank from further extending loans to the Agri-Agra: the agrarian reform beneficiaries are not organized into “corporatives” to achieve scale, mitigate credit risk, and be bankable with UKBs; the liberalization of rice importation which resulted in the Unibank to recalibrate its credit exposure to those within the rice industry value chain, among others. Moreover, the concern for lack of “character” (e.g., previous instance of loan default by a farmer-applicant due to natural calamity which necessitated debt restructuring) and “capacity” (e.g., high operating expenses and working capital requirement due to increasing cost of farm inputs, lack of serviceable farm-to-market roads) cannot always solely be blamed to the borrower as these are also outcomes of the regulatory environment (e.g., lack of organizing mechanism, i.e., “corporate” or contract farming, for small farmers, such that scale can be achieved and risks can be mitigated; poor public infrastructure).

The whole-of-government—not only the BSP, but Congress as lawmakers, the Executive in charge of provision or regulation of various infrastructure and technology “goods” affecting Agri-Agra—ought to work in a concerted manner—either through public investment to the most underserved or through organizing the private sector to finance key research and infrastructure projects—in order to send to the banks the signal of viability. Until this whole-of-government effort is there, the BSP can only do so much in promoting, through its implementing strategies, compliance to RA 10000.

The Unibank's norms

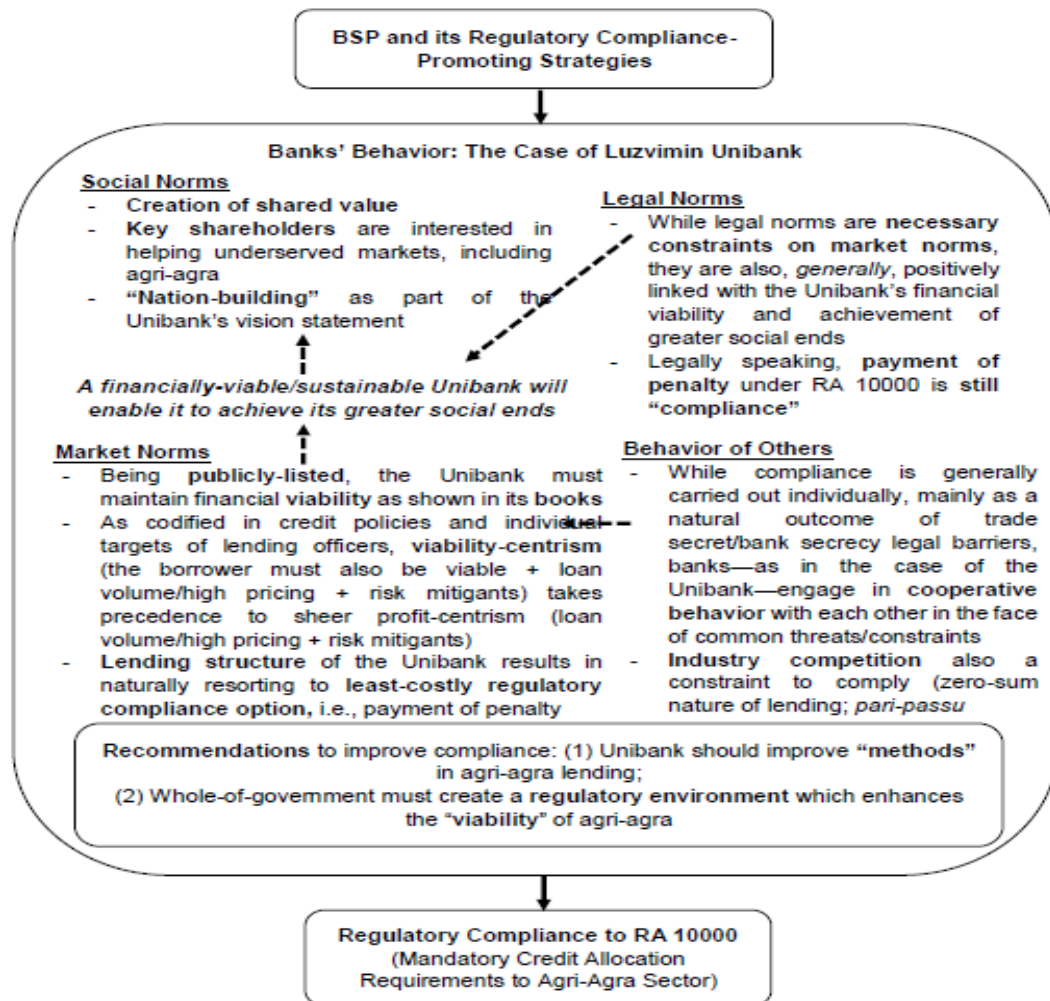


Figure 5. Illustration of the Unibank's incentives and disincentives to comply to RA 10000's mandatory credit allocation requirements

What can be said of the norms of the Unibank? Gathered data on market norms suggest that the Unibank has neither codified guides nor prevailing practices which point to a conscious and direct market-based incentive or disincentive to comply to RA 10000. Rather, compliance or non-compliance becomes an accessory outcome of the Unibank's primordial market norm: concern for "viability", which can be operationally defined as prioritization of the borrower's character (willingness to pay) and capacity (capacity to



pay; “first way out”) over sheer profit (loan volume growth and interest income) and collateral (“second way out”). Bankers are interested in their performance ratings (micro) and books (macro) thus will not replace viability for collateral (minimizes loss from default, but cannot replace “viability” of the borrower) and profit (e.g., higher interest rate also increases risk of default). Stated differently, the more “viable” an Agri-Agra borrower is, the more incentive there is for the Unibank to lend to said borrower and, consequently, the more regulatory compliance to RA 10000 will be, *vice versa*. The concern for viability is indispensable in protecting the Unibank’s core interest as a publicly-listed firm: to show “financial viability” to the market through its books.

As for legal norms, gathered suggest that the Unibank’s legal incentive to comply to laws and policies—such as RA 10000—is based on the incentive to follow the law as a necessity in doing business, as demonstrated in different instances. However, this is outweighed by the disincentives to comply to RA 10000, namely: (1) other legal barriers and disputes to converting credit approvals to actual loan booking (basis of reporting “compliance”) and (2) RA 10000 itself provides for an “equally-legal” alternative, i.e., payment of penalty. These incentives and disincentives are weaved by the norm of “discretion”, to which gathered data operationally define as the Unibank’s process of decision-making that aims for the least costly mode of regulatory compliance—within the options provided by law or policy—in order to pursue “viability” (market norm). Exercise of sound discretion promotes viability; conversely, viability—as primordial norm—dictates exercise of discretion. The more a law or policy is punitive and truly mandatory (so the less discretionary it is), the more legal incentive (“follow the law because it is the law”) there is for the Unibank to comply as intended, *vice versa*.

As for social norms, gathered data suggest that the Unibank’s social incentive to comply to RA 10000 is the promotion of “shared value”. Data point to an operational definition





of “shared value” as a state where the Unibank’s, the social entrepreneur’s, and the marginalized/underserved community’s interests meet and result in a sustainable way of helping an identified marginalized/underserved sector, including Agri-Agra. However, the disincentive to comply is the difficulty of achieving and sustaining shared value; nevertheless, this disincentive is offset by the Unibank’s orientation towards social change: an incremental, slowly-but-surely process. When related to the Unibank’s primordial concern for viability, data points to this relationship: while viability takes precedence to achieving social ends, e.g., shared value, the pursuit of viability also enables the Unibank to pursue and sustain its greater social ends.

As for the behavior of other banks, gathered data suggest that with respect to the behavior of other UKBs, the Unibank has the incentive to comply to RA 10000 since it is in line with the Unibank’s interest to engage in cooperative behavior with other UKBs, particularly government UKBs.

All of these point to the peculiar character of the Unibank as (a) big bank and (b) as a liberal economic organization, which also affect how it behaves as a regulated agent.

***Clash of bank identities: centralized and financial-based lending versus decentralized and relationship-based lending***

Bank size and structure, among others, affect its identity, priorities, and regulatory compliance capacity. Due to being publicly-listed and closely-monitored by regulators and financial observers, big banks—the Unibank and all other UKBs—are under immense pressure from shareholders, the investing public, and the regulators to report to the public sound financials (financial viability) through their books. Given their size, big banks ought to produce as much income with the least amount of cost as possible to report high margins, high return on assets (ROA), low NPL ratio, high return on equity (ROE),



among others. This firm identity also informs the Unibank's behavior: lending desks are concentrated in key cities and business centers; otherwise, ROA and ROE will go down if the bank is pushed to "branch out" (brick-and-mortar branches), hire more people (additional expense), to "reach out" (additional operational expense) to the "underserved market" which have minimal aggregate loan volume (low loan requirement on a per-borrower basis) contribution yet with high credit risk. Approval of loans is also concentrated to the powerful credit committee—to ensure that the "complex norms out there" are factored in on every single borrower to protect the Unibank's viability and its books. This identity also informs the bank's resort to payment of penalty, since accumulation of 25% credit exposure to a high-risk Agri-Agra sector puts to risk the bank's books (especially in light of the "forward-looking" norm of IFRS 9). This explains the bordering-cliché statement that big banks are "not structurally designed" for Agri-Agra lending.

The analysis on the Unibank's firm identity also allowed discovery of something which prevailing literature and policies tend to overlook: ultimately, big banks are concerned on financial viability (character and capacity); they are not in the business of collecting collaterals since no amount of collateral can replace bad credit, and that they can forego short-term concern for profit in order to protect long-term concern for viability.

RA 10000 works for decentralized, relationship-based lending, e.g., rural banks, and arguably even big banks but those owned by the government. To be truly compliant to RA 10000, a bank ought to send officers to the countryside and get to know the borrowers on an individual, personal level. This business model is asset- and OPEX-heavy: hundreds to thousands of loan officers servicing small borrowers; lots of brick-and-mortar, and high operating and administrative expenses, which will pull down profitability ratios. Approval of loans will also have to be decentralized to cut turnaround time. The ability to decipher



small borrowers' character through relationship-based lending is possessed by rural banks (who are embedded in these communities) as well as Landbank, who has access to a rich database of agrarian reform beneficiaries, and whose firm identity is governmental and developmental as well: concern not only for profit, but also for implementing the government's objectives to help those sectors that private banks are averse to.

***Clash of norms: liberal economic norms versus illiberal economic norms***

RA 10000, the BSP, and the UKBs are caught within the grand clash between liberal economic norms and illiberal economic norms. The earlier-explained debates on method, firm identity, clashing regulatory imperatives, are tied to these two (2) classic political economy ideas. Although it is hardly possible to identify policies and firms which are either purely liberal economic in orientation or otherwise, it is still possible to make an association. RA 10000 can be argued as illiberal—it diminishes the discretion and choice of banks as market agents since the law “mandates” a specific portion of bank's resources to be “funneled” to a high-risk sector. Meanwhile, the BSP is informed by liberal economic norms of promoting “market-based” solutions to socio-economic ills through diffusion of information which will help agents such as banks make more “informed choices” in allocating credit resources. Private banks such as the Unibank also operate within a liberal economic framework where it ought to make proper disclosure of its financials to the investing public, thereby improving agents' ability to make choices and is also healthy for a competitive banking industry. The government also has embarked in a liberal economic journey: from banking (liberalization) down to rice importation (removal of import quotas).



### ***Regulatory compliance to RA 10000***

*Clash of methods: methodological individualism in banking versus methodological collectivism of the law*

The data gathered exhibit the classic clash between individualism and collectivism in terms of their method of operationalization. By individualism, the individual holds ontological priority over the collective, which informs its epistemology of understanding individual interest (e.g., for rational choice, rationality and maximization), all the way down to method: use of tools to understand and prioritize individual interests and qualities, which will—when aggregated—mirror macro outcomes. On the other hand, by collectivism, the collective or group hold ontological priority over individuals, which informs its epistemology of understanding collective identities, shared meanings, and the like (e.g., for Marxism, class analysis), all the way down to method: use of tools to understand and prioritize group interests. Method matters in the analysis of regulatory outcomes since it is an iteration of a greater ontology, and policies can be informed by different ontologies; ergo, the analysis of compliance or non-compliance to RA 10000 can be understood by examining methods in lending and doing business. The study and the data did this.

Data suggest that Unibank's lending and compliance to RA 10000 is informed by methodological individualism. Compliance to RA 10000 becomes the aggregate outcome of one-by-one, borrower-per-borrower analysis, approval, and disbursement of loans. This method is employed by the Unibank—and, arguably, all other UKBs—due to its core concern for viability as a publicly-listed company whose main medium of communication to the capital market is its books. And given the recent accounting and regulatory changes which drive banks towards tighter controls on lending—since every piece of bad credit added to the books will pull the bank's capital, efficiency, and profitability ratios—banks ought to filter—borrower-per-borrower—good credit from the



bad. The Unibank is industry-blind since it recognizes the peculiarities of individual persons and firms, even when belonging to the same industry or sector. Consequently, these individualist norms also inform the behavior of each and every lending officer: based on specified, measurable targets. Although Unibank credit policy is industry-blind, this method and filtering mechanism is disadvantageous to Agri-Agra as a class, not as a deliberate intent, but as an unintended consequence of the aggregation of individuals.

On the other hand, RA 10000 is a contradiction—which explains non-compliance thereto—since it is deeply collectivist in methodology: it intends “all” banks, regardless of type, to “set aside” a portion of their loanable funds for lending to an underserved “class” that is the Agri-Agra sector. Discussed elsewhere is the reality that banks are not homogenous—even within UKBs, local banks operate differently from foreign banks, as the former have substantial Agri borrowers in their books while the latter are in the country either to support the requirements of foreign firms operating in the country or through niche businesses such as consumer and digital banking. “Setting aside” of loanable funds is also alien to the lending behavior of UKBs, whose real-time loanable funds is highly variable and cannot be projected except for a limited period of time since individual loan availments are unpredictable. The concern for “class” also explains the disregard to mitigate “individual” credit risk mitigants.

*Is there a middle ground?* The BSP’s AVCF Framework can be seen as middle ground. While the AVCF calls upon banks to look at the “bigger picture” of various Agri-Agra players being part of an interconnected “value chain”, i.e., collectivist, the AVCF also prescribes banks to study the “role” of each actor in the value chain, as well as mitigate credit risk by identifying how, and even to whom, to release loan proceeds, i.e., individualist. Similarly, other existing and future efforts of the BSP to reduce uncertainty



and imperfect information in the Agri-Agra lending market highlight individual and collective strengths and weaknesses of agri-agra borrowers; thus, middle ground.

On the part of UKBs, data show that the middle ground for big banks such as Luzvimin Unibank is its investment in institutional capacity-building activities, i.e., fund grants to eligible Agri-Agra applicants, training of its loan officers to be more knowledgeable of the Agri-Agra sector as prospective market for borrowers, and collaboration with other banks which entailed cost (including access to one's own internal trade practices and secrets). While these activities do not immediately result in formal or quantitative compliance to RA 10000, they are necessary steps towards that end. As presented, when Agri-Agra grantees gain scale and turn bankable, banks start to be comfortable in extending credit. When human resources are beefed up by trained agriculturists and welcome scientific developments in agriculture, banks start to gain more comfort in lending to Agri-Agra, just like the Luzvimin Unibank. This way, the bank is able to balance its pursuit of viability as well as its commitment to comply to regulation and to contribute to society.

## Conclusion and Policy Implications

### *Answers from responsive regulation and behavioral approach*

As employed in the study, responsive regulation was able to describe and provide normative guide with respect to making policy sensitive to firm behavior and, in turn, promote compliance as a desired regulatory outcome. Descriptively, responsive regulation—with the help of behavioral approach for the indicators—provided the insight that banks, fundamentally, are interested in viability, and that the BSP has used other levers such as AVCF Framework to somehow make regulation responsive to this industry conduct; normatively, it is through revisiting RA 10000 and making it more attuned to the agents' pursuit of viability that will make the policy able to better promote regulatory



compliance on the part of banks. The normative aspect was initially tackled by the respondents' recommendations but will be discussed in full in the forthcoming policy recommendations in this chapter.

By treating "interest" not as an unquestioned given but as something "out there" waiting to be discovered and understood, the use of responsive regulation enabled the understanding of various "interests" of the Unibank. At the core is the pursuit of "viability"—the indispensability of "character" (willingness to pay) and "capacity" (capacity to pay) when answering the core lending business question: *to whom do I lend?* While the best case scenario is to have all five (5) Cs of credit—including collateral—as well as good loan pricing, "viability" is non-negotiable as it is the core standard by which the Unibank can respond to its peculiar materialist condition: a publicly-listed company, whose "financial viability" is measured by the investing public through its well-curated financial books. The pursuit of "viability" heavily informs not only the Unibank's lending behavior—to which Agri-Agra are disadvantaged—but also its regulatory compliance behavior as well as social behavior.

By understanding the Unibank's behavior and primordial concern for financial viability, the study was able to understand which implementation strategies by the BSP work better over others with respect to promotion of regulatory compliance. The BSP's implementation of RA 10000 using Circular 736 as part of its financial supervision powers hardly promotes compliance since, tied to the law, the law itself is insensitive to banks' concern for viability. Yet, the BSP employed complementary strategies and programs to promote regulatory compliance: by understanding the banking sector and promoting financial inclusion education and advocacy which resulted in the AVCF Framework, the BSP has used its other levers to go beyond the rigidities of RA 10000. However, the diffusion of viability-promoting information (i.e., that banks can explore value chain-based financing rather than on an exclusively per-borrower basis), as well as its conversion to



regulatory compliance, takes time. Nonetheless, the study was able to demonstrate how despite the paradoxical constraints of RA 10000 that renders it difficult to produce its desired regulatory outcome, the BSP's strategy to improve "viability" through diffusion of information matters as it is responsive to the nature of the banking industry.

### ***Findings-based contributions of the study***

*Did the study, using responsive regulation and behavioral approach, offer anything new and valuable with respect to understanding RA 10000's implementation, banks as regulated agents, as well as what triggers regulatory compliance?* The study did in two ways: (1) the study's findings that RA 10000 does not lend itself to being complied—no matter how effective BSP is at implementation—and that in such case the regulator may have to use other available levers outside the law in order to promote regulatory compliance is a challenge to the prevailing notion that "The Philippines is a country of good laws but is bad at implementation"; (2) the study's findings and nuanced discussion on "viability" as core primordial concern of UKBs demonstrates the explanatory limit of rational choice and the need for interdisciplinarity.

First, the study was able to present that some laws, such as RA 10000, are not successfully implemented because the contents of said laws do not lend themselves to being complied due to insensitivity to industry conduct. Much of prevailing literature and policy initiatives identify corruption, bureaucracy, and lack of regulators' capacity as culprits on why certain policies (presumed most of the time as "good") are not successfully implemented and do not generate the intended policy outcomes. However, in this study, BSP has effectively implemented the letters of RA 10000 primarily by its promulgation of Circular 736; however, tied to the law, BSP is also tied to the insensitivity of the law to banks' pursuit of viability; hence, a barrier to successful promotion of regulatory compliance. However, the study was able to discover that the BSP's weaving of other





norms it subscribes to—adoption of financial inclusion as an advocacy as well as regular conversations with banks—enabled the BSP to use its other levers to go beyond the law and produce alternative instruments to promote compliance, i.e., AVCF Framework. Thus, if the “primary source” of regulatory power is weak (RA 10000), the regulator can draw from “other sources” (financial inclusion, conversation initiatives) to compensate.

Second, the study uncovered the limits of rational choice in understanding “interest” of agents. The use of responsive regulation—making “interest” endogenous to the analysis—did not only revisit these rationalistic assumptions about banks, but even provided new ways of understanding bank “interests” which, arguably, would have not been unearthed if explanations were to be fettered by rational choice alone. It was the study on “legal norms” that revealed that even when banks have the rationalistic drive to lend, compliance will not take place due to external legal barriers (e.g., third-parties alien to the bank filing a case to the borrower which bars loan drawdown). It was the study on “social norms” that revealed that the Unibank has historically and is currently interested in pursuing greater social ends as manifested through various programs, which cannot be fully discerned by rational choice. The study on “market norms” also revealed that the big banks are fine with foregoing a portion of immediate profit and are not after collecting collaterals; banks are after character and capacity, i.e., viability. This is contextualized by recent changes in the banking industry—including the lessons learned from the financial crisis—that rendered rational choice insufficient in fully capturing this complex decision-making process of banks. These were achieved by going beyond rational choice and introducing interdisciplinarity in the analysis. Also, by looking into “interest”, the study as able to discover that banks balance viability and the regulatory imperative to comply through institutional capacity-building, i.e., step-by-step process by giving grants to eligible Agri-Agra players and training the loan officers about Agri-Agra which eventually build the banks appetite or comfort to take risks and lend to Agri-Agra. Lastly, just like



how arguably new “viability” is to the rational choice-centric understanding of bank behavior, such funding may also be a new area for the BSP and other relevant government agencies to explore for policy reform and in recalibrating strategies. *Are the regulators’ strategy for implementation and boosting Agri-Agra lending by banks responsive to the banks’ concern for viability?*

### ***Recommendations for further research***

Based on the totality of the study, the following three (3) empirical and theoretical puzzles are recommended to be made subject to further scholarly investigation:

1. How homogenous or heterogenous are UKBs with respect to concern for “viability”? How does firm size (being part of the top five UKBs versus otherwise); firm ownership structure (UKBs with foreign equity; UKBs with government equity; UKBs with history of being “bailed-out” by the government; UKBs principally owned by Taipans; UKBs with rich family-business heritage; local branches of foreign big banks operating in the Philippines for consumer and transaction banking businesses but using UKB license); firm leadership (background of credit committees; key executives) affect the concern for “viability”? Is the concern for “viability” universal? The same can also be studied with respect to thrift banks, rural banks, and the like.
2. What is the correlation between increase in compliance to RA 10000 and increase in productivity of the country’s agricultural sector, especially that a substantial portion of loan utilization is used for importation of finished goods?
3. Will compliance to RA 10000 be hastened by financial inclusion? If big banks are “going digital”, how can “digitalization” enable UKBs to reach out to the unbanked at the least possible cost, i.e., achieving both concern for viability and imperative for financial inclusion.



### *Policy recommendations*

Based on the findings of this study, the following three (3) courses of action are recommended in order to achieve responsive regulation's objective—make regulation sensitive to industry conduct:

1. **Assuming policy repeal is viable: Repeal RA 10000; BSP to enhance initiatives similar to AVCF Framework that provide banks information that may improve their credit judgment in pursuit of viability; the whole-of-government—either through direct public investment or organizing partnerships with the private sector—to beef-up Agri-Agra “public goods” and technology that mitigate credit risk and will send to the banks the “signal of viability” for lending.** The legacy of PD 717 and RA 10000 will remain: at the very least, the laws provoked banks to think about how formal lenders can help the Agri-Agra sector. Even without RA 10000, BSP—informed by its advocacy to promote financial inclusion—will continue to promote AVCF Framework and other initiatives which can be stand-alone programs for the underserved sector. Moreover, even without RA 10000, the indispensable role of the whole-of-government to shape a regulatory environment conducive for lending to the Agri-Agra subsist. As part of banks' job is to spot opportunities in the market, banks are closely monitoring signals of viability among different sectors and industries which need credit supply. “Public goods”, especially for agrarian reform beneficiaries, such as farm-to-market roads; irrigation; climate-resilient and high-yield crops, among others, cannot be financed by one or two private banks—they will have to be financed directly, or through organizing joint ventures or public-private partnerships with private firms, by the whole-of-government.

2. **Assuming policy amendment is more viable over policy repeal:** In order to incentivize banks to invest in institutional capacity-building towards compliance, RA 10000 should acknowledge (a) funding grants to Agri-Agra applicants, (b) investment in trainings and organizational structures that enable loan officers to be proficient in lending to Agri-Agra, and (c) similar institutional activities as quantifiable, formal modes of compliance. The study shows that regulated banks, especially UKBs, spend resources to grants, trainings, and studies to promote the institution's capacity to comply. These resources eventually are converted into compliance figures once the, say, grantees become bankable, as in the case demonstrated in the study. To encourage this positive behavior which complements formal compliance to RA 10000, the policy itself should expand and acknowledge these institutional behaviors as modes of compliance.
3. **The "less industry-insensitive" middle ground is to make RA 10000's "targets" subject to periodic review to be more sensitive to (1) industry structure and (2) economic trends.** Instead of specifying the figures (i.e., 25% of loanable funds, 15% of which for Agri; the balance for Agra) and limiting the "priorities" (i.e., priority of supplying credit to Agri-Agra), the amended RA 10000 should consider a more "flexible" provision that will leave to a collegial body (i.e., BSP, DA, DAR, NEDA, relevant Senate and House committees, and even key stakeholders from the banking and Agri-Agra sectors) the determination of "relevant and timely" targets for Agri-Agra. Said collegial body can be convened on quarterly basis or on as-needed basis (e.g., the case of India, wherein the types of priority sectors and the corresponding targets are revisited in several times within in a year, depending on economic trends) and be given the leeway to set timelines (e.g., one-, two-, three-year targets). Instead of being confined to lending alone, the collegial body can also include



other compelling financial inclusion agenda as part of the targets, e.g., increase in deposit account openings for Agri-Agra, bank investment in financial inclusion and Agri-Agra community interventions; bank lending to construction of roads, irrigation, and other infrastructure that improve Agri-Agra viability; bigger weight on lending for expansion, e.g., acquisition of farm equipment and construction of farm facilities, over short-term credit for importation of raw materials; bank investment in producing innovative financial products and services tailored for Agri-Agra, among others). Consequently, the different targets will be weighted depending on the prevailing priorities at a given time.

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## Economic Development and Strong State Policy: Does Duterte's War on Drugs Promote Economic Security?

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### Introduction

#### *Background of the Study*

Human Security has been an emerging research area in the field of the social sciences. The approach shifts the concept of security from a traditional (state-centric, military) point of view to an even broader categorization. The "new security" issues include, but not limited to, economic, environment, political, personal, community, health, and food security.

It is important to note that the formal introduction of the human security framework is not the first attempt to address other forms of insecurity aside from state-and-military-related issues. The Human Rights International Regime has long preceded the Human Security Agenda. In the Human Security framework, human rights are still addressed but it is, arguably, no longer given main significance as it has before. The International Human Rights Regime is still effective until this point, but it is contended that the Human Security framework has made this less of a priority for state policies and even used as a valid reason to promote other kinds of *securities* while disregarding others.

This study looks particularly at the economic security issue of the Philippines under the strong state policy on war on drugs. According to the United Nations Human Development Report (1994), economic security would mean having sufficient **income** and **employment**.



It is important to make a disclaimer that the researcher in this study is not a supporter of the government's brutal approach to solve the problem of illegal drugs. While the researcher agrees that illegal drugs must be suppressed, there are several alternative ways that the problem can be addressed. This study therefore shows that the current strong and brutal approach of the government actually promotes insecurity rather than security.

### ***Importance of the Study***

The War on Drugs is considered as the foundation of President Duterte's domestic policy. This is the same policy the leader pursued when he was still the Mayor (Local Chief executive) of the city of Davao, Philippines. The leader believes that the drug problem of the country hinders its social and economic progress. Hence, the administration argues that the elimination of illegal drugs is one way of achieving economic and social development in the country. On a report published by *Business World* (2018), it mentions that the "10 Point Socio-Economic Agenda" which was prepared by the government's economic planning strategy, then became the "0+10 Point Socio-Economic Agenda" with the "zero" being the fights against criminality and drugs. In addition, the report states that Economic Minister Ernesto Pernia said that the fight is a prerequisite "for the economy to thrive and flourish and for the country to prosper" (Business World, 2018). In the literature review, it will be showed that the problem of drug abuse has indeed social and economic implications. However, this study argues that although illegal drugs abuse is hindering social and economic development, the manner by which the fight against this must be considered.

This paper shows that the brutal drug war promotes more threat than safety to people, there is a need for the government to reconsider its policy, if not revoke it. The heavy



investment being given by the government in terms of fighting illegal drugs also proves justification why this phenomenon deserves an attention for research.

Human Rights have been violated in the Philippines in the conduct of the drug war. The summary killings exercised by both the state and vigilante groups deny the suspects of their right to be tried in courts. At the extreme, the right to life of the killed suspects are also denied. In addition, critics of the bloody drug war such as human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, and Catholic Church members have received threats from high-ranking officials, says United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights Michelle Bachelet (CNN, 2019). The Human Rights Watch World Report (2017) considers the Philippine drug war as “its worst human rights crisis since the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos in the 1970s and 1980s” (pp. 429). The report, at that time, estimates a total number of 12, 000 lives lost, composed primarily of poor urban dwellers. Despite Duterte’s harassment of individuals demanding for accountability including the United Nations itself, the Philippine President has not been reprimanded by international organizations, or the United Nations per se, for the grave human rights violations. This shows that State authority still plays a major role despite international efforts for cooperation regarding human rights and human security issues. As a result of continuous demand for accountability to the administration’s human rights abuses, critics such as the Catholic organizations, journalists, and the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) of the Philippines have all received wide criticisms from the people. The Human Rights Watch in its investigation has also found that the Philippine National Police (PNP) and its agents have “repeatedly carried out extrajudicial killings of drug suspects, and then falsely claimed self-defense” (pp. 430). In addition, the president has pledged to pardon police officers that are associated in the killings and even encouraged the police to “shoot them”, the human rights groups and advocates, if these groups are “obstructing justice”.



This study is of particular importance because it analyzes one the Duterte administration's core policies in a human security perspective – focusing on the economic, security issue. The basic argument in this study is that the War on Drugs, depicted by Duterte as hindrance to social and economic development, is a fundamental security issue and the goal is to identify whether or not it really promotes security that in turn lead to development.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

The main research question that the researcher is trying to answer in this paper is: “Does the government's War on Drugs promote economic security for its citizens?”

Specifically, three specific objectives are satisfied to provide an answer for the research question being asked:

- (1) To contextualize the Philippine economy to serve as basis for comparison on the impact of the drug war policy.
- (2) To identify the income and employment status of the country to serve as benchmarks for identifying the impact of the drug war.
- (3) To situate how the war on drugs affects the economic security (income and employment) in the country.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Human Rights and Human Security***

Henk (2005) argues that, “human security is achievable only in synergistic collaboration across social, institutional, and sectoral boundaries.” However, this global level of cooperation is a lot more difficult to practice than to advocate. In practice, the State still has the authority to implement security policies. The international organizations can



demand from individual states to halt human rights violations, but the ability to punish and intervene is still hardly exercised. In extreme cases, the Responsibility to Protect (ICISS, 2001) may bypass state sovereignty and intervene in the affairs of one State to protect its citizens but as Mary Martin puts it, the R2P still “lack clear guidelines on how to protect the civilians, hesitation by the UN Security Council to fully accept the protection of civilians, the use of force to protect civilians is perceived as damaging to sovereignty, and political interests” (Martin, M. *Human Security Course*).

This drive for international cooperation is not a new global trend. The International human rights regime has long preceded the Human Security Agenda and has been an avenue for international collaborations to address human rights issues. Some aspects of human security are also addressed in the International human rights regime like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Howard (2012) argues that at best, human security complements the international human rights regime, and at worst, it undermines it and more importantly, it undermines the primacy of civil and political rights. Due to the similarities on some of the components of human rights and human security, some people have sometimes used the two concepts alternatively. In this study, basing from the United Nations’ (1994) categorization human security is a broader concept and human rights is simply a component of human security under the label of *political security*.

Ogata and Sen (2003) argue, “Human security complements state security, enhances human rights and strengthens human development.” It seeks to protect individuals against wide-ranging sources of threats and empower them to act on their own behalf. They add that respecting human rights (civil and political as well as economic and social) is at the core of protecting human security and need to be upheld comprehensively.





### *Human Security Approaches*

Several approaches to the new security paradigm are presented. The United Nation's approach to human security maintains that security is needed to achieve development, and vice versa, development is needed to achieve security, and neither can be achieved without respect and consideration for the human rights of the individuals (UN General Assembly, 2005: 6). The Canadian approach puts emphasis on the "freedom from fear" element of human security. In its core principles, it acknowledges that States still has the primary Responsibility to Protect (R2P) its citizens but in times where the people are suffering and the State is "unwilling or unable to halt or avert it" the International Responsibility to Protect will be enacted (ICISS, 2001: XI). According to Mary Martin, scientific advisor at London School of Economics, the London School of Economics (LSE) approach to human security focuses on the "everyday experience of the individual or group and their vulnerability to violence in multiple forms." The European Union (EU) approach looks at human security as "freedom for individuals from basic insecurities caused by gross human rights violations" (Albrecht, et al., 2004). The doctrine is comprised of three elements and the first mentions a set of seven principles for operations in situations of severe insecurity that apply both ends and means. The seven principles include the primacy of human rights, clear political authority, multilateralism, a bottom-up approach, regional focus, the use of legal instruments, and the appropriate use of force.

Considering the four approaches mentioned, one particular theme is always apparent with paramount significance: the **primacy of human rights**. Among the UNDP's Human Development Report (1994) categorization, the topic of human rights falls into the *political security* aspect. Alkire (2003) argues that the elements of the vital core of human security are fundamental human rights that all persons and institutions are obliged to respect or provide. Howard (2012) argues that human rights, particularly civil and political



rights, are of paramount importance because these are strategic tools that can be used to obtain “economic, social, and cultural rights, and to press for development processes that focus on individuals”. Further, enjoyment of these rights “help citizens to act in their own interests, to force states to ensure the personal, physical, and material security they need” (Howard, 2012, p.108).

Related to the importance attributed on human rights is human security’s emphasis on individuals. Ogata and Sen (2003) explain that the State remains the primary source of security, but due to its often failure to fulfill this obligation and even at times observed to be the source of threat, there is now the shift from state security to the security of the people. Hampson and colleagues (in Alkire, 2003) argue “the concept of ‘security’ can be defined as the absence of threat to core human values, including the most basic human value, the physical safety of the individual”. Bajpai (2000) makes similar argument of referring to the individual as the primary target of security and argues that two values are significant in the conception of human security: “*bodily safety and individual personal freedom*”. The first is what Bajpai (2000) considers as the “core of human security” and it implies two things: protection of the body from pain and destruction and at least some level of physical well-being. Personal freedom is the “basic freedom of the individual in relation to one’s most intimate and meaningful life choices and freedom of the individual to associate with others. The latter may be called civic freedom and refers to the liberty to organize for cultural, social, economic, and political purposes” (Bajpai, 2000). This emphasis in individuals is closely related to the human rights aspect of human security. According to Alkire (2003), through this, the human security approach “parallels the movement in economic development and international law to shift the emphasis from instrumental objectives (such as growth, or state rights) to human development and human rights”. Therefore, the emphasis on individuals reinforces the significance given to human rights.



The academic literature on human security looks at the concept in different ways but they all agree in the significance of human rights and an emphasis on individuals in achieving security and then development. Looking at development alone through economic security, or other security aside from political perspective is lacking and unsustainable. This study puts forward the argument, borrowing mostly from Howard (2012), that political security should be the foundation of any society. This type of security will provide the foundation in achieving other kinds of security such as economic, social, and cultural. Skipping the political security aspect will still lead to development but this type of development is unsustainable and may even promote more insecurities than security.

### *Human Security and Development*

In trying to emphasize the significance of human security, it is important to address the question, "What is the goal of human security?" Borrowing from the UN's approach, it can be said that security will help us achieve development. Leaning and Arie (2000) argue, "Human security is an underlying condition for sustainable human development". However, the term "development" is very broad and composed of different classifications. Others may only focus on economic development, social, and cultural and so on. However, for this research, the author would like to refer to the use the term "development" as something that is more encompassing. According to Amartya Sen (2000), "development is not only about the growth of GNP per head, but also about the expansion of human freedom and dignity". Therefore, development is an inclusive term that covers all other goals: "social, psychological, economic, and political aspects of human life that in times of acute crisis or chronic deprivation protect the survival of individual" (Leaning and Arie, 2000). Hence, it is the argument of this research that development that is a result of selective security strategies (with a disregard on human rights) is unsustainable and so, every effort for development must be first based on the emphasis given to the human rights of every country's citizens. As Amartya Sen (2000)

advances the consequences of a “downturn with security” – occasional downturn in market economies – he argues that political participation especially by the weak and vulnerable is important during these “downturn” events as it enhances security through support of human dignity and helps secure the continuation of daily lives.

It is important to note that the goal of this paper is not to show the causality between human security components and development. The purpose of this paper is to show that although the drug war may achieve some form securities, the manner by which these are achieved is important to consider. The absence of human rights and political security in the conduct of the drug war may actually not promote development at all.

### ***Giving Concrete Definitions to Human Security Concepts***

According to UNHCR (1994), *political security* means “people should be able to live in a society that honours their basic human rights” (pp. 32). Human rights concept is still broad and will be further simplified. Borrowing from Howard (2012), this study will particularly refer to *human rights* as the *civil and political rights*, being the primary requisite to achieve all other rights or security. The civil and political rights are stipulated in the international human rights regime through the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The ICCPR, although it is focused on the civil and political rights, still cover a broad range of issues. The Equality and Human Rights Commission, which is Great Britain’s national equality body, summarizes these broad range of rights into the following: (1) freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, (2) freedom from slavery and forced labour, (3) arrest, detention and imprisonment, (4) movement into, within and out of a state, (5) judicial process, (6) privacy, home and family life, (7) freedom of thought, religion and expression, (8) peaceful assembly, (9) freedom of association, (10) marriage and the rights of children, (11) political



participation, and (12) equality and non-discrimination (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2017).

Economic security demands an assured basic income and employment (UNDP HDR, 1994). The economic security's equivalence to the international human rights regime is stipulated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). This treaty covers important areas such as work, fair and just conditions for work, social security, and adequate standard of living (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018).

In this research, only the two aspects are included in the framework namely political and economic with the highlight given on the latter.

### ***The Social and Economic Impacts of Drug Abuse***

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) published a study about the "Economic and Social Consequences of Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking". According to this study, the economic consequences can be seen in these five classifications: (1) the costs and benefits of drug abuse and trafficking; (2) work, employment and productivity; (3) prices and income; (4) trade and balance of payments; and (5) on finance and investment. In terms of costs, the UNODC study shows that drug abuse costs some percentage of the GDP in different countries. In terms of work, employment and productivity, UNODC finds that drug abuse occurs most frequently to those who are part or will be part of the workforce. UNODC finds strong correlation between unemployment and drug-taking habits. In addition, the study reports that there are also established links between low productivity and drug abuse.



The social consequences include (1) family and community; (2) health, (3) education; (4) environment; and (5) crime, corruption and dangers for civil society. In terms of family and community, the country studies carried out by the UNRISD show that the disintegration of families appear to be related to drug abuse. In addition, the study shows that the drug abuse makes families dysfunctional by straining relationship among members and in turn transforming the family as an asset to a burden in society. The study also writes that while the family can be a source of drug problems, it can also be a significant source of prevention and treatment. In terms of crime, the UNODC study shows that drugs increase the likelihood of many kinds of criminal activity. The study explains that these drug-related crimes happen in the form of trafficking-related activity, theft and prostitution resulting from the need of consumers to finance their addiction, and delinquency increased due to addiction.

The findings of the UNODC would provide a support for the argument that the fight against drugs would mean achieving security in a sense. However, this study offers more to this literature by arguing that the manner by which the movement against drugs is an important factor in order to genuinely achieve security. Putting it in a straightforward way, the brutal approach of the government is shown in this study to promote more insecurity than security in the economic, personal, and community aspects.

### ***Making Sense of the Existing Literature***

Literature review in this study is designed so that a framework for human security, war on drugs, and development could be established. This framework is presented in the succeeding part of this paper. Existing literatures on human security highlight the primacy of human rights and the emphasis on individuals to achieve other forms of security. The framework that is established in the next chapter provides an explanation, later on the conclusion, as to why the drug war has failed in promoting security, which in turn leads

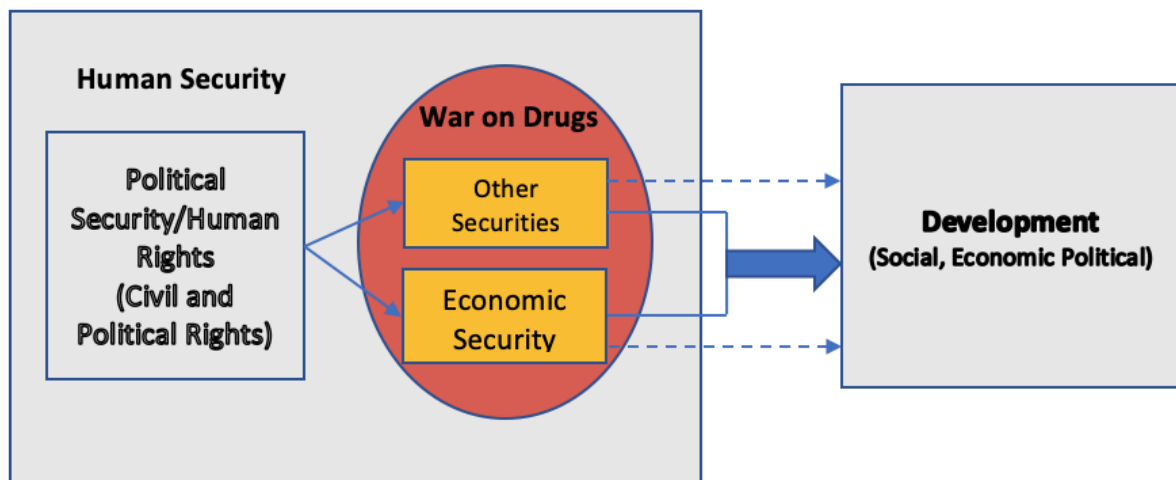
to development. The very fact that the war on drugs ignores human rights highlights the weakness of the policy in terms of delivering a more secured future for the people. The absence of human rights issue in addressing the problem of illegal drugs is therefore argued here to be the reason why it promotes more insecurity.

## Methodology

### Framework

Table 1

*Paradigm of the interplay between Human Security, War on Drugs and Development*



Literature on human security approaches point on the significance and the primacy of human rights in the human security and development discourse. The particular emphasis on the civil and political rights in the framework is founded from Howard's (2012) argument making it a strategic tool that can be used to obtain "economic, social, and cultural rights, and to press for development processes that focus on individuals". This emphasis "help citizens to act in their own interests, to force states to ensure the personal, physical, and material security they need" (Howard, 2012, p.108). In the absence of a strong international/global entity that sanctions States from their human rights violations, governments engage in a selective security strategy. This selective security strategy is



shown here in the form of economic and other security components. The relative success of these selective policies in turn justifies the violations in the human rights of the citizens in different countries. This selective strategy is highlighted in the “circled” part of the framework, which is the focus of this study. The argument here is that even though States seem to promote economic and other securities, there should be varying applications and implications in the domestic context. In giving context to this, the study focuses on the War on Drugs policy of the current Philippine administration. Also, as observed in the framework, even without political security, some kind of development can still be achieved. However, the dashed lines represent the unsustainable characteristic of this kind of this development. Development without political security as a foundation is unsustainable. The presence and implementation of civil and political rights arm the citizens with the power to demand from the government. When the economic (e.g. income and employment) and other rights are violated, the presence of civil and political rights gives these citizens the legal rights to demand action from the government.

The Philippine government’s securitization of the War on Drugs is justified by their argument that illegal drugs hinder socio-economic development, therefore eliminating the illegal drugs problem can generate degrees of security for the people. The focus of this study is found on the encircled part in the framework. Specifically highlighted in this paper is the economic security component of human security. Findings in this study suggest that there are more insecurities than securities in the war on drugs in terms of the economic aspect. In addition, because political rights are ignored in this context, the people’s capability to address these insecurities is undermined. It is also argued that due to these insecurities, development (of any kind) is less likely to be achieved, giving explanation as to why the war on drugs after three years has arguably failed.



### ***Research Design***

The main research question that is being answered in this study is “Does the government’s War on Drugs promote economic security for its citizens?” In addition, three more specific objectives, as mentioned earlier, are satisfied in order to clearly answer the main question being asked. This study employs a qualitative research design to answer all these questions.

This study adheres to a qualitative approach to research. Specifically, this paper incorporates a single-case study research design. Although human security is a global phenomenon, context-specific studies are important in order to have a more localized solution to local problems. Security issues may overlap across national boundaries, but the different social and political contexts affect the dynamics on insecurities. Therefore, it is best to apply a case study research design in this line of inquiry. This kind of research design is characterized by an *emergent* (Creswell, 2014) nature of a process of a qualitative research.

### ***Single-country Studies as Comparison***

Landman (2000) talks about the strength of a single-country case study for comparison. According to him, a single-country study is comparative if the concepts that are being used or developed are also applicable to other countries and/or seeks to make larger inferences. He adds that this method provides contextual description, develop new classifications, generate hypotheses, confirm and infirm theories, and explain the presence of deviant countries identified through cross-national comparison (Landman, 2000, p. 32). Landman adds that another strength of this method is it is “useful for generating hypotheses for theories that have yet to be specified fully” (Landman, 2000, p. 32). The human security framework is relatively new and approaches to the study of human security are still very broad and unspecified. One reason perhaps for this is the



global nature of insecurities and therefore the continuous attempt to generate more general approaches that encompass the handful of countries in the world. However, contextual applications must also be advanced because even though the political, economic and social issues are global, their applications in different contexts may vary a lot. Hence, a single-case country study is also useful for generating localized understanding of insecurities and generating larger inferences with other countries.

### *The Philippines as a Case*

This study chose the Philippines as the case. The selection is based on the following significant reasons. First, as mentioned in the introduction chapter of this study, is the grave violation of human rights in the country due to the radical War on Drugs of the President. In other countries in Southeast Asia, serious human rights issues are also observed but what makes the Philippine case particularly significant are the strong endorsement of the President to the killings of alleged 'drug addicts' and the labeling of innocent people and children who are killed in the process as "collateral damage". Whereas in some countries human rights are ignored or the government is skeptic, in the Philippines, these violations are openly sanctioned by the State. Second is the nonconformity of the President with regards to the United Nations and other international bodies. In condemning the severe human rights violations, the United Nations and other international bodies have received strong criticisms from the Philippine president. This is manifested through Duterte's "war of words" with the U.N. and his bad remarks about the international condemnations. It should be noted that the United Nations is supposed to carry out the task of promoting safety to the citizens when their own governments violate it. But due to this absence of this strong reinforcing power that punishes deviant States, governments are not held accountable for their actions.

On a regional level, the Philippines is not the only country that deals with illegal drugs in an inhumane way. Nithin Coca (2018) of *New Naratiff* reports that according to a local NGO in Indonesia, extrajudicial killings leaped from 17 (2016) to almost 100 in 2017. On a similar report of Coca (2018), Cambodia has engaged in 8,000 indiscriminate arrests in 2017. Coca (2018) then writes that this trend, as observers argue, may have been enabled by Duterte's bloody drug war. The point here is that while there is also the existence of drug wars in other Southeast Asian countries, Duterte's war on drugs is a special case, not only because of the high number of deaths compared to other countries, but also because of its impact on other countries that may follow his approach.

### ***Data Collection***

Marshall and Rossman (2006) mentions four primary methods for gathering information in a qualitative research: (1) participating in the setting, (2) observing directly, (3) interviewing in depth, and (4) analyzing documents and material culture (pp. 97). In this study, document analysis is the primary source of data, supplemented by certain kinds of observation and interview methods. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), the review of documents is an unobtrusive method, rich in portraying and understanding the values and beliefs of participants or the settings. Newspaper editorials, information from reliable certain websites, minutes of meetings, logs, announcements, formal policy statements, letters, research journals and other documents have been utilized as data in this study. In addition, audio-visual materials type of data collection was also used to supplement written documents. Public speeches, interviews, and other types of audio-visual materials related to the study were gathered and then analyzed.

### ***Data Analysis***

The utilization of documents for a study often entails a specialized analytic approach called as content analysis (Marshall and Rossman, 2006, p. 108). In addition, Marshall and



Rossmann (2006) argue that the greatest strength of content analysis is that it can be conducted without disturbing the setting in any way. On the other hand, the aforementioned scholars also mention about the potential weakness of content analysis. This is due to the analysis aspect that relies on the interpretation of the researcher regarding the meaning of the documents being processed.

Since this study primarily relies on the analysis of the contents of documents, it is important to address the problem *translation*. English is the primary language of this research but there are instances when direct quotations in the Filipino language are made. Losing the meaning and connotations in the process of translation has not been a problem since official documents and other related documents mentioned above are written in the English language. In certain cases, though where a translation is needed, the researcher has been the one to translate the quotations from the Filipino to the English language. Rossmann (2006), basing from her own experience, argues that it in fact more issues of meaning and interpretation arise when someone other than the researcher translates the words – spoken or written. Hence, the consistency on interpretation and the emphasis on certain themes will be more consistent when the researcher is the one doing the translation. It is important, however, to note that this will be only applicable if the researcher has sufficient knowledge on the languages involved in the study.

According to Creswell (2014), one of the characteristics of a qualitative type of research is the incorporation of both inductive and deductive data analysis. Through induction, patterns, categories, and themes have been built from bottom-up by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information. While on the other aspect, through deduction, the researcher looks back at the data from the themes to determine if more evidence is needed to support each theme (Creswell, 2014).

In qualitative types of research, data is usually dense and not all of these pieces of information are going to be used. Hence, in this study, the researcher will “winnow” (Guest, et al., 2012 in Creswell, 2014) – a process of focusing in on some data and disregarding other parts of it.

### **Validity**

Creswell (2014) offers several strategies to address the issue of validity in doing qualitative research. *Triangulation* has been used in order to check the validity of sources and build a coherent justification for the themes. The usage of *rich, thick description* is also present in this study. In this strategy, detailed description of the case has been given in order to bring the readers the element of shared experiences. Another is bias clarification of the researcher. It is the fact that the researcher in this study has unfavorable opinion about the Philippine president’s policy on the war on drugs. This is apparent throughout all the parts of this paper. Another strategy that is somewhat an answer to the bias is called *negative or discrepant information*. Information that contradicts the themes in the findings are also discussed to provide a more realistic result (e.g. acknowledgment of growth).

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Economic Security and Duterte’s War on Drugs***

This section begins with the contextualization of the state of Philippine economy. The second part focuses on employment and income as economic security indicators. The goal of the second part is to illustrate the security condition of the country in terms of the economic component. The third part of this section situates the role and impact of the “War on Drugs” on the economic security in the country. The third part therefore is divided into two subsections. One talks about the indirect effect of the war on drugs on employment and the other talks about the effects of the war on drugs on.

### Economic Trend in the Philippines

In an economic report published by the World Bank in October 2018, it presented positive outlooks of the Philippine economy. In the report, economic growth is projected at 6.5% in 2018, 6.7% in 2019, and 6.6% in 2020. In another report of the World Bank published in September of 2018, key findings suggest that the country’s ability to sustain the high growth rate will primarily depend on two factors. One is on how the Philippines can “accelerate investment in improving its physical structure” and the other is on how it will be able to “make better use of capital, labor, and technology to increase productivity.”

Figure 1 illustrates the Philippine GDP growth rate from July of 2016 to January of 2019. President Duterte took office in June of 2016 therefore the graph shows annual growth rate in the span of more than 2 years since he became president.

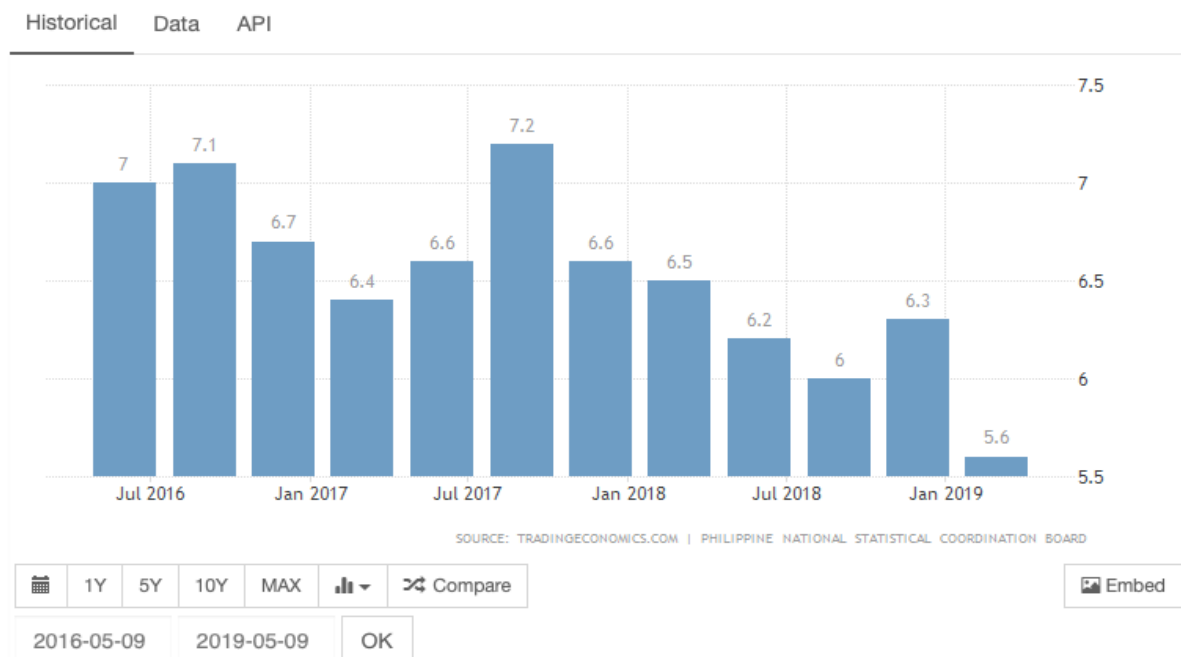


Figure 1. Philippine Annual GDP Growth Rate

It is observed that during the term of President Duterte that there have been observed growth in the economy. Although it is important to note that also that in the 2019 data as shown in the graph that growth has drastically slowed to 5.6% low. It is also important to note that the **growth observed does not translate directly into economic security**. One problem seen is what Panos Mourdoukoutas (2019) mentions as “Duterte’s Jobless Economic Boom” where growth did not actually translate into the provision of more jobs. The other is what IBON (2019) research group finds that real wage has actually declined during the time of Duterte despite economic growth. The 1994 Human Development Report identifies income and employment as major indicators of economic security, and these will be the subjects of discussion of the next section.

As per the World Bank’s suggestion to (1) accelerate investment and (2) increase productivity to sustain growth, this part of the study actually shows that although there are investments, the war on drugs come into the middle by giving security threats to foreign private investors. In addition, as per the findings of IBON (2019), labor productivity increases were not accompanied by real wage increases making people more vulnerable to inflationary episodes. As per the impact of the War on Drugs on income, it is seen as giving a rather indirect impact that is undermined by most.

The next section (II) of the paper discusses about economic security in the Philippines focusing on two indicators identified by the UN Human Development Report of 1994 namely employment and income. The second section aims at describing the state of economic (in)security in the country.

### ***Employment and Income as Economic Securities***

Data on the status of employment in the Philippines is varying and there is the tendency of a *one-sided* data presentation for employment due to political reasons. Therefore, two



major different sources are gathered in this part of the study and put together. Some estimates do vary from the estimates of different actors but what is notable, and perhaps common; to all are the observed increases and decreases of employment and unemployment rates in the country.

In an article of IBON (2018), it mentions that its research group IBON in its 2017 year-end analysis of economic and political trends has found that Filipinos actually do not feel the Philippine economic growth due to worsening job crisis. Looking at the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data, research group IBON presents that the number of employed Filipinos dropped by a number of 663, 000 in 2017 compared to the year before. IBON argues that this is the largest contraction in employment in the last 20 years. IBON group also notes that unemployment rate has risen to an estimate of 9.2%, the highest in Asia. Further, IBON group noted a decline in labor force participation rate dropping to a 63.7%, considered lowest in over three decades since the 1985 economic crisis, the group added.

In the articulated PSA data (see Figure 2), changes in terms of employment and unemployment can be specifically observed. Data from 2016 to 2019 were chosen and put together in the table to provide comparisons. It is important to note that President Duterte took office from June of 2016, therefore the January 2016 column serves as a benchmark for comparison. It can be noticed that reduction in employment rate and increase in unemployment rate were observed during the first several months of Duterte's administration. However, in 2018 to 2019, improvements can be observed with employment rate rising from 94.2% in 2016 to 94.7% in 2018 and 94.8% in 2019 respectively. Similar improvements are illustrated in terms of unemployment rate shrinking from 5.8% to 5.3% and then 5.2% in 2019. These periods mark the "economic achievement" of the Duterte administration. However, taking a closer look, IBON (2019)



points out that the annual job creation for 2017 and 2018 averages only to 81, 000 and argues that this is obviously way below the annual average job creation of previous Philippine presidents. Data is presented in a table in Figure 3.

Philippines	January 2016	January 2017	January 2018	January 2019
Population 15 years and over (in 000)	67, 153	69, 414	70, 897	72, 524
Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	68.3	60.7	62.2	60.2
Employment Rate (%)	94.2	93.4	94.7	94.8
Unemployment Rate (%)	5.8	6.6	5.3	5.2
Underemployment Rate (%)	19.7	16.3	18.0	15.6

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority

**Figure 2.** Philippine Statistics Authority Labor Force Survey (Compiled from 2016-2019)

Data estimates presented by the IBON research group and the PSA seem to vary in number but what is observed is the apparent decline of economic performance in terms of employment in the first year of Duterte administration. However, these were followed by a relatively better performance in the years 2018 and early 2019. Following is a decline to a GDP growth of 5.6 percent in recent figures. This shows the ups and downs in the economic growth in the span of Duterte's presidency. However, what is a common theme is that although some jobs are created, the number is very low if compared to the performance of previous leaders.

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President	Year	No. of jobs created (annual average)
Corazon Aquino	1987-1992	810, 000
Ramos	1993-1998	489, 000
Estrada	1992-2001	842, 000
Arroyo	2002-2010	764, 000
Benigno Aquino III	2011-2016	827, 000
Duterte	2017 and 2018 data	81, 000

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Source: IBON (2019) taken from Philippine Statistics Authority

**Figure 3.** Comparison of Average Annual Job Creations of Philippine Presidents

Employment is so far only one of the indicators of security that is discussed here. Even when people are employed, economic security is still threatened by the sufficiency of their income. Therefore, this study also turns attention into the income aspect of the Philippine economy. Even with employment, if people are not earning enough with a decent income, then insecurity can still arise.

According to IBON (2018), accelerating inflation will continue to erode the incomes of the poorest families and may cause more poverty if substantial wage hikes are not implemented. Figure 4 shows IBON's (2018) January to July estimates of the impacts of inflation on the income of households according to their classifications (represented in deciles). The group argues that it is possible to increase the average daily basic pay from Php378.71 up to Php750 nationwide. In a more recent report, IBON (2019) writes that assigned minimum wage does not keep up with the rising costs for living. Further, the group argues that despite rising labor productivity, the National Capital Region (NCR) minimum wage is observed to be "falling under the Duterte administration" from Php467 (2016) to Php457 (2019). According to the research group, the falling of real wages

despite economic growth is making worse the “elitist and exclusionary character of the economy”.

Income Distribution per Household	Monthly Income	Income Lost Due to Inflation (Cumulative)
1 <sup>st</sup> Decile	PHP7, 724	PHP1, 276
2 <sup>nd</sup> Decile	PHP10, 711	PHP1, 769
3 <sup>rd</sup> Decile	PHP12, 835	PHP2, 120
4 <sup>th</sup> Decile	PHP15, 132	PHP2, 500
5 <sup>th</sup> Decile	PHP17, 309	PHP2, 859
6 <sup>th</sup> Decile	PHP21, 119	PHP3, 489

Source: IBON (2018)

**Figure 4.** January to July of 2018 Estimates for the Impacts of Inflation on Household Income

The next section of this chapter (III) contextualizes economic and income securities in the Duterte administration’s “War on Drugs”.

### ***War on Drugs and Economic Security: Indirect and Undermined Effects on Employment and Income***

In the study by UNODC presented in the literature review, it showed that are indeed economic consequences that resulted from drug abuse. As of the moment, there seems to be no observed direct relationship of the War on Drugs with job creation or in the increase in the real wages of the Filipino people. In an ANC interview with Public Administration Professor Edna Co of the University of the Philippines, she argues that the “*drug problem and criminality is a result of the poverty not being addressed*”. This is relationship is the opposite of what the Duterte administration has argued that the

poverty is a result of the drug problem. No matter what the relationship is, it is important to establish the relationship between the two. Professor Co adds that in order to “address poverty one has to look at the economic goals and build the connection in the strong message of anti-drug and criminality campaign... There has to be a stitching on what the economic goals are, what the link is between drug addiction [and] criminality as the indicators of poverty”. Therefore, it is argued that the government sells drug war to the people through the “social” and “economic” reasons but hasn’t shown how these are related especially on the economic aspect.

However, it appears that the current war on drugs of the government affects the economy in a different and adverse manner. One is on investments and its relationship with employment prospects and the other is on the killing of family breadwinners and its relationship with prospects on income security. According to the Heritage Foundation (2019) Index of Economic Freedom investors remain concerned about the President’s heavy-handed rule. In addition, the index shows that judicial independence is strong, but the rule of law is generally ineffective. This affects the economy in some ways and one particular impact discussed here is on investments and family breadwinners.

### ***Employment and War on Drugs: Impacts to Potential Investors***

Richard Heydarian’s (2018) article in *Forbes* argues that “Duterte’s scorched-earth war on drugs campaign” combined with policy unpredictability has made anxious investors domestically and abroad. In a January 2018 news article by the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP), the United States and Korea investments have decreased while China and Japan investments in the country have risen. In the report, while growing relations with China and steady economic ties with Japan has contributed to foreign investments, security issues have become a major concern for Korean investors

and resulted to big drops on investment pledges. ECCP writes the words of KCCP's Lee as follows:

*"We strongly believe in the importance of the rule of law, due process and respect of human rights in all countries, including the Philippines. Security is the issue investors are most concerned with when they decide and choose a place or country. To be frank with you, to date, it shows that the Philippines is not a safe country. Government should tighten gun control. This is not the US, it's the Philippines."*

Richard Heydarian (2018) in his article in *Nikkei Asian Review* writes that due to the Philippines' unpredictable policies and persistence of extrajudicial killings that Western investors see Philippines as a "tough sell". This kind of "tough sell" can be manifested for example in a report of *Inquirer* (2017) stating that, as new investments declined by a remarkably 90.3% in the first half of 2017, the Duterte administration prepared to send an economic team to the U.S in order to attract investments. Therefore, the Philippine government, acknowledging the difficulty of securing investments, engages in more aggressive attempts by sending economic personnel abroad to convince governments to invest.

Although the Philippines is securing pledges for investments from its newly-formed ally China and long-term partners like Japan, prospects for investments with other countries like Korea are not looking good due to brutal government policies like the war on drugs that threaten the security of these investors. This is important because in 2018, South Korea made investment pledges in the Philippines. In a June 2018 report of Darwin Tocmo in *Optimus Energy*, four South Korean companies have made proposals to invest



on energy projects in the Philippines: *Sy Enc* and its renewable energy proposal is projected to generate 10, 000 jobs; *BKS Energy Indusrty* and its solar power generation project is expected to generate 1, 000 jobs per year while its proposed power plant project is expected to generate 3, 000 jobs yearly during the construction period and 600 jobs in the operational period; *SK E&S* investment proposal for a liquefied natural gas is projected to create 2, 200 jobs during the construction period. On a June 2018 report of Dharel Placido of *ABS-CBN News*, South Korea and the Philippines signed a \$4.9 billion trade and investment pledges during the Philippine president's visit to Korea. In addition, the report adds that Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez said in a briefing that these investment pledges could generate 50, 000 new jobs. These trade and investment pledges and proposals are important for the provision of more jobs, translating into employment of individuals. In trying to understand the impact of the War on Drugs in these (pledged) investments, it is also important to note the difference between state pledges and non-state pledges. In a report of Phelim Kine of *Human Rights Watch* (2018), he argues that South Korea (government) is turning a "blind eye" in the abuses generated by the Philippine drug war. This argument is founded on the argument that South Korea, as a major source of foreign aid and investment to the Philippines, should play a major role in demanding for the end on the killings due to the drug war. However, Kine writes that instead, South Korea donated more than 130 vehicles to the Philippine National Police (PNP) as part of an agreement between the two countries. Kine's criticism of the "blind eye" is between two governments and therefore, if it is true, investments and trades between two governments may not be affected by the drug war. However, government-to-government is different private companies-to-government relations. Private individuals like that of KCCP's Lee's statements of security concerns due to the drug war can affect the investment prospects for the Philippines. Whether or not the foreign governments like that of South Korea condemns the human rights abuses, the factor of "diplomacy" and establishing good ties may be an intervening factor why it does not

condemn the killings. On the other hand, private investors become more wary on the weakness of the rule of law and the killings because they may also be victims of these events.

Therefore, even if the war on drugs has not directly affected employment, it poses threats on securing job opportunities through investments. These foreign investments can generate job opportunities for the country but the fear for personal security affects these prospects. Therefore, it can be said that the war on drugs indirectly affects employment by generating “fear of security” and the “worry for unpredictable policies” for private investors.

### ***Income Security and War on Drugs: Killing the Breadwinners***

One interesting and perhaps undermined indirect effect of the war on drugs on economic security is the impact of the brutal policy on the breadwinners of families who fall victim to this war. *South China Morning Post* quotes Norma Dollaga, head of Rise UP, a Non-Government Organization (NGO) as follows:

*“Most of those killed were the breadwinners of the family. Now, women are struggling to raise their families...” “Duterte is waging a war against the poor, not drugs. And it doesn’t matter how many he kills, because poverty will shove more people to the trade.”*

Ica Fernandez, a Filipino development specialist who has been studying about the war on drugs and its impact on the poorest households, states that the drug war “takes a toll on the country’s poorest women and children, when a family’s primary earner, usually a man, dies in police operations” (UPI, 2019). Ronald Mendoza, dean of Ateneo School of Government, estimates a minimum of 7,029 individuals, composed of “very poor, mostly



male”, that died from 2016 to 2018, and 61% were below the age of 40 (UPI, 2019). Although data on the kinds of jobs that the victims had is difficult to obtain, Mendoza identified the occupations of 17% of individuals in his database who worked in jobs such as jeepney dispatchers, street vendors, and garbage collectors (UPI, 2019).

Philippine Human Rights Information Center (PhilRights) Executive Nymia Simbulan said that the effects of the brutal drug war go beyond death because for every death in the drug war, a family is left behind (Rappler, 2018). In the same Rappler (2018) report of Jodes Gavilan, it states that PhilRights, from its analysis and documentation of 58 extrajudicial cases, found that victims are composed of “male adults within productive age range, primary breadwinners, low or irregular wage earners, of low educational attainment, and residents of urban poor communities” (Rappler, 2018). This problem is even made more complex. As Simbulan said that a lot of these women who now have to seek for jobs for her family will end up getting low income and irregular jobs in the informal economy due to their low educational backgrounds (Rappler, 2018). Therefore, even if the wife, or whoever left to support the family will most likely, if they manage to do so in the least, get a low-paying job that still would not support the needs of the entire family.

An Inquirer News article released in 2016 features a story of a family whose husband/father has been killed due to the drug war. According to the Inquirer report, Marcelo, the husband of Betchie, was a tricycle driver when he was still living. In this case, the wife mentioned that the 39-year-old husband was the family’s only breadwinner. This case is just one of the many untold stories of families who have lost their breadwinners due to the drug war campaign of the government.

Therefore, it is showed in here that while the war on drugs has no direct effect on getting more income, it actually has an indirect and adverse effect. By killing these sources of





income or potential sources of income in the family, the drug war indirectly contributes to economic insecurity especially in the poor sectors of the population. Matt Wells' (2017) article in *Amnesty International* writes that during their interviews with family members, the "war on drugs as a war against the poor" concept has been repeatedly described. To avoid misconceptions, it is important to mention that this study is in no way justifying drugs as a "source of income". The drug war does not only kill present breadwinners but also potential breadwinners in the family. These potential breadwinners are potential sources of income for the family in the future. By cutting off the source (and potential) sources of income in poor families, economic insecurity in terms of income is worsening. The literature regarding the series of studies of the UNODC showed the economic consequences of drug abuse. Basing from that study, it is safe to argue that illegal drugs must be eliminated. However, this study shows that the brutal approach is not solving the problem of income security. Rather, the brutal approach is just making everything worse by making those members left in the family more insecure because the source of income is now gone.

## Conclusion

### ***War on Drugs Promotes More Economic Insecurity Rather Than Security***

It is observed that there is economic growth in the Philippines under Duterte's presidency. This economic growth may be considered as one of the factors that generate popular support. However, cautions must be taken into consideration because this growth according to GDP does not automatically mean economic security. In addition, it appears that the brutal drug war does not have anything to do with this observed growth in GDP.

The War in Drugs by the government has been premised on the argument of hindering social and economic growth. There are indeed social and economic consequence of



illegal drugs according to the literature. This kind of framing the policy of War on Drugs as something that generates “economic growth” because it will destroy illegal drugs may contribute to the generation of popular support. However, there seems to be no direct relationship between the War on Drugs and securing income and employment, as of the moment at the very least. The opposite is actually showing to be the case: that poverty causes drugs and criminality.

There seems to be no direct impact of the drug war on economic security. However, indirect and undermined effects are observed. The fear for security amidst weakening rule of law and extrajudicial killings intimidates private foreign investors of Korea, an example presented here, to pursue investments in the country. This affects the prospects for future employments, as these projects would require employing thousands of individuals during and after construction. Breadwinners as sources of income in the family and potential breadwinners as potential sources of income fall victim to the vicious drug war. This is made worse as the drug war is targeting the urban poor. Killing the poor does not eliminate poverty but rather compounds it as sources of income and potential sources of income are eliminated.

It appears that there exists an economic insecurity in the Philippines and the brutal approach to the War on Drugs is nowhere near in addressing this kind of problem. The consequence is on the discourse by which the war on drugs is justified by the government. While the discourse that generates support to the drug war is on “removing the socioeconomic hindrance”, it appears that this is not the case, at least in the economic aspect in this part of the study.

While the problem of illegal drugs must be addressed because of its economic consequences, the brutal approach does not appear to be the solution. Addressing the



problem of drug abuse in the country may contribute to more economic benefits for the people. Therefore, there is a necessity for the government, if they really want to achieve economic security, to consider alternatives in addressing the drug problem in the country.

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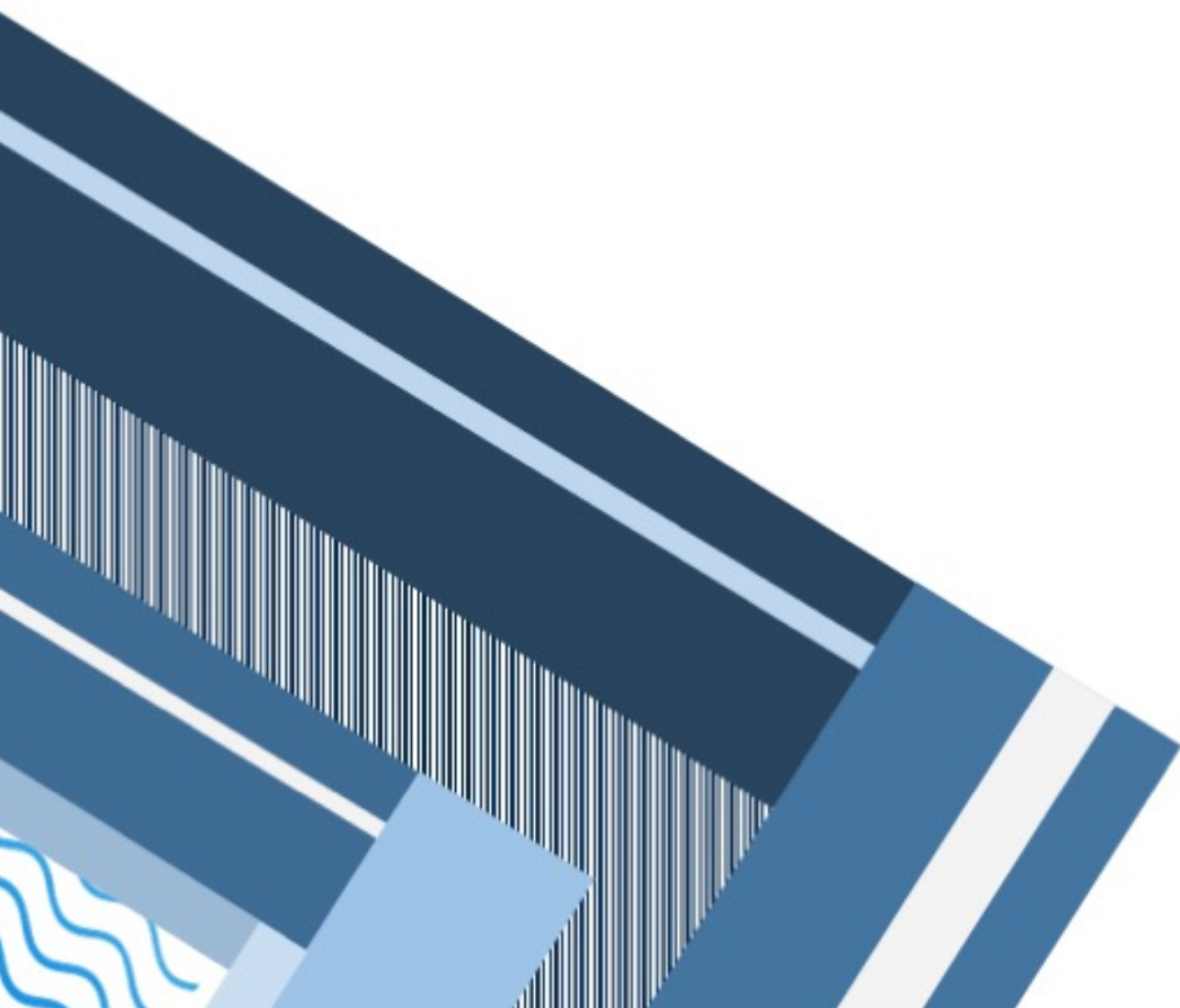
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1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia

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# **WP SERIES 10**

## **BEYOND THE STATE: SOCIAL SERVICE DELIVERY IN LOCAL SETTINGS**





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## Non-Governmental Organization's Participation in the Case of Three Selected Barangays: A Practice in Democratization

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### The Problem and its Setting

*"The right of the people and their organizations to effective and reasonable participation at all levels of social, political, and economic decision-making shall not be abridged. The State shall, by law, facilitate the establishment of adequate consultation mechanisms" (Sec. 16, Art. XIII, 1987 Constitution).*

For more than a decade now, non-governmental organizations (NGO's) have seen unprecedented growth as citizens with common interests organize themselves and take part in the decision-making processes within the government in a voluntary capacity. The fundamental principle behind this phenomenon is that citizens aim to bring their concerns to the government through nongovernmental organizations which, advocate for the realization of their needs and aspirations, in the monitoring of policies. It also provides information and encourages participation. NGOs have become appropriate channels for citizens to reach out to the government and at the same time for the government to reach out to those who are most in need.

In the Philippines, several avenues for effective participation of NGO's in local governance, have been provided under the existing statutes and policies. The primary law which defined NGOs' participation in the structure of local government is the Local Government Code (LGC) which took effect in 1991. The essence of the law is



democratization at the local level which particularly gives citizens a voice in decision-making, based on local needs and aspirations.

The research revolves around the smallest unit of the local government which is the barangay. It focuses on three (3) barangays personally handpicked by the presenter to gather concrete answers on the claim that the size of a barangay dictates the extent and quality of basic services to be provided to its constituency at a given period. It will also dwell on the size of the barangay, amount of remunerations, resources to finance its operations and its programs, projects, and activities (PPA's), and the number of NGOs operating within its territorial jurisdiction. The study also intends to discover if the NGOs operating within its area of responsibilities are invited by the barangays to be part of their governance by accreditation and by joining the Barangay Development Council (BDC) to be involved in the decision-making process. Furthermore, the chieftains in the aforementioned barangays are known to the writer in one way or another. Building rapport and establishing trust and confidence has been easy. To sum it up, soliciting deeper secrets and profound answers will not be a problem.

Numerous studies and researches have been made around the nation seeking the realization of NGOs' participation in local governance, but none yet so far have touched the plight of NGO's within a particular barangay. A study by Capuno (2001) stated that the sluggish regional development during the last 20 years is partly due to the overall low levels and quality of local public services, arising in turn from weak local governance mechanisms. The study pertained to the participation of NGOs in local special bodies at the regional and municipal levels. It is noteworthy to point out that nothing yet has touched on the state of NGO's participation in the barangay development council which is also a part and parcel of the local government code provision. In a thesis submitted to the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, Orbista, Carmelo (2012) focuses on the

participation of NGOs in the different Local Government Units (LGU's) like the city and municipal governments. The study of Mejorada, F.A. (20116) in his thesis entitled Thesis on the Role and Participation of NGO in Muntinlupa City, depicts NGO participation on a city level. These are the primary reasons why the presenter chose to study this topic.

**Table 1**

*Tabular presentation of the three selected areas*

Barangay	People interaction	Population	NGOs	Sec. 107 of R.A. 7160
622	yes	yes	yes	mere compliant
178	yes	yes	yes	compliant
Pacita I	yes	yes	yes	compliant

Out of the 42,045 barangays throughout the archipelago, these three barangays were selected as pilot areas. In terms of geographical setting, the three areas are strategically situated within the center of people's interaction. The first one comes from our nation's capital city, Manila. The second comes from the south of Metro Manila, known as the gateway to our country since the international airports are situated there. The third barangay is located at a city in the Province of Laguna, known as the center for commercial interaction in the Southern Tagalog Region. Two barangays are in Metro Manila and the other one is located in a city in the nearby province of Southern Luzon. All these barangays have NGO's operating within its territorial jurisdiction. Out of these three barangays, two are compliant with Section 107 of R.A. 7160 while the other one is merely complying. The illustration explicitly states that the different variables presented were all the same except for one barangay's mere compliance to the above-said law.

A comparative study of the subject areas was adapted to discover commonality and differences, whether there are shared spontaneous factors enabling the idea that the



resources of the local government affect their relationship with NGO's. The complexity of issues between a large and a small barangay in terms of effective service delivery which can be related to financial, technical, and human resources was also looked into. The presenter also examined alleged arrogance and/or negligence on the part of some barangay council officials in the decision-making process, purposely denying access to some NGO's while extending favors to those who are known to them. Some barangay officials allegedly practiced the same to pay political debts and extended political favors. Do barangay councils invite NGO's within their area of jurisdiction to be listed and accredited to make them eligible to join the barangay development council? Are the citizens within these barangays involved in socio-civic groups, civil society organizations, NGO's mandated by law to be partners in governing their respective areas? Do they have the capacity, abilities, and technical know-how to lead an organization to progress? Hong (2015) said it can be problematic when stakeholders lack knowledge and understanding of budgetary demands, and there are often trade-offs between inclusivity and knowledgeability. If we involve everyone including the not so knowledgeable citizens in terms of budgetary matters, we might suffer setbacks. Also, there is a tendency for professional groups to dominate decision-making leading to outcomes that represent professional interests (Huxham and Vangen, 2000; Purdy 2012; Warner 2006).

In table number 2, the writer compared these three pilot areas in terms of barangay sizes, their difference in land area, their respective funding, and the number of inhabitants therein as well as the number of NGOs operating within its territorial jurisdiction. The funding of every barangay comes from their respective share of the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA), of which the exact amount is determined by a formula combining the barangays population and land area. To simplify appreciation and identification, the paper categorized them into small, medium, and large barangays.

**Table 2**

*Additional data of the three selected barangays in terms of population, land area, resources, and the number of NGOs operating in its area of jurisdiction*

Barangay	Category	Population	NGOs	Resources	Land Area
622	Small	1,264	5	2,471,191.00	1.07 has.
178	Medium	5,627	8	6,270,000.00	2.03 has.
Pacita I	Large	20,362	20	21,000,000.00	150 has.

### Review of Related Literature

Fung, Archon (2015) claims the potential of citizen participation three in values of democratic governance: effective, legitimacy, and social justice. He added that increasing constraints on the public sector in any societies, combined with increasing demand for individual engagement and the affordances of digital technology, have paved the way for participatory innovations aimed at effective governance. Effective governance can be measured through the people's eagerness and wanting to get involved, and contentment with its results. Hong (2015) suggests it can be problematic when stakeholders lack knowledge and understanding of budgetary demands, and there are often trade-offs between inclusivity and knowledgeability. As such, we need to educate the citizenry to manage the dynamics of power and knowledge.

Ramaley, Judith (2016) in her Faculty Publication and Presentation explained that today's societal context offers an especially challenging blend of cross-generational change combined with the emergence of a pattern of complex, multi-faceted problems that require new forms of collaboration, knowledge creation, and shared responsibility both within our institutions and within the context of our relationships with the communities we serve.

According to Sjoberg, Fredrik et.al. (2017) participation typology “Fix My Street” (FMS) facilitates a specific type of non-electoral participation, typically described as “particularized contacting”: (Verba and Nie 1972) or “citizen-initiated government contacting” (Coulter 1992), in which citizens individually contact governments to make a particular request and report issues with public infrastructure and services (Minkoff 2016). FMS reporting is also a clear example of co-production, as it requires input from both bureaucrats and citizens to produce the quasi-public good of street fixes.

Magno, F.A. (2015) discussed that the reforms in the Philippines appear to be most consistently aimed at solving two crucial problems. First, the participatory institutions are geared toward solving the problem of low knowledge and limited engagement among CSO’s and citizens. Second, there is also a specific interest in limited corruption.

A study conducted by Bulos, M.C. (2016) states that there is a growing interest among local companies to make employee involvement a significant part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts. The said CSR of every company could be an important tool for sustaining the programs of the different barangays. Since these companies, regardless of its size are built within a particular barangay territory.

Mejorada, F.A. (2016) in his thesis analyzed the role and participation of NGOs in Muntinlupa City. He asserts that his paper is different from other existing studies because of its area of concentration, but it reveals otherwise. His study is nothing new since its scope of emphasis is also on a city-wide level.

### **Statement of the Problem**

NGO’s – Barangay Councils (BCs) relations are geared towards providing a collaborative mechanism to bring about relevant community development efforts. The essence of





collaboration is to have an efficient, relevant, and effective delivery of services to the local level which is reflective of the needs and aspirations of the citizens. In theory, the effectiveness of collaboration between the two sectors can be deduced from interviews and focus group discussions viz-a-vie the outcome of their performance. However, it seems that the planning and implementation of programs, projects, and activities (PPAs) that require NGO's – Barangay Councils (BCs) collaboration cannot be felt by the citizens or rather there is no concrete proof of their output.

This leads us to the following questions:

1. Should NGOs have to participate in the Barangay Development Council (BDC)?
2. Should the Barangay Councils (BCs) be more receptive to the idea of collaboration?

To achieve answers to support the general questions, the following sub-questions must be answered first:

- 1.1 What benefits do NGO's gain in participating and collaborating with local special bodies specifically the Barangay Development Council (BDC)?
- 1.2 Does the size of the barangay dictate the magnitude of services delivered to the constituents of its territorial jurisdiction?

## Methodology

The writer gathered enough data to substantiate the suppositions and assumptions laid at the outset of the discussion. It was also used to answer the statement of the problem set in the preceding statements.

Qualitative research employs a set of non-statistical investigation techniques and for data gathering about social phenomena, the use of such data not only describes them but also expedites understanding, subjective interpretation, and critical analysis. Further,



qualitative researched methods were designed to give real meaning to the phenomenon because the presenter is involved directly and indirectly in the process. Its key strength is that it allowed the questioner to access peoples' perceptions and understandings (Trumbull, 2000.)

A phenomenological study was an appropriate qualitative method influenced by the nature of data that was sought after in this study. As such, the writer required the opinions, beliefs, and feelings of the informants about NGO's – Barangay Councils partnership and citizen's participation in barangay governance. Who benefitted from the said collaboration? What factors affect the magnitude of service delivery in each of the subject areas.

The succeeding table (table 3) gives a preview of the informant's profile. These will help the readers in analyzing how credible the informants were in their respective fields of endeavor. The research presumes that the informant's current position is vital and sufficient enough to attest that they are an authority on the subject matter they are solicited to clarify. In addition to this, their years of continuous service to their community as public servants coupled with their vast experiences in government service would elicit more profound elaboration for the study.

To preserve the confidentiality clause as agreed upon by the informants and the writer, only their expert opinions on the subject matter at hand will be revealed in the course of the discussions. Their views and professional opinions about the subject matter on hand will not in any way be attached with their names to conceal their identities.



Precaution to the informants includes the use of a consent form, a run-through of the interview topic and its time frame, and the use of a voice recorder to ensure the accuracy and preciseness of the data gathered.

An ethics protocol was discussed with the informants before being interviewed. All agreements made throughout this study are kept by the writer. Furthermore, all confidential matters discussed, will all be kept confidential to honor the integrity of the author. The identity of the informants together with all the data they have shared is treated as confidential and is not divulged in the course of the write-up.

### ***Instrumentation***

The primary tool utilized in this research is the interviewer and the informants. The informants in the said interviews are the barangay officials and leaders of different NGOs operating within the area of responsibility of the three selected areas or barangays identified and labeled as barangay small, medium, and large. A semi-structured interview was used to allow the informants to feel at ease with the interview.

At first, the informants were briefed by the writer on the flow of the interview. The author explained to the informant what type of questions were asked and clarified that there were no wrong answers to the questions. In short, at the outset, the writer builds rapport with the informant and establishes a free-flowing discussion, which produces usable and effective answers. Creswell, (2012) emphasizes establishing rapport with informants is important to provide study access and yield valid data.

Second, the informants were briefed about the nature of the study and asked for their respective informed consent to be interviewed and be part of the research as informants. The informants were given a consent form that contains the title of the study and the

informant's consent with the premise that their identity was preserved and that the data gathered will be confidential.

**Table 3**

*Respondents Profile*

Informant	Current Position	Previous Position	Years in Public Service
1	NGO President	Barangay Kagawad	10 years
2	Barangay Kagawad	Lupon Member	16 years
3	Barangay Kagawad	NGO President	7 years
4	Barangay Secretary	NGO Chairwoman	7 years
5	Rider's Club President	Gov't. Employee	7 years
6	Youth Club Chair	Youth Club leader	4 years
7	Barangay Chairman	Barangay Kagawad	25 years
8	Barangay Secretary	Barangay Secretary	7 years
9	Barangay Kagawad	NGO Head	12 years
10	Barangay Treasurer	Lupon Member	4 years
11	VAWC Focal Person	NGO President	5 years
12	NGO President	Gov't Employee	5 years
13	NGO President	NGO Board Member	10 years
14	Barangay Chairman	NGO President	20 years
15	NGO President	NGO Board Member	10 years
16	Barangay Kagawad	NGO President	12 years
17	Barangay Kagawad	NGO Head	8 years
18	Barangay Kagawad	Barangay Volunteer	5 years
19	NGO Chairwoman	NGO Board Member	10 years
20	NGO Chairman	Gov't. Employee	10 years
21	Barangay Chairwoman	Entrepreneur	8 years



We have had a total of twenty-one (21) informants at seven (7) participants in each of the three barangays we had pre-selected to answer our inquiries.

## Findings and Discussions

This chapter presents the tabulation of the results of the individual interviews with all of the informants. There are twenty-one (21) informants at the rate of seven (7) informants each coming from the three (3) different areas who are randomly selected to answer the same type of questionnaires. We have three (3) NGO heads and four (4) barangay officials in each of the said barangays who were pre-selected for this study.

The questionnaires prepared by the interviewer involve relevance and applicability with the thesis statement of the problem; 1.1 What benefits do NGO's gain in participating and collaborating with local special bodies specifically the Barangay Development Council (BDC)? 2.1 Does the size of the barangay dictate the magnitude of services delivered to the constituents of its territorial jurisdiction?

- On Affairs of Personal Information; the experiences and background of each of the resource persons are necessary to establish relevance and authority over the subject matter at hand. Likewise, the vision, mission, and goals of each entity were discussed by the informant as proof of its stability. Further, the financial standing of each group is an important aspect to sustain its existence. The firmness and steadfast leadership of the informants promote **sustainability**.



- On Matters Relating to Barangay Councils – NGO’s collaboration; the citizens have the right and the opportunity to take part in the conduct of barangay affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; thus, is the essence of democracy. Participation is an epitome of people's empowerment.





### *The Two Words (Thematic)*

The two words which manifested throughout the interview process were the words sustainability and people empowerment. These words were divested from the result of the series of discussions with the different informants from the different sample areas. We say again that the experiences and backgrounds of each of the informants are necessary to establish relevance and authority over the subject matter at hand. Likewise, the vision, mission, and goals of each entity were discussed by the informant as proof of its stability. Furthermore, the financial standing of each group is an important aspect to sustain its existence. These were the questions asked on numbers one to four. The firmness and steadfast leadership of the informants promotes sustainability.

In questions four to six the importance of Barangay Councils – NGO's collaboration shows that the citizens had the right and the opportunity to take part in the conduct of barangay affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives, thus is the essence of democracy. Participation is an epitome of people's empowerment.

### *Comparative Profile of the Subject Barangay*

It is relatively obvious that the three-sample barangay differs much in terms of size of land area, the number of inhabitants, number of NGOs operating within their respective areas, and the number of resources each of them received from their respective local government unit. The smallest barangay obtained a much smaller piece of the budget while the bigger ones received a much bigger slice of the pie. If it would only rely on its budget allocation (i.e. IRA), then we can tell that the larger the size of the barangay, the bigger the project its constituents get. The resourcefulness of the barangay leaders coupled with their vast experiences in their respective fields of endeavor is a vital component to multiply the resources of the said barangay thereby soliciting additional funding to finance and support its PPA's.



The larger the resources it has, the more abundant the service delivery it provides its constituents. It is apparent that the kind of service delivery a barangay affords to offer to its constituents relies on the number of resources the particular barangay receives from the higher echelon of power. Going back to the statement of the problem 2.1: Does the size of the barangay dictate the magnitude of services delivered to the constituencies of its territorial jurisdiction? The answer is a resounding yes. The size of the barangay dictates the magnitude of services delivered to its constituents.

Another concern is that the size of the territory of a particular barangay greatly affects the number of NGO's formed within the said jurisdiction. Meaning, the smaller barangays have a lesser number of NGOs being organized while the bigger ones have a much higher number of organized groups.

### ***Comparative Analogy of the Interview Results***

The data gathered in the process of the series of interviews conducted by the researcher, all the informants (resource persons) who were asked the same set of semi-structured questionnaires unanimously declared that Barangay Council – NGO's collaboration is a necessity. The informants though stated their respective answers in various ways and/or diverse manner but in essence, they all believed in the following findings as reflected in their answers, viz:

- NGO's participation in barangay governance is vital towards achieving better community development.
- NGO's participation in barangay governance is a testimony that democracy reigns over our barangay governance system.
- The presence of NGOs in barangay governance minimizes, if not eradicates graft and corruption.





- Participation in governance strengthens the capacity of the barangay council being the duty bearers and empowers the NGO's as the rights holders.
- People, when given the proper motivations, relevant capability enhancement, and strong political will to lead them will surely be mobilized.
- In implementing programs and projects, when it comes from the people's suggestions, they own it, value it, and monitor it until it succeeds.
- NGO's have additional leverage to lobby their demands for ordinances that cater to their respective sector needs (i.e. passage of local ordinance providing additional benefits to senior citizens of barangay Pacita I.)
- NGO's widen their scope of influence and additional networks for the benefit of their organizations.

The statements above are real-life testimonies and experiences of the research interview informants which categorically answer our statement of the problem number 1.1: what benefits do NGO's gain in participating and collaborating with local special bodies specifically the barangay development council; truly a lot of benefits are being enjoyed by participating in governance. These benefits can be classified into three categorizations namely; permanent benefits, tangible benefits, and momentary benefits. The NGO's participation in governance reaps the sweet fruition of the practice of democratization.

In relation to question number one (1), it was revealed that the twenty-one (21) informants are all leaders with vast experiences in their respective fields of endeavor. The majority of them answered the interview questions with conviction and based on their respective expertise. They are firm in their stand on different issues concerning their respective constituencies. These qualities of the said leaders are the precondition for the conception of sustainable growth of an organization.



In relation to question number two (2), it was observed that out of the twenty-one (21) informants when asked about their vision, mission, and goal, answered this way: five (5) are service-oriented, another five (5) want unity within their community, four (4) of them wished for a peaceful domicile to live-in, while three (3) of them wanted a progressive abode for their families, two (2) out of the twenty-one (21) informants dream of possessing their own house and lot. The character traits and the quality of community being sought for by the informants in their answers to number two (2) questions are relative factors in sustainable community development.

While in question number three (3), evaluation reveals that twenty-one (21) out of twenty-one (21) informants are resourceful and a majority of them are observed to be self-sustaining. It is either they are collecting fees and dues from their members, soliciting support for their programs from institutions or they are requesting grants, etc. These are positive attributes of sustainability.

Question number four (4) disclosed that all the twenty-one (21) informants are service-oriented individuals. The delivery of services or extending help to the needy is an affirmative virtue that is worth emulating. These positive values are the offspring of sustainable growth.

On the fifth (5) question, all of them signified their respective concurrence with the idea of participation in governance. The twenty-one (21) informants attested to the fact that participatory governance is vital in achieving community development. They believed that participation in government affairs is synonymous with empowering the citizenry.

In the final question, although everyone is amenable to people's participation in governance, five (5) out of the twenty-one (21) informants believed that in their respective



barangay NGOs' participation in governance is not realized for one reason or another. While the rest of the sixteen (16) informants disclosed that participatory governance is successful in their localities. The rest of the sixteen (16) informants elucidated that both the citizens and the government received the sweet fruition of the collaboration of NGOs and local government. The said participation is a concrete manifestation of democracy in action which may lead to people empowerment.

The democratic order asserts that the citizen must be actively involved in government affairs. This is the guiding principle of most of our informants regarding the participation of NGOs in governance. In analyzing the results of the interviews from question number 1 up to question number 6; two words prominently appeared within the course of the evaluation, these two words were sustainability and empowerment.

In addition to the above findings, one of the pilot area's informants admitted that there is a scarcity of NGOs operating within their jurisdiction. Although the members of the barangay council believe in the necessity of having NGOs as partners in community development, they have no recourse since no one applied for accreditation to be included in the barangay development council. To fill in the gap, and in compliance with existing issuances, the barangay council enumerated a list of their allies and included them as members to form part of the barangay development council (i.e. a teacher friend was listed as representative of an academe group, a known pastor was listed as ecumenical group representative, etc.). Only the senior citizens' group was an active organization and it so happens that its president is a seating *barangay kagawad*, thus, she has now dual function in the barangay development council.

The dispositive portion of R.A.7160, Section, 107 states; "Representatives of NGOs operating within the barangay, shall constitute not less than one fourth (1/4) of the



members of the fully organized council.” What the barangay council did was just mere compliance. The said barangay council circumvented the law and, in the process, subjugated its real essence.

This is far beyond the practice of the other two (2) pilot areas. The medium size pilot area was even commended by its city government for being the first barangay to have formed its barangay development council (BDC) in the entire city and the first ever to submit a comprehensive barangay development plan (BDP).

Under Article 64 (a) of the Local Government Code, within 30 days from the organization of the newly elected council, each council concerned shall call all community-based people's organizations or NGO's, including professional groups, to apply with the same LGU concerned for accreditation for membership in the local special bodies. Barangay 178 was adjudged by the city government to be the only barangay in the whole city who had so far complied with the said guidelines.

It all started when the barangay council invited representatives of the NGOs operating within their area into a one-day orientation. On the said occasion, the first term *punong barangay* discussed to the participants the importance of NGOs' participation in the barangay development council and encouraged them to join, be listed, and be accredited in order for them to qualify as members of the barangay development council. When the barangay development council was fully organized, the whole team underwent a massive two-week live-in seminar. The output of which was their comprehensive barangay development plan (BDP). Because of this, they were the first barangay in the whole of Pasay City to submit their barangay development plan.

On the other hand, the large-sized barangay had no difficulty in addressing the said concern since the *punong barangay* was already on her second term of office. Days after



obtaining her fresh mandate, she immediately called the leaders of the different NGO's into a meeting and discussed with them the importance of renewing their accreditations together with their intentions to be part of the barangay development council. Since it was a newly created barangay, it was easier for the said local chief executive, since the barangay is smaller and more manageable in comparison with the old one. The old Barangay San Vicente that she used to spearhead was sub-divided into seven (7) barangays. The former has 92,000 inhabitants while the newly created sub-division has a population of more or less 20,000 constituents. The portion that the said *punong barangay* leads now has many active NGO's. Before, these NGO's received much attention and support from the said leader. Now that their barangay was sub-divided and had become smaller; the barangay has no allocation of support funds coming from the internal revenue allotment (IRA) since the move for dividing their barangay came from the provincial government and not from the Philippine Congress. Therefore, the allocation of the fund was yet to be realized. The city government has only this much to help. What happened is that the NGO's in the area are the ones who supported the initial programs of the said barangay. They help in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the programs they had agreed upon in their barangay development plan. They even supported financially some of the barangay programs. The same is in gratitude to their leader's good deeds.

In summation, all three pilot areas, the small, medium, and large areas worked hard in compliance with the provisions of the law. They all respect and adhere to the mandate to include NGOs in local governance. What matters is the manner in how they acted upon the said law. Out of the three sample areas, the two (medium and large) experienced the sweet fruition of participation of NGOs in governance. The barangay government's foreseen benefits include the reduction of responsibilities because some of their responsibilities were taken care of by the NGOs. The NGO's even provided



financial support to some programs they cannot afford to finance. Another great contribution of the active participation of NGO's in barangay governance is the improvement of the quality of public policies which became more relevant to the needs and aspirations of the people since the NGO's themselves come from the citizenry and thus know their needs (i.e. an ordinance granting additional benefits and privileges to senior citizens in San Pedro City, Laguna thru lobbying of the NGO's).

### Summary of Findings

In this final chapter, we will find the results of the study. We can ascertain the contribution of the manuscript concerning the intention of our university. This pertains to cultural and social studies that are bent on supporting the national government in the initiation and establishment of cooperation of the citizenry towards community development. Furthermore, we are likewise assured that, on the subject of NGO's participation in barangay development council, NGOs are involved in barangay affairs because it plays a vital role in a more efficient, effective, and relevant delivery of basic services.

On matters relating to the magnitude of assistance delivery, the research theorizes that the size of a barangay dictates its quality and quantity of services. It is instrumental in achieving a decent, peaceful, and progressive community that its citizens deserve to live in. The NGO's presence in barangay governance is a welcome notion because it strengthens the capacity of the barangay council to govern, being the duty bearers. It empowers the NGOs, being the rights holders. Likewise, it lightens up the work of the barangay council, since the presence of the NGO's helps in identifying the priority needs of the community. They also help in fast-tracking the formulation of policy guidelines and preparation of programs, projects, and activities. It also serves as a deterrence of ill practices in governance at the local level (i.e. diversion of funds, kickbacks, and



commissions, etc.) simply because the NGOs served as an active watchdog in government.

The citizens' involvement in the decision-making process reflects their sentiments and it is beneficial to them; thus, is the real essence of democracy in action. The most important attributes and contributions of NGOs' participation in barangay governance are the actualization and realization of peoples' democratic rights. Furthermore, the NGO's participation in governance is a venue to advance their political and economic aspirations. It likewise widens their scope of influence.

On the part of the barangay councils, they must provide a more adequate and conducive atmosphere for its citizens' to be motivated to organize themselves into groups and be involved in governance. There are places in our country like in the case of our smallest pilot area where there is a scarcity of NGOs operating within a certain community. They must not invent names, instead, they should compel the citizens to organize themselves, practice their democratic rights, and be active in socio-civic activities. The barangay council must instigate capacity building training and seminars to its constituency to strengthen their technical know-how in organizing. They must adopt innovative knowledge that may draw further the interest of its citizen in public service, appropriate civic values, skills, attitude, and dispositions thus enhancing their capacity to lead and getting themselves involved in socio-civic endeavors.

In matters pertaining to the sizes of barangays, it was ascertained by the results of the study that the larger the size of the barangay, the bigger the funding it receives. The bigger the funding it receives the more abundant the programs, projects, and activities are delivered. In a nutshell, the funding of a certain barangay is dependent on its size. The size of the barangay may also be a factor that may affect BC-NGO relations. Larger



barangays with substantial resources may effectively deliver abundant services whereas smaller barangays relied on external support and resources or pre-existing support mechanisms.

When we speak of local community development, we mean the actual delivery of the basic necessities of the citizens. These basic services such as electricity, water, sanitation, health, and education, are standard prerequisite to enable economic development. These basic needs of our community are cognizant of the size of our community and the amount of budget being allocated in it to support the spending of our locality. That is why we encourage citizen's participation in governance, maintain checks and balances, and ensure the accountability of our officials. We need to make sure that the money is spent wisely, economically, and properly prioritized. It must be allocated equitably so that the interests and needs of the neediest are adequately addressed.

Furthermore, in improving service delivery, it is not enough to concentrate only on the 'supply-side' mechanisms (meaning the government or the service provider they contracted to deliver the particular service). We also need to capacitate the 'demand side' (which are the citizenry who are supposed to benefit from the said services) by ensuring that the end-users of the service delivered are well informed of their rights and entitlements and are enabled to exercise their rights by seeing to it that the quality of services are adequate and making the service provider accountable.

## Conclusion

In the Philippines, the democratization of the local government is a consequence of a long authoritarian rule which thus provides multiple participatory opportunities to the people in decision-making and service delivery. Although the system is already in place, there is still a sense of inadequacy as far as democratization is concerned. Having come





from a long authoritarian rule, it is safe to say that our local government may still have a sense of resistance to “pluralist democracy, participation, political equality, freedom of speech, or responsiveness to the public” (Bucek and Smith 2000:13). On the other hand, NGOs may also lack the necessary skills and resources to be effective partners in local governance.

Strengthening Barangay Council – NGO relations is indeed a difficult task. Hence, the recommendations are directed towards strengthening the mechanisms and empowering the NGO’s. The involvement of the NGOs begin during the accreditation process by the barangay council (local legislative body), wherein the barangays conduct an inventory of existing NGO’s within its area of jurisdiction for accreditation and monitoring purposes. After the accreditation process, all of them are called upon for the conduct of an election to choose among the leaders who will represent them in the barangay development council (BDC). This portion is crucial since there should be standard guidelines in choosing who among the NGO’s will sit as representative in the Barangay Development Council. This is to ensure that engaging the NGOs is not tainted with political maneuvering. As previously noted, the participation of NGOs in local special bodies depends on who the chief executive wants (Co, 2002). Appointment of NGO representatives to the local special bodies in some areas is exercised as a political consideration, which should not be the case.

## **Recommendations**

In conclusion, the NGO’s are perceived to be conduits between the people and the local government, and that the involvement of the NGO’s in barangay governance has the potential to improve their communities and influence the provision of benefits to more needy constituents. On the part of the barangay government, the benefits foreseen, include the reduction of responsibilities, because some of their responsibilities will be



taken care of by the NGO's. The improvement of the quality of public policies will be more relevant to the needs and aspirations of the people since the NGO's themselves come from the people who know their needs. Also, the NGO's will have the opportunity to widen their operations and influence and, in the process, advance their group's needs and aspirations.

The barangays, being the smallest local government unit is fully informed and directly aware of the situation at the grassroots level. They are the reflection of the economic status of their locality. It manifests the kind of leadership they have. Once the leader is incorruptible, progressive, and pro-people then the area develops easily. On the other hand, if the leader is corrupt and does not care about his constituents, then development is elusive.

The national government and other concerned government instrumentalities must devise a system to reinforce the institution in every locality; like frequently engaging the leaders with meaningful growth seminars to enhance their patriotism and love of service for others. Furthermore, it must establish additional safety nets to ensure that the real essence of the law, statutes, and issuances are obeyed by all, and are not maliciously manipulated by those with vested interest.

Finally, the presenter recommends following a more vibrant and successful collaboration of Barangay Councils (BC's) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in local governance, viz;

- The citizenry must be more active and bolder in claiming their democratic rights to be heard and to articulate their minds through participating in governance



- We also call on all patriotic, peace-loving, and dedicated organizers of our nation to study the NGO's and Barangay Council collaboration and help propagate, arouse and organize the citizenry and multiply more NGO's especially at the barangay level
- The local government units must provide a more conducive atmosphere for participatory governance by injecting more benefits and incentives for NGO's at the barangay level
- The national government must introduce a more efficient and effective information campaign to solicit a much wider and active participation of citizens at the grassroots level
- The national government must establish and institutionalize a Non-Governmental

Organization (NGO) Agency which is mandated to monitor, evaluate, assist and propagate the existence of all the NGO's nationwide

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## Implementation of Solid Waste Management Program in Selected Ecotourism Sites in Aklan, Philippines: Issues and Challenges and the Local Government Initiatives

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### Introduction

Solid Waste Management (SWM) is attributed to all activities to collect, transport, treat and dispose of waste due to public health concerns, aesthetics, natural resource conservation, and other environmental considerations. It is an obligatory function of any local authority and provides support to economic productivity through the utilization of waste as a resource (Munala and Moirongo, 2011). Solid waste is a commonly identified impact of tourism but is rarely examined in tourism literature as the tourism industry produces excess quantities of waste annually (Willmott and Graci, 2012). Tourism is a high energy and water resources demanding activity, generating significant amounts of solid wastes from lodgings and recreational areas (Muñoz and Navia, 2015). In tourism dominated island communities, seasonal variations in solid waste quantity and composition are problematic (Ezeah, Fazakerley and Byrne, 2015).

The Solid Waste Management (SWM) Program in the Philippines has insufficient funds in terms of program implementation and the Local Government Units (LGUs) are incurring a financial gap in the operation of the whole system. However, the LGUs have several funding arrangements, sources, and options for the establishment of the solid waste management system that include: general budgetary appropriations; external sources; cost recovery mechanisms such as the collection of waste fees and fines from waste violations; and the National Solid Waste Management Fund (Pagunsan and Shimada, 2012). Unavailability of a national compilation of data regarding the monitoring of and



compliance with environmental laws, regulations, and standards is one of the environmental issues in the Philippines (Lapid, 2007).

More than a decade after the passage of Republic Act 9003 (RA 9003), enforcement and compliance with RA 9003 remains a challenge due to technical, organizational, political, and financial limitations of responsible agencies and LGUs (Acosta, et al, 2012). The RA 9003 is the legal institutional framework of solid waste management system in the Philippines that empower the LGUs to pursue their respective solid waste management systems in their area of jurisdiction. It sought to institute mechanisms of waste minimization, resource recovery, appropriate collection and transport services, treatment, and disposal of garbage (Saei, 2012 and Halili, 2004). The implementation of this Act is the most notable policy which is considered to be a broad-based and comprehensive approach by promoting 3 Rs: reduce, reuse, and recycle (DENR, 2001).

The act was enacted as a holistic approach to adopt a systematic, comprehensive, and ecological program that will ensure the protection of public health and the environment (Mercado, 2006). The local government is responsible for collecting non-recyclable materials and special wastes, while barangay units are given the task and responsibility of collecting and segregating the biodegradable, compostable, and reusable wastes (ADB, 2004).

The inefficiency and failure to sustain proper solid waste management is a societal, environmental, economic, and political issue (Vivar, et al, 2015). Lack of political will is most often cited as a reason for local governments' noncompliance with RA 9003. Some indicators include discontinuance of SWM programs initiated by previous administrations; insufficient budget and human resources allocation for SWM; failure to implement segregation at source, segregated collection, and closure and rehabilitation



of open and controlled dumpsites, and many other provisions of the law (NSWMS 2012-2016).

Accordingly, the most commonly identified problems in SWM are: no separation at source; complicated collection processes; weak organization; limited budget allocation for SWM; open dumped landfill; and no control of gas emissions and leachate in a landfill. SWM is country-specific, and decentralization is the most appropriate management approach (Dhokhikah and Trihadiningrum, 2012). Other related common problems cited are the absence of effective and comprehensive legislative frameworks governing the solid waste sector, and inadequate enforcement mechanisms, which are no less important than the legislations themselves which create gaps and intensify the problems in SWM (Khatib, 2011). Inadequate policy and legislation, lack of public commitment and awareness, lack of technical capacity, and poor financing are commonly identified in developing countries (Sibanda, Obange and Awuor, 2017).

A long-term sustainable solution on solid waste management implies the integration and consideration of technical and engineering issues, environmental impacts, public awareness and participation, socio-cultural factors, financial and economic issues as well as institutional, legal and political concerns (Zurbrügg, 2013). To achieve sound waste management, the application of good governance through the participation of various stakeholders, strong awareness campaigns, and promotion and replication of innovative and appropriate technologies are necessary (Atienza, 2011). The key to effective SWM in the Philippines is mainly the political will of the LGUs to innovatively comply with RA 9003, through mobilization and participation of the community, private and informal waste sectors towards managing solid waste (Castillo and Otoma, 2013).





Ecotourism is tourism done in a specific way that follows a set of principles promoting social, environmental, and economic sustainability (Bricker, 2013). In principle, ecotourism supports environmental conservation and local development (Cobbinah, Black, and Thwaites, 2015). It contributes to the conservation of biological diversity and protecting local people's welfare and also requires that the overall tourism policies, regulations, and plans are available (Cetin and Sevik, 2016). Ecotourism is classified into three such as 1) Cultured-based which refer to Agri-tourism, museum, and historical tours, archaeological sites, architectural tours, immersion visits, among others; 2) Activity-based deals on shopping, conventions, special events, festivals, and gaming; and 3) is Nature-based which refers to beach tourism, adventure tourism, outdoor recreation (Alampay and Libosada, 2003).

The growth of tourism calls for effective waste management measures (Dileep, 2007). Excessive use of plastic and the disposable consumption style of visitors is a threat to the growing eco-tourism industry. Nature gifted tourist places should be kept intact, free of waste with the participation of local people (Scaria, 2013). If natural sites are seriously destroyed, ecotourism destinations have nothing to attract tourists to visit (Zhenjia, 2008).

Resort and commercial establishment owners in ecotourism areas can benefit from the creation of R.A. 9003 since the Philippines is an ecotourism dream destination. Considering that ecotourism destinations rely on their natural beauty of the sand, the waters, and other natural attractions to attract tourists, it is therefore important to find out how environmental laws are implemented in ecotourism sites and how a resort's management responds and participates in the SWM program at the local levels.

The Province of Aklan is known for the famous Boracay Island, however, Aklan has a lot of ecotourism destinations that serve as alternative tourist destinations. The LGUs in Aklan



Province implemented the SWM program that mandates to practice waste segregation at source, recycling, re-using, reduction, composting, and proper disposal for not only households but also for commercial establishments.

The selected ecotourism sites in the Province of Aklan were chosen because of the aforementioned context. The study aims to find out the implementation status of SWMP in ecotourism areas. They examine and discuss the issues and challenges, and the LGU initiatives regarding the implementation of the SWM program which mainly focus on LGU managed, assisted, and frequently visited ecotourism sites. Purposive sampling was done and data were obtained through survey and Key Informant (KI) interview. The responses are drawn from resort management and personnel, the Barangay Captains, and the Committee Chair on Tourism, where ecotourism sites are located. Secondary data from the LGUs were reviewed and utilized to describe the characteristics of the ecotourism sites.

### ***Characteristics of the Ecotourism Sites***

The selected ecotourism sites are considered as alternative tourist destinations of the province of Aklan. The ecotourism sites utilized in this study were based on the records from the Provincial Tourism Office and these are the following: the Bakhawan Eco-Park; Hacienda Maria Agro-Eco Park; Pagatpat Mangrove Eco Park; Katunggan It Ibajay Eco Park; Malay Ecological Park; Nabaoy River; Pangihan Cave; Jawili Falls; and Bughawi Beach Reforestation Project. These identified ecotourism sites were selected based on the criteria as LGU managed, privately managed with LGU assistance, and frequently visited sites.

The Bakhawan Eco-Park is found in Brgy. New Buswang in the municipality of Kalibo, Aklan with a fruitful partnership between the community, LGU, Government Agencies,



and NGOs. It is an 80-hectare community-based ecotourism project with a small park and a recreation area where you can take a 15-minute “eco-walk” made of bamboo and wood that will take you through the heart of the mangrove plantation and up onto the beach. It also provides an opportunity for local communities to increase their livelihood income through tourism and fishing activities.

The Hacienda Maria Agro-Eco Park is located in Brgy. Tigum, Burunga, Aklan, and is privately owned and managed with the assistance of LGU Buruanga. The recreational activities to be enjoyed at the site are swimming at the falls, cave adventures, picnics/excursions, and a hot pot jacuzzi on an open fire where the hot water in the big pot is mixed with herbal leaves.

The Pagatpat Mangrove Eco Park is found in the town of Buruanga, Aklan which is a relaxing place with lush mangroves, clear water, and cool nipa huts built on its boardwalk trail. The beach alongside the boardwalk is where the tourists can enjoy swimming.

The Katunggan It Ibajay Eco Park is a more than 40 hectares of mangrove park located in the Brgys. of Bugtong-bato and Naisud basin with a total of 27 species of mangroves acknowledged by the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development-Aquaculture Department (SEAFDEC-AQD) as ideal for scientific research on mangroves and aquaculture development projects. It is full of birds and other wildlife and the jewel in its crown is the stand of centuries-old mangrove trees scientifically known as *Avicenniarumphiana*. Tourists can take the 800-meter foot walk, or go rafting upstream when the tide is high. It is managed by Bugtongbato Fisher Folk Association and Naisud Mangrove and Aquatic Organization.



The Malay Ecological Park is 8,010 square meters by a 35-meter inclined park situated at Brgy. Argao in the municipality of Malay that overlooks Boracay. It is planted with a variety of shady fruit trees, a butterfly and botanical garden, tree houses with view decks, and has 65 climbing stairs that are ideal for picnics and gatherings.

The Nabaoy River is 6 kilometers from Poblacion, located at Brgy. Nabaoy also in Malay. It has an abundant plantation of trees with clear water, ideal for swimming. There are native huts for rent, bamboo rafting activities and the locals offer native dishes and delicacies.

Another attraction still found in the municipality of Malay is The Pangihan Cave with a distance of 600 meters from the town hall of Malay and a national road with an area of 5,001 sq.m. It has narrow passages leading to eight huge, spacious, and connected chambers inside. It is home to small furry bats which nest in the dark cracks and crevices of the caves.

The Jawili Falls is located at Brgy. Jawili, Tangalan, Aklan, accessible by concrete road and an LGU managed ecotourism site. The seven basins have been uniquely arranged by centuries of water flow which has made it an attraction. The cool and clear water rolls from basin to basin as if cascading down a giant stairwell. Small restaurants and nipa huts in the nearby resorts are built next to it.

The Bughawi Beach and Reforestation Project is a white sand beach surrounded by one of the nation's most successful reforestation projects. It is located within the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Regional Training Center in Brgy. Jawili in the municipality of Tangalan, Aklan. It is an ideal venue for swimming and a cool retreat



during summer. Mountain trekking within the reforestation project brings one deep into the dense forests of Mahogany, Mountain Agoho, Teak, Alibangbang, and Fire trees.

The study sites selected have commercial establishments like resorts, snack houses, karaoke bars, and structures like nipa huts and gazebos, picnic areas, and lodging houses that serve as venues for different special occasions and celebrations. Commercial establishments and tourists accumulate wastes that could threaten the biodiversity and physical landscape of the ecotourism sites if proper solid waste management is not practiced.

### Issues and Challenges

**The inability of the LGU to solve the problem alone.** The local authority is responsible for the overall management of MSW in each municipality. Solid wastes are disposed of at landfills and open dumpsites, areas that are identified by the LGU in a barangay far from Poblacion and residents. As practiced in ecotourism sites, solid waste is segregated at the source and is generally deposited in the designated trash bins with labels such as biodegradable and non-biodegradable. However, during the implementation, the barangay level is very dependent on the municipal level. The LGU will collect the waste at the designated areas by the LGU dump trucks.

The burden in addressing the problems in SWM in collecting and disposing of solid waste that is handled by the LGU. However, they cannot effectively address the SWM problems without the participation of the tourists, the management and owners of resorts and business establishments. According to LGUs, they need the full participation of the private sector and the local community to make the implementation effective.



The barangay officials where ecotourism sites are located rely on the full implementation of the SWM Program at the municipal level. However, the implementation should start at the barangay level. Section 1 of Rule XI of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) 9003 states that “the barangay shall be responsible for the collection, segregation, recycling of biodegradable, recyclable, compostable and reusable wastes; and Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) will be established in every barangay or cluster of barangays. The LGUs have conducted a series of orientations and seminars that discuss various models for the stages of implementation, however, there are still no MRFs fully established in any municipality.

The biggest challenge for LGUs is to come up with a comprehensive solid waste program with strategies that would effectively resolve the issues and challenges in the implementation phase.

**Lack of strong political will.** The intent and strong motivation among the barangay officials for SWMP is low due to resource constraints. Appropriating a budget for establishing MRF is not the priority of the barangay council since it has other priority programs for the barangay. Although barangay officials claim that they have the will for development efforts on SWMP, in truth, they are mainly preoccupied with controlling every facet of political life and governance.

**Lack of Manpower.** The LGU has insufficient resources such as technical and engineering expertise for the manpower that is required in SWM. Generally, the LGU has a department that supervises the employees assigned to the collection, transfer, transportation, and disposal. However, these employees are either common laborers or utility employees who lack proficiency in SWMP. This is made worse by the fact that they operate without the supervision of a technical expert. The waste accumulated at the site

is usually collected and transported by resort personnel. They take the waste to the designated sites with the aid of a wheelbarrow, tractor, tricycle, motorcycle, pedicab. Sometimes the waste is even handled personally and is placed at a designated area of a barangay. The LGU personnel then collect the garbage and transport it to the landfills and open dumpsite. The collection utilizes dump trucks that are usually sent out once a week or sometimes on an irregular basis.

**Lack of regular monitoring by the LGU Personnel.** LGUs do not conduct monitoring to update the status of solid wastes in the resorts and commercial establishments within ecotourism sites. As cited, the unavailability of data regarding the monitoring of and compliance with environmental laws, regulations, and standards is one of the environmental issues in the Philippines (Pagunsan and Shimada, 2012 and Lapid, 2007).

**No sanitary landfill is established.** Among the five municipalities where ecotourism sites of this study are located, only the municipality of Malay has established a sanitary landfill. The municipalities of Buruanga, Ibajay, Tangalan, and Kalibo are utilizing open dumpsites.

**Insufficient funds.** The LGU has insufficient funds to provide resort-to-resort collection systems, thereby, waste collection is irregular. MRFs in the municipalities of Buruanga, Ibajay, and Tangalan is not properly established due to budget constraints. In the municipality of Kalibo, budget allocation for establishing a sanitary landfill is not a constraint, however, they find it hard to obtain land intended for the establishment of MRF.

**Insufficient campaigns and public education awareness/Lack of information dissemination.** At the barangay level, the campaigns and public education awareness



regarding the implementation and significance of SWMP is rarely done. Information dissemination is not properly conducted which leads to inappropriate waste disposal practices.

**Complexity of implementation.** As cited by the resort managers and staff, the main focus of the implementation of the SWM program is only for the public markets and slaughterhouses in the municipalities of Buruanga, Tangalan, and Ibajay. In the municipality of Malay, the focus of the implementation is for the slaughter house, public market, and other commercial establishments in Boracay Island. The ecotourism sites are not the main focus of the implementation and are prioritized the least. In the municipality of Kalibo, SWMP is implemented at the slaughter house, public market and commercial establishments, and the Bakhawan Ecotourism Park. The staff of the resorts and commercial establishments are the ones responsible for managing waste disposal. The staff collects the waste which is bagged and transported to the designated areas in the barangay where solid waste is collected by LGU collectors. The Municipal Tourism Offices of the LGUs are focused on ecotourism promotion only.

**Stubbornness on the part of stakeholders.** As compliance for the program of the LGU on 3 Rs: Reduce; Reuse and recycle; composting; and waste segregation at source, the resort, and commercial establishment owners impose the 3Rs at their respective sites. However, there are still local visitors/tourists who possess a stubborn attitude. Even though the resort management emphasizes waste segregation and provides properly labeled trash bins, some tourists still do not care much. The waste from the resorts mostly consists of organic wastes such as food leftovers, dried leaves, and flowers, stalks, rotten fruits, and vegetables. There are also packaging materials like carton boxes, pieces of cellophane, plastic cups and straws, paper plates, and other wastes brought by visitors





or tourists. Some resort operators burn waste in their deep pits, even though the LGUs are campaigning against it.

### *The LGU Initiatives*

Initiatives are the ability to assess and initiate practices, with the hope that they will continue. The LGU initiatives towards addressing the SWM problems are the following: 1) imposing the 3-Rs: reducing, reusing and recycling; composting, and waste segregation; 2) information dissemination through public assembly; 3) through Public hearings; 4) through Press Releases; 5) posting ordinance in public places, and report feedback; 6) Clean up drive activities.

The LGUs are strongly imposing the 3-Rs, composting, and wastes segregation. Through campaigns, they educate and encourage the stakeholders to practice reducing, reusing, and recycling solid wastes and encouraging them to utilize bio-degradable materials if applicable and necessary. Composting is highly encouraged by the LGUs since it is nature's way of converting organic waste into new soil and can be utilized in gardening or landscaping especially for other ecotourism sites. They emphasize that the 3- Rs and composting are the key mechanisms to recover useful products and reduce the waste quantity. While waste segregation is the best process where different categories of recyclables and organics are separated at source to facilitate reuse, recycling, and composting.

The LGUs have emphasized that they do not encourage burning as a means of waste disposal. Information dissemination is done if there are schedules of public assembly.

Disseminating accurate information is very essential to the community and dissemination is done through scheduled general assemblies, public hearings, and press releases



through different mass media. Posting ordinances in public places also creates awareness among people in the community.

The clean-up drive activities along the beaches are conducted in partnership with the Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and various academic institutions which promote educational awareness and the value of the SWM program, especially among students. They collect and segregate the waste in the area. According to resort owners, clean up drive activities are a big help to their ecotourism site/resort.

The safe and definite long-term disposal of solid wastes is an essential component of integrated waste management. Although source reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting is done, a large amount of waste accumulated still needs to be placed in sanitary landfills or MRFs.

## Conclusions

The implementation of the SWM Program is not an LGU priority. They are more focused on wet markets, commercial establishments, and slaughterhouses. Their main task is to promote the site to the tourists to contribute to the development of the local tourism industry.

The resort and commercial establishments owners in selected ecotourism sites in the Province of Aklan are practicing the 3Rs: re-using, recycling, and reducing plastics utilization; composting, and wastes segregation. Their response to and participation in the SWM program of the LGUs is notable.

A monitoring and evaluation program should be formulated by the LGUs since there is no real monitoring or evaluation conducted for SWMP in the barangays where ecotourism



sites are located. There is no proper coordination between the office of the Local Chief Executives, the Barangay Council, and Resort Managers regarding the implementation of the SWMP.

The SWM Program of the ecotourism sites in the Province of Aklan is not fully implemented due to resource constraints, lack of technical expertise, and low precedence in implementation. The initiatives done by the LGUs for the ecotourism sites is a good kickoff, however, more initiatives and other enabling mechanisms should be conducted. The involvement and participation of mass media, academic intuitions, and NGOs in the implementation of SWMP play a vital role in the implementation of the program.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that LGUs with ecotourism sites should conduct a review on the program and implementation of SWM. Ecotourism sites should be included since there are resorts and commercial establishments at the sites.

The LGU should properly coordinate with the local barangay council when implementing solid waste management. They should have a framework for the process of implementation. The designated person responsible for this should do their duties and functions regularly. They must hire technical and engineering experts for solid waste management services to maximize the growing problem of waste. Leaders must practice unity and cooperation to ensure the sustainability of the program. The stakeholders' participation is very significant to this endeavor; therefore source waste segregation should be mandatory. Initiatives of the private sector, also help to increase the efficiency of the waste management system.



Cooperation between the local governments, research institutes, NGOs, stakeholders, and public participation can help solve the gaps in SWM. A reliable and well-planned local monitoring programme concerning the number of tourists, their socioeconomic situation, waste generation habits, and product conceptualization (involving environmentally friendly materials) should be considered.

The LGU should monitor ecotourism sites properly. They must work with other line agencies that should be included under the environmental protection program for sustainable ecotourism. A monitoring system should be implemented to ensure that solid waste management regulations are adhered to and targets are set to improve collection practices by all key players. By monitoring, the performance of SWM services in the province of Aklan will be improved and areas that need improvement can be identified.

Conducting training and seminars about waste management is also recommended for better waste management practices.

Waste management strategies that go beyond conventional recycling should be explored. Adopting a more proactive approach towards the development and application of the public-private partnerships (PPP) model for waste management including issues-related like financial constraints, lack of technical experts, and other factors, will allow current initiatives to be assessed and improved. The government shall have to exert more effort. Financial assistance shall be needed for solid waste management. Implementing long-term solid waste management requires commitment and aid from the LGUs all over the Province of Aklan. This support is needed for the delivery of service and proper action towards sustainable solid waste management. A partnership between public and private corporations is also highly recommended.



The barangay officials of the different barangays where ecotourism sites are located shall create an ordinance wherein violators in the ecotourism sites should be penalized. A fine should be imposed so that tourists and visitors are answerable for their actions, especially since ecotourism relies on the natural beauty of the sites. Water in the falls and beaches should be well-taken care of and protected to avoid groundwater contamination.

The budget for the appropriate disposal bins, transportation-vehicles, safety clothing, and other relevant equipment should be prioritized by the LGUs. Vehicles used for transporting waste need to be sufficient for the waste quantities generated. They must be appropriate, and specifically designed for carrying waste. Waste recovery technologies such as composting, recycling, and Material Recovery Facilities (MRF) should be adopted at every municipal scale.

Regular awareness and educational campaigns should be organized in order to educate the public on proper solid waste management for environmental sustainability and human welfare. Resort and commercial establishment owners on-site must put up SWM program signs at their respective resorts and establishments. For long-term positive impacts on the attitude of the community, solid waste management should be mainstreamed into the formal education system as basic knowledge because everyone is ultimately a waste generator.

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## Water Conflicts and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms of BWSAs in Santa Barbara, Iloilo

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### Introduction

In an era of scarcity and volatile seasonality of water as a resource, water conflicts are a serious concern confronting water users and water managers. Water conflicts are characterized as contestations over one's access to (i.e. in the case of water users) and control of (i.e. in the case of water managers) water (Djiré et al., 2010; Mweemba et al., 2010; Nguyen et al., 2010; Hall et al., 2015). These may range from "non-violent disputes to sustained, violent conflict" (Ratner et al., 2013, p. 186).

Literatures on water conflicts are quite rich. There are those that focus on conflicts brought about by scarcity (Katz, 2011; Theisen et al., 2011; Kremer, 2013; Robins & Fergusson, 2014; Okpara et al., 2015), multilayered policies and multiple institutions (Hall et al., 2015; Rola et al., 2015a; Rola et al., 2015b), and conflictive and cooperative interactions among individuals or parties of different socio-economic backgrounds (Crow & Sultana, 2002; Kramm & Wirkus, 2010; Funder et al., 2012) as further influenced by resource demand, supply, and restraint (Bohmelt et al., 2014). Other studies document best practices in water conflict management (Djiré et al., 2010; Mweemba et al., 2010; Nguyen et al., 2010; Rola et al., 2016).

In the Philippines, water conflicts are among the pressing issues surrounding water as a policy area. To improve water governance, different types of water service providers (WSP) have conflict resolution mechanisms in place as claimed by the majority of the sampled water managers in a survey (Rola et al., 2016). These mechanisms are a key



component as to how WSPs govern—implicative of how effective are they as platforms for conflict resolution and in instituting new and more effective measures to prevent the same conflicts from persisting.

For instance, a study by Hall et al. (2015) revealed that water conflicts brought about by seasonal scarcity as well as those arising from among the members of the water organization are resolved at the barangay LGU-level through informal or legal (yet non-binding) mechanisms such as dialogues and negotiations between the parties involved (i.e. with or without the water managers mediating the process). Some are raised and addressed during barangay assemblies. Through these, individuals/parties in conflict won't have to undergo the tedious and costly process of conflict resolution that involves the court or any agency related to water servicing and policing at the national level (e.g. NWRB). Furthermore, it encourages active and inclusive participation from among the local authority and the water users not only in conflict resolution but also in the institution of policies and local ordinances that can prevent conflicts from persisting or escalating (Hall et al., 2015).

Resolving water-related conflicts requires a thorough inquiry into the different dimensions and causes of the conflict itself. In the context of renewable resources (i.e. from which domestic water is included), Ratner et al. (2013) explicitly cited that the "assessment of the contextual factors – characteristics of the resources and the users, including the risks and assets, the governance arrangements, and collective action institutions – can help to anticipate the scope for conflict or cooperation" (p. 201). This process enables the stakeholders to arrive at an informed and collective decision regarding the future utilization and conservation of the resource—implicative of good water governance.



However, good water governance goes beyond mere conflict resolution. As noted by the National Water Resources Board (2015), WSPs that are “regulated and have corporate governance structures” (e.g. water districts and private utilities) perform better than those which are unregulated by the local government unit (LGU) or the NWRB.

Among these unregulated WSPs is the Barangay Water and Sanitation Association (BWSA), a community-based organization (CBO) providing domestic water services either to a portion of or the entire community. Based on the Listahang Tubig Survey, BWSAs constitute 28% of the total registered WSPs in the Philippines, following the 32% unnamed WSPs. Most BWSAs are loosely organized. Its daily operations are usually headed by the Punong Barangay (NWRB, 2015).

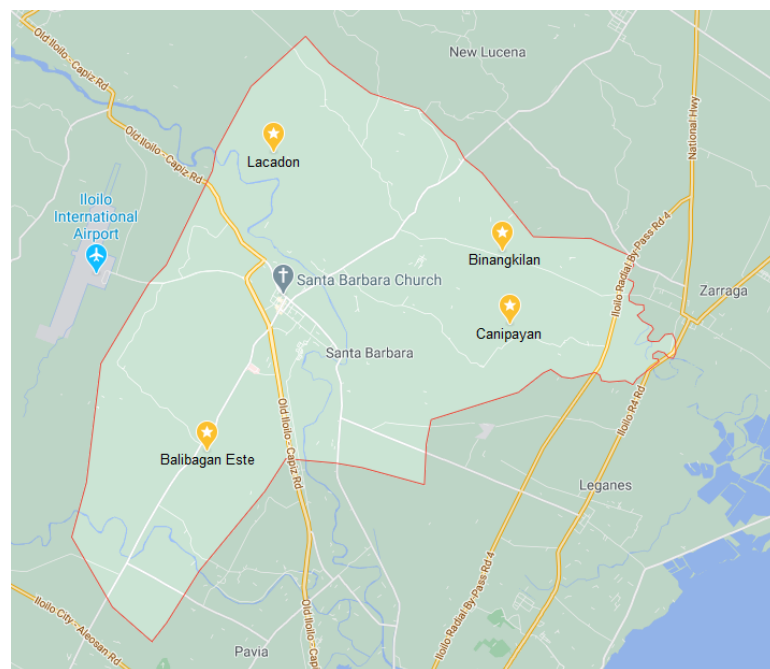
While BWSAs comprise a great number of registered WSPs in the Philippines, studies about them are quite thin. Despite loose (or the absence of) regulation, BWSAs are a good subject to study because of their highly-differentiated water governance practices, including conflict resolution.

Specifically, this study focuses on (a) the type of water conflicts encountered, (b) the type of conflict resolution mechanisms used, and (c) the proactive measures enforced by four (4) BWSAs in the Municipality of Santa Barbara, Iloilo. It also inquires on the relationship between the level of water supply service with the nature of water conflict and conflict resolution mechanisms as well as the relationship between the attributes of water users and their tendency to complain. Lastly, it examines the effects of conflict resolution on the dynamics of members, rules and regulations of the organization, and prevention of future water conflicts. Furthermore, this study adds not only to the existing literature on water-related conflict management employed by CBOs but also to water governance in general.

## Methodology

### *Research design and methodology*

This study documents the water conflicts and the conflict resolution mechanisms used by four (4) BWSAs in the Municipality of Santa Barbara, Iloilo. The town, situated at the centermost part of the Province of Iloilo (see Figure 1), was purposively selected as it is the only municipal LGU in the province with at least two (2) BWSAs for each of the three (3) levels of water supply service—Level I, Level II, and Level III (see Table 1). The NWRB’s (2015) Listahang Tubig Survey accounted for 15 registered BWSAs in the Municipality of Santa Barbara. Two (2) of which are categorized as Level I, two (2) are a mixture of Levels II and III, and 11 are classified as Level III.



**Figure 1.** Map of the Municipality of Santa Barbara, Iloilo with the study locales indicated (Google, n.d.)

However, the two (2) BWSAs, categorized as a mixture of Level II and Level III (i.e. a combination of communal faucets where water access is free of charge and piped water connections which require the household to pay a certain amount depending on the

volume of water consumed), were not included in this study because one has not been operational for years and the other's Punong Barangay was unresponsive to the researchers' request. Also, only two (2) of the 11 Level III BWSAs were selected for this study through purposive sampling—by using the functionality of the existing water system and the number of households it serves as proxy measures. Thus, only four (4) were chosen as the locales of this study—Barangay Binangkilan and Barangay Canipayán for Level I BWSAs and Barangay Balibagan Este and Barangay Lacadon for Level III BWSAs.

**Table 1**

*Main features of BWSAs depending on the level of water supply service*

Level of Water Supply Service	Main Features
Level I	<i>Point source.</i> Water, usually stored in a shallow well or directly sourced underground, is being pumped through a jetmatic pump. The usual pail system is employed in fetching and transporting water from the source to private households. Level I BWSAs serve a cluster of households in a certain portion of a community.
Level II	<i>Communal faucets.</i> Water, usually collected from a point source and stored in a tank, is accessed by the users through communal faucets. While the pail system is commonly employed to fetch and transport water to private households, others use a water hose to do so. Level II BWSAs usually serve the entire community.
Level III	<i>Piped connections.</i> Water, usually collected from the point source and stored in a tank, directly goes to private households through individual pipelines. Level III BWSAs are fully-reticulated and utilizes water meters to monitor individual households' water consumption. A formal organization is often instituted to handle its daily operation and maintenance and collect monthly dues based on individual households' water consumption. Level III BWSAs serve the entire community. Provided, they are members of the duly-instituted formal organization.

Source: NWRB, 2015.



To answer the research objectives, three (3) data collection methods were employed—secondary data (e.g. organizational documents, membership agreement forms, etc.) collection, key informant interview (KII), and focus-group discussion (FGD).

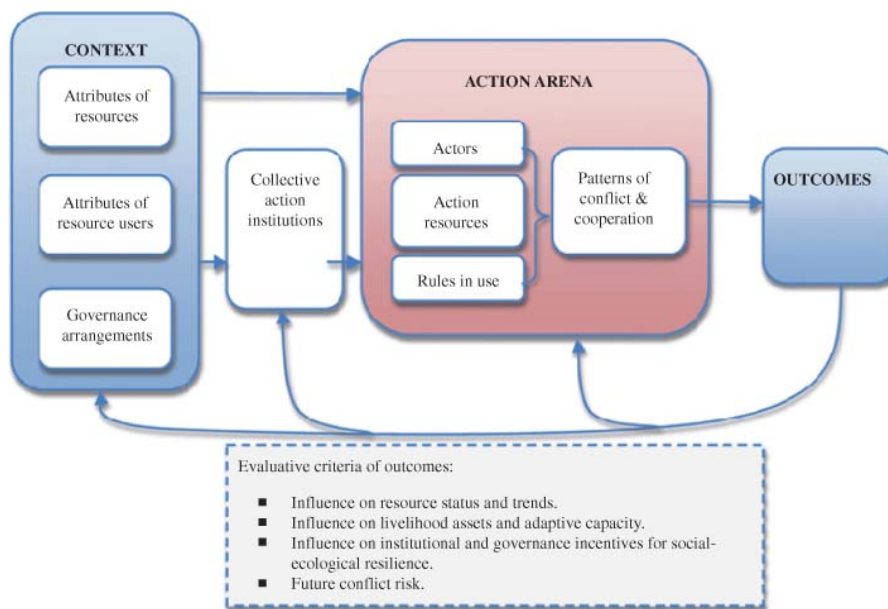
On one hand, KIIs were conducted among Punong Barangays (i.e. in all study locales) and water managers (i.e. in the case of communities with Level III water system). They were asked about the nature of the water system (i.e. to include water servicing) in their respective community and their role in the BWSA; the nature of support/assistance extended by the barangay-LGU to the BWSA and some pertinent ordinances related to water access and service; the nature of water conflicts, conflict resolution mechanisms, platform for conflict resolution, proactive measures, and complainants; and the effects of conflict resolution to water governance.

On the other hand, FGDs (i.e. one in each study locale) were conducted among nine (9) to ten (10) members of the BWSA (i.e. following an equal male-female ratio). The participants were asked about their membership in the BWSA; the water-related conflicts they have experienced, the mechanism employed to resolve them, and their preferred platform for conflict resolution; the notable proactive measures employed by the BWSA in order to prevent conflicts from persisting or escalating to a much extreme form; the factors driving water users to complain (e.g. distance of their house to the water source, etc.); and their level of satisfaction vis-à-vis the conflict resolution and overall water governance.

Data collected were triangulated and analyzed using Ratner et al.'s (2013) Resource Conflict, Collective Action, and Resilience Framework. Specifically, intra-level (i.e. between BWSAs of similar level of water supply service) and inter-level (i.e. between BWSAs of different levels of water supply service) analyses were made.

### Framework of analysis

Guided by Ostrom’s (2005) Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) model and di Gregorio et al.’s (2008) framework on Property Rights, Collective Action and Poverty, Ratner et al.’s (2013) Resource Conflict, Collective Action, and Resilience Framework (see Figure 2) aims to provide “a shared conceptual language to guide research on the role of collective action in the cooperative management of renewable natural resources, conflict, and social-ecological resilience” (p. 186).



**Figure 2.** Ratner et al.’s (2013, p. 187) Resource Conflict, Collective Action, and Resilience Framework as adopted from Ostrom (2005) and di Gregorio et al. (2008).

The framework features four (4) major elements, namely: (1) context; (2) collective action institution; (3) action arena; and (4) outcomes. The context—incorporating the attributes of the resource, attributes of resource users, and governance arrangements—shapes the patterns of interaction (i.e. either conflictive or cooperative) formed in the action arena leading to an outcome. Similarly, the context influences the decisions made by the existing collective action institution which, in turn, aids decision-making in the action



arena. The outcomes of these negotiations are further assessed based on how they influence the status of the resource, institutional dynamics and governance arrangements, and future conflict risks. Thus, justifying the necessity for a feedback loop (Ratner et al., 2013).

The framework, as used in this study, sets out a more structured analysis of how BWSAs handle water-related conflicts and employ more appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms as deemed-applicable to the conflicts-at-hand. It even facilitates an understanding of how conflict resolution affected the resource, the dynamics between and among the members of BWSA, and the improvement of the current governance arrangements surrounding water servicing and policing.

By exploring the current state of the domestic water resource, the attributes of the water users, and the gaps in the rules of the water organization (*vis-à-vis* access and control of the resource) as potential sources or drivers of conflict, we are able to identify how various stakeholders handle the conflicts-at-hand. Aside from providing definite dimensions of inquiry, the context is also instrumental in deriving lessons for much-improved water governance. These may be accounted for as outcomes of both conflict resolution and cooperation between and among parties-in-conflict and the stakeholders in general. Yet, the framework also requires an assessment of the outcomes *vis-à-vis* its impact on the status and utilization of the resource, incentives for sustained socio-ecological resilience, and prevention of future conflicts. These areas of assessment were also accounted for in this study.



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## Results and discussion

### *Water service providers in four (4) locales*

The NWRB (2015) categorized all registered BWSAs in the Philippines into three (3) levels of supply service – Level I, Level II, and Level II. Each level is characterized by the mechanisms used to collect, store, and transport water from the point source to the private households; the number of households it serves; and the presence of a formal organization handling its operation and maintenance (see Table 2).

On one hand, there is a Level I water system (i.e. hand pumps and wells) in Zone II, Barangay Binangkilan, and Sitio Sapa, Barangay Canipayon, respectively. The residents use pails and gallons, capable of holding six (6) to 20 liters, to fetch water from the source to their houses which range from one (1) to 200 meters. They often do this multiple times. There exists no formal organization but water users hold a regular meeting to discuss the maintenance (e.g. cleaning of wells, replacement of pumps, etc.) of the water system.

On the other hand, a Level III water system serves the households in Barangay Balibagan Este and Barangay Lacadon, respectively. There exist formal organizations in these two (2) communities which are headed by their respective barangay councils. Both water systems are dependent on electricity on drawing groundwater using motor and pipes to fill the tanks which, in turn, will supply water to the households.

**Table 2**

*Description of the water system in the four (4) barangays*

	Barangay			
	Binangkilan	Canipayan	Balibagan Este	Lacadon
Level of BWSA	I	I	III	III
Name of BWSA	-	-	Balibagan Este Waterworks System (BEWS)	Barangay Water Association (BWA)
Main water source	Groundwater; nine (9) hand pumps, wells	Groundwater; one (1) hand pump, two (2) wells	Groundwater; individual connections	Groundwater; individual connections
Ownership and use	Privately owned but shared with neighboring households	Owned by the BLGU and used communally	Private; Php15/m <sup>3</sup>	Private; Php40/m <sup>3</sup>
Number of households served	Three (3) to seven (7)	15	About 200	45

***Water conflicts, conflict resolution mechanisms, and proactive mechanisms***

Water conflicts are minimal in communities with Level I BWSAs. Some of them are directly related to water use and management while others are not. For example, an owner of the hand pump in Zone II, Binangkilan puts chains on the pump whenever children play with the scarce water supply. Meanwhile, other owners exclude their neighbors from accessing water whenever they have personal issues with the latter. Also, some residents of Sitio Sapa, Canipayan call the attention of water users from the neighboring barangay for leaving behind their trash (e.g. sachets of used detergent, shampoo, soap, etc.) in the area where the water system is situated.

In contrast, communities with Level III BWSAs experienced more pronounced water conflicts ranging from scarce water supply to verbal disputes. Water scarcity is a persistent problem during the summer. For instance, water users from Barangay Lacadon reported more water conflicts and emphasized the recurring problem they had with the unauthorized activation of the water system by some residents which affect water scheduling and the amount of water that reaches the households in farther areas. Similarly, water managers in Barangay Balibagan Este noted that some water users pay their dues beyond the deadline and even steal pieces of the electric motor.

**Table 3**

*Description of water conflict, conflict resolution, and proactive mechanisms*

Variables	Level of BWSA			
	Level I		Level III	
	Binangkilan	Canipayan	Balibagan Este	Lacadon
Water conflict	Interpersonal conflicts brought about by irresponsible water use	Interpersonal conflicts brought about by irresponsible management of the water resource	Water scarcity; interpersonal conflicts arising from a scarce water supply, delayed/nonpayment of monthly dues, and bad water management (e.g. delayed activation)	Water scarcity; interpersonal conflicts arising from a scarce water supply, delayed/nonpayment of monthly dues, and some attitudinal risks (i.e. in the case of water users)
Conflict resolution mechanisms	Informal (e.g. community dialogues and bilateral negotiations)	Informal (e.g. community dialogues and bilateral negotiations)	Formal (e.g. barangay assembly and session of the board of water organization)	Formal (e.g. barangay assembly and session of barangay council)



Variables	Level of BWSA			
	Level I		Level III	
	Binangkilan	Canipayan	Balibagan Este	Lacadon
Proactive mechanisms	Presence of several alternative sources of water; chaining of the hand pump or removing its handle	Presence of several alternative sources of water; barangay councilor assigned to the sitio can relay the water users' concerns to the Punong Barangay	Water scheduling; required parties in conflict to sign a mutual agreement	Water scheduling; transferred all household water meters to a fenced area; wells as alternative sources of water

To resolve the aforementioned conflicts, Level I BWSAs and Level III BWSAs employ different conflict resolution mechanisms. Informal conflict management practices dominated in communities with Level I BWSAs. This is quite understandable given that there is no formal organization managing the water resource and that the water system is only shared by fewer households. Problems are raised and addressed during community meetings and bilateral negotiations. On the contrary, the intervention of the barangay council, through the barangay assembly and council meetings, were common in Level III BWSAs. This was also expected considering that it is the barangay council that governs the water operations. Nevertheless, there were instances when informal conflict management was used. An example is when council members and the water operator settle minor issues right away without going through any formal process.



Water users in communities with Level I BWSAs relied mostly on the presence of several alternative sources of water such as shallow wells and pumps in other areas within the barangay and private water service providers (especially for drinking water) as proactive mechanisms to prevent escalation of water conflicts.

In Barangay Binangkilan, putting of chains around the hand pump and the complete removal of the handle for some time of the day were also practiced to prevent kids from playing with and wasting water. In Barangay Canipayán, residents can relay their concerns (e.g. request for a new pump) to a councilor designated in their area who will then communicate the message to the Punong Barangay.

In communities with Level III BWSAs, water scheduling was a common proactive mechanism used to address water scarcity. Throughout the year, each of the zones within the barangay has a schedule as to when it will be supplied with water. Escalation of conflicts was said to be prevented by settling any disagreements as soon as possible. Concerning non-payment of dues, the disconnection date can be postponed as a gesture of consideration for those who cannot immediately pay their bills due to an unexpected situation (e.g. death of a family member). In Lacadon, the barangay council dug up a well during the El Niño in 2016 to cover the water demand of the residents. In addition, the Barangay Council decided to transfer the water meters from the households to the water tank area, which was fenced to prevent illegal tampering and unauthorized activation of the water system.

Based on the data, it can be said that there is a direct relationship between the level of water supply service and the types of water conflicts experienced in the four (4) barangays. In other words, the kind of water system a barangay has shapes the water conflicts that it will experience. On one hand, Level I BWSAs only encountered minimal

water disputes. This can be attributed to the sense of community that exists in each of the two barangays. Although the hand pumps in Zone II in Binangkilan are privately owned, these are still being shared with other residents. In the case of Sitio Sapa in Canipayan, the wells and the hand pump are communal and are managed by 15 households, who are blood-relatives. On the other hand, Level III BWSAs experienced more evident conflicts given their multiple arrangements, both formal and informal, and of the bigger population that they serve. With clearly defined rules, noncompliance of members therefore can be easily noticed, and this can eventually lead to verbal disputes.

Moreover, there is a direct relationship between the level of water services and the conflict resolution mechanism used. Since the water system is shared by just a section of the barangay, water users in communities with Level I BWSAs deal with the water conflicts among themselves. There is no need for third-party intervention. When bigger problems arise such as a damaged jetmatic pump, the community can convene a meeting to discuss the matter. In contrast, the Level III BWSAs cover more than two (2) zones of the barangay and the water services are managed by the respective barangay councils. Thus, water conflicts are usually resolved during barangay assemblies or regular meetings of the Barangay Council. A barangay assembly is held at least twice a year to tackle the pressing issues concerning the water system.

### ***Water users and tendency to complain***

Another objective of this study is to inquire about the possible relationship between the attributes of resource users and their tendency to complain. As expressed by the water managers and water users, the distance of individual households to the water source and gender have a direct relationship with the propensity of water user to express concerns related to water service provisioning.



On one hand, BWSAs get more complaints from their members whose households are far from the point source. This is very much evident in communities with a Level III water system where water is delivered to individual households through pipes. Conflicts arise when water users get little water for all of their domestic chores (e.g. cooking, bathing, cleaning, etc.). Complaints of this nature are raised to the BWSA even more frequently during the dry season.

On the other hand, the water managers from the three (3) communities (i.e. in the exception of Barangay Lacadon) stated that they received complaints related to water service provisioning and management from women water users than men counterpart. Women water users in these communities provided a brief rationalization to this matter by saying that they do most of the household chores which directly require water. As such, constraints in water access drive them to raise complaints directly to the BWSA for immediate resolution. Meanwhile, men water users also experience fatigue derived from fetching volumes of water multiple times a day, however, these are not necessarily relayed to the BWSA. In the case of Barangay Lacadon, gender is a less significant driver for complaints. This is founded on the assumption that water conflicts are appraised as issues experienced by a household rather by an individual.

Income and membership to other organizations were said to be not a significant factor in their tendency to complain because, as the respondents reasoned out, anyone has an equal right to call upon the barangay council to address problems in the water services. For instance, both low income-earning and high income-earning households in communities with Level III water system are required to pay dues. Thus, requiring the BWSAs to provide them with equal rights, opportunities, and representation. In communities with Level I water systems, water-users (i.e. household-level) get to contribute equal amounts for the maintenance of the water system. Financial assistance



from the barangay LGU also helps minimize the cost shouldered by all water users. Awareness of rules was also judged irrelevant since members were all knowledgeable of the BWSA's rules and are constantly updated on the state of the water system through regular meetings.

Inquiring on the attributes of resources users, especially those who complain about water service provisioning and management, enables the BWSA to improve their existing policy measures that directly resolve the conflicts-at-hand. The same thing applies to the development of new rules and proactive mechanisms that intend to prevent conflicts from recurring or escalating to a more extreme form. For instance, the BWA in Barangay Lacadon has been prioritizing households that are far from the point source in terms of water scheduling. Similarly, the representation of women and their outstanding issues (i.e. regarding water management) in the actual process of conflict resolution manifests an inclusive and participatory approach to water governance.

### *Outcomes of conflict resolution*

The last objective of the paper is to examine the effect of the outcomes of conflict resolution on (a) member dynamics, (b) BWSA's rules and regulations, and (c) prevention of future water conflicts. As reflected in Table 5, the KII and FGD respondents in all of the four (4) communities reported that they were satisfied with the impact of conflict management on the three (3) variables mentioned.

For member dynamics, the respondents emphasized that the peaceful settlement of conflicts resulted in the BWSA members' active participation and harmonious relationship. Rules and regulations were also updated after every water conflict is addressed. When the illegal tampering of water meters was exposed in Barangay Lacadon, the BWSA members then convened and addressed the issue through the



enactment of a new policy penalizing those who will be caught doing the same act. The rule authorizing only the water manager to manage the distribution of water to different areas of the barangay was also re-clarified. Escalation of water conflicts is also said to be prevented through the conduct of regular community dialogues or barangay assemblies, where problems with the water system are discussed and addressed as much as possible.

**Table 4**

*Water users' assessment of the effect of conflict resolution*

Variables	Level of BWSA			
	Level I		Level III	
	Binangkilan	Canipayan	Balibagan Este	Lacadon
Member dynamics	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied
Rules and regulations	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied
Prevention of water conflicts	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied

### ***Analysis***

As mentioned, the researchers used a modified analytical framework of Ratner et al. (2013) to analyze the conflict resolution mechanisms of selected BWSAs. The framework has four (4) main components, namely: (1) context; (2) collective action institution; (3) action arena; and (4) outcome.

The data gathered shows that the context (i.e. to comprise the resource's attributes, resource users' attributes, and governance arrangements) significantly shaped the interaction in the action arena, primarily in the types of water conflict experienced and the types of conflict resolution mechanism used. Water conflicts are more pronounced in communities with Level III water systems given that they serve a larger number of households and have a formal and more complex set of rules that governs all matters – i.e. from the process of accepting new members to the disconnection of water supply



whenever dues are unpaid. By contrast, water conflicts are minimal in communities with Level I water systems since they only cover a smaller section of the community—about 3-15 households—and that the water users are in most cases, blood-relatives. The governance arrangements are more concrete in Level III water systems. This is manifested in the membership agreements where the barangay council requires new members to sign the written ordinances concerning the provision of water services. Although such governance arrangements are absent in Level I water systems, member dynamics are governed by informal rules in the form of verbal agreements among the water users in the community. These agreements are dependent on whether the collective action institution—BWSA—is formally structured as in the case of Level III water systems, or loosely organized as in the case of Level I water systems.

In the action arena, both water managers and water users identified gender and the distance of the house from the water source to significantly influence the propensity of BWSA members to complain. Other attributes such as income, awareness of rules, and memberships to other organizations were irrelevant. Only internal actors—BWSA members—were involved in the water conflicts and even in the actual resolution of these. Conflict resolution often takes place during the regular meetings of the BWSA. For conflicts that involve a particular water user/s, bilateral negotiations with the water manager are employed as a conflict resolution mechanism. Given that conflicts are internal to the organization, water users expressed willingness to partake in the process of conflict resolution since the outcomes of which are perceived to be instrumental to the future governance of the resource. Provided, the BWSA upholds an inclusive and fair process as well as the confidentiality of the issue raised.

Additionally, the conflict resolution mechanisms vary between the levels of water system. In communities with Level I BWSAs, conflicts are settled informally (i.e. community



dialogue and bilateral negotiation) and without the involvement of the barangay council. Although minor disagreements are also settled informally in Level III, most water conflicts are resolved formally through the conduct of barangay assembly and sessions of barangay council.

Given these conflict resolution mechanisms, all respondents from the four (4) communities reported that they were satisfied with the effects of the conflict management on the dynamic members, rules and regulations, and the prevention of future water conflicts. Similarly, the outcome of conflict resolution further improved the context, the collective action institution managing the resource, and the interaction of waters users.

For instance, water users in communities with Level I water system feel that they are directly included in the state of baranganic polity whenever their issues with the water system are immediately responded to. The presence of a barangay councilor who constantly inquires about their concerns, (i.e. not only with the water system but also in general) elicits a similar outcome. It even increases their willingness to participate in almost all baranganic endeavors including the sustained management of the water resource. Meanwhile, water users in communities with Level III water system are confident that their respective BWSA is constantly improving its rules and regulations on membership, water service provisioning, and control of the water system (e.g. authorized activation of the water system, documenting water consumption per household, etc.). As manifested in the current practices of BEWS and BWA, gathering the water users for updates on the organization's rules and regulations vis-à-vis water access and control, consensus-building and approval of new policies and penalties, and raising of issues and concerns regarding the resource and its management are deemed instrumental not only for the immediate resolution of conflicts raised but also for the institution of proactive



mechanism for conflict prevention, collective action, and sustained patronage of the BWSA.

## Conclusion

In an era of scarcity and volatile seasonality, water conflict is a pressing challenge. Among numerous Barangay Water and Sanitation Associations (BWSAs) (which are unregulated community-based organizations providing domestic water), conflict resolution mechanisms are key components of how they govern. This research focused on the water conflicts, and the conflict resolution mechanisms used by four (4) BWSAs, two (2) each for Levels I and III, in the Municipality of Santa Barbara, Iloilo.

There is a significant difference in the nature of water conflicts that exist in communities with different levels of water supply service. On one hand, communities with Level I BWSAs only encountered minimal water disputes. This can be attributed to the presence of alternative sources of water and the sense of community that prevails among the residents of the zone/sitio. Although the dispute is minor, it is important to note that the attribute of the resource (i.e. communal in use) contributes to the emergence of conflict. Thus, this necessitates taking into consideration intervening variables. On the other hand, communities with Level III BWSAs experienced more evident conflicts given their multiple arrangements, both formal and informal, and of the bigger population that they serve. With more clearly defined rules, non-compliance of members can be easily noticed which, eventually, leads to some verbal disputes.

There was also a direct relationship between the level of water services and the conflict resolution mechanism used. Since the water system is shared by just a section of the barangay, water users in communities with Level 1 BWSAs deal with the water conflicts among themselves. There is no need for third-party intervention. By contrast, the Level 3



BWSAs cover at least two (2) zones of the barangay, and the respective barangay councils manage the water services. Water conflicts are usually resolved at the barangay level although the council members and water operator can also settle minor issues informally.

Moreover, gender and the distance of the house to the water source were reported by the key informants and FGD participants as having a direct relationship with the propensity of BWSA members to complain about the water services. The farther the house is from the point source, the more the BWSA member complains. Except in Barangay Lacadon, the respondents from the other three (3) BWSAs stated that women complain more than men, primarily because of the traditional gender roles that the former perform in the household which require them to use more water.

Lastly, the FGD participants reported satisfaction on the effect of their BWSAs' existing conflict resolution mechanisms, despite variations between Levels I and III, on the dynamic of members, rules and regulations, water services, and the prevention of future water conflicts.

The end goal of this paper is to recommend measures for both levels of BWSAs that can help improve the provision of water services, especially in rural communities. Aside from water scheduling, the creation of alternative water sources (e.g. wells, hand pumps) in barangays with Level III water systems would prove to be useful in times of scarcity and blackouts. Furthermore, the use of informal means to resolve minor conflicts is an efficient way to conserve resources. For instance, ties of kinship among water users in communities with Level I water system are highly-valued. Thus, driving the water users to choose the least damaging mechanisms to resolve minor conflicts related to water access and control. This does not only save time and resources but it also increases social cohesion among them. For water users in communities with Level III water systems,



informal mechanisms to resolve conflicts are preferred for practical reasons. As most water users expressed, these conflicts may be resolved through a diplomatic exchange of sentiments between parties (i.e. with or without the intervention of the water manager) and don't necessarily need to be brought to higher conflict-resolving platforms (e.g. court). It saves money and resources and provides an immediate response to outstanding issues.

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## Local Governments' Initiatives on Environmental Sustainability in Puerto Princesa City

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### Introduction

Sustainable development is the organizing principle for meeting human development goals while at the same time it does sustain the natural resources and eco-system. The modern concept of sustainability in development is focused more on the economic, social, and environmental development for the future generation. It is so because our world is said to represent a distinctive break from previous eras with the visible effects of globalization through the frenzied mobility of people, goods, money, and technology.

The term sustainability should be viewed as the goal of humanity. Sustainability also measures as a drag to economic development, turning them to market opportunities that will deliver greater good. The goal of sustainability should be the main parameter in policy analysis. All policies evaluated should be aligned with sustainability. According to Clark (2013), sustainable development and policy analysis are interrelated to each other due to its outcome which will result in a good policy that is supported by the government. Sustainable development is the promotion of human beings while conserving life-supporting services of the natural environment over the long run. It is believed to have emerged as a central challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Continuity and sustainability of programs are compromised because of government transition.

The Philippines is an active member of the United Nations which promotes sustainable development goals. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals, is a universal call to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all



people enjoy peace and prosperity. This global goal includes climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace, and justice, among other priorities. The SDGs or the Global Sustainability Goals work in the spirit of partnership and pragmatism to make the right choices that improve life and sustainably for future generations. However, the achievement of sustainability remains a long road for local governments to lead. So how is sustainable development applicable to local governments? What policies do they adopt in order to cope with climate change whilst promoting better local governments? What are the factors when considering sustainable development in Palawan? Palawan as the last frontier has higher stakes. Many of its natural resources are affected by local governmental decisions.

The 1987 constitution ensures the autonomy of local governments. There is a need to decentralize the government in order for the administrative system to be more responsive and effective in the delivery of basic services. The idea of local autonomy was formally laid down by the enactment of the Local Government Code. Many people welcomed the enactment of the code since it aimed to strengthen the powers of the local governments. One of the basic features of the code is the devolution of local governments, the enforcement of environmental laws, and the delivery of certain basic services such as the initiative to establish community-based forestry projects.

This paper attempts to discuss local initiatives and best practices by barangays in promoting environmental sustainability in Puerto Princesa City, which is the only highly urbanized area of Palawan. Moreover, this paper desires to highlight the inevitable and valuable role of political decisions and processes in the promotion and fulfillment of sustainable development goals to provide an initial platform for policy formulation.

*Palawan: The Last Ecological Frontier*



Palawan is known as the Philippines “Last Ecological Frontier” and, at the same time, the largest province in terms of the total area of jurisdiction in the country. It is located between the Western Philippine and the Sulu Sea and has a total area of 1,464,973 hectares. The province is part of Region IV-B or the MIMAROPA Region along with Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Marinduque, and Romblon (Local Governance Support Program for Local Economic Development, 2016).

Moreover, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced Palawan as a Biosphere and Fish and Wildlife Sanctuary and Habitat of 232 endemic species. Demographically, the capital of the province is Puerto Princesa City, comprised of 23 municipalities and 367 barangays, with a total population of 771, 667 (52% male, 48% female) in 2010. The population density is 53 persons per square kilometer and its Human Development Index for 2009 is recorded at 0.498 (Local Governance Support Program for Local Economic Development, 2016).

Palawan is also considered to have a very low combined risk of geophysical disasters based on GIS mapping and analysis by Manila Observatory and DENR. Its major activities are the local economy, agriculture, and fisheries, and possess the following major crops: rice, corn, and coconut. It also has 176 fishing grounds, which supply 65% of Metro Manila’s fish consumption. It is known for fresh and dried fish, *lamayo*, fish fillet, smoked fish, tuna cuts, spicy *dilis*, tuna sausage, tuna spring rolls, and delectable fish cuisine which are served in hotels/restaurants. Other marine products produced and exported are live grouper and seaweeds with an approximate production of 260,606 MT.

Palawan’s capital, Puerto Princesa City is known to be a city in the forest, which is in danger of losing its identity due to the burgeoning population and the mushrooming of tourism-related establishments. Being a highly urbanized city, it is also vulnerable to the



negative impacts of urbanization on its environment. In 2018, tourist arrivals already reached 1.8 million (Reduble, 2019). This precipitated the rise of economic establishments in the city which is one of the major sources of revenue for the city government. To promote progressive and sustainable tourism, it constantly collaborates with other agencies of the government and civil society. This is one step that helps manage environmental sustainability.

### ***Environmental Sustainability***

As globalization continuously covers all aspects of human life, humanity also calls for strengthened protection and preservation of the environment. With the increasing human development aspirations, countries all over the world design Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure environmental sustainability. This is in recognition of growing concern for the volume of current consumption and production patterns causing an unsustainable utilization of natural resources.

Environmental sustainability is known as the third pillar of Sustainable Development alongside economic and social sustainability. This term was first coined by scientists at the World Bank and originally called “environmentally responsible development (World Bank, 1992). Subsequently, “environmentally sustainable development” was used (Serageldin & Streeter, 1993) and, the concept of environmental sustainability was promoted (Goodland, 1995). According to Goodland (1995), this pillar seeks to advance human welfare by protecting the sources of raw materials used for human needs and ensuring that the sinks for human waste are not exceeded. It aims to preserve and protect the ecological balance system for future generations while allowing the present generation to enjoy the fruits of economic development.



Furthermore, environmental sustainability covers a wide range of issues starting from a specific place to global. Global issues comprise problems with climate change, GHG mitigation, and renewable energy, while the location-specific issues are most often about soil erosion, water management, soil quality, air, and water pollution. According to Morelli (2011), despite there being a debate as to the nature of environmental sustainability, there should at least be an agreement that ensures the provision of clean air, clean water, and clean productive land which is important for a responsible socioeconomic system. This concept can also be viewed as a condition of balance, resilience, and interconnectedness that allows human society to satisfy its needs. The requirements of humans do not exceed the capacity of the ecosystems to regenerate, thereby ensuring sustainability. Moreover, the risks to biological diversity are diminished.

Also, some scholars focused their attention on national and international sustainability declarations, whereas others have chosen a micro-approach to sustainability in higher education by creating institutional policies that are relevant to their particular mandate. Various higher educational institutions are actively engaged in the constant knowledge production that is related to environmental governance. There are also educational institutions that are actively participating in the creation of relevant institutional mechanisms that are in accordance with international and national declarations. Some of the emerging themes of research about environmental sustainability are the following: a) sustainable physical operations; b) sustainable academic research; c) environmental literacy; d) ethical and moral responsibility; e) cooperation among universities and countries; f) the development of interdisciplinary curriculum, partnerships with government, non-governmental organizations and industry, and public outreach. These themes manifest that the attainment of sustainability in the environment is a collective responsibility of all the members of the community.



Nowadays, global environmental issues are spreading and becoming unregulated; they go beyond borders. Human beings are now dealing with the negative consequences of global warming and climate change and are struggling to prevent their further effects. As a result, countries call for global cooperation wherein various international agreements, institutions, and policies are created.

These commitments require the active and full involvement of several players such as public officials, civil society, academe or epistemic community, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. In this paper, the crucial role of local governance is emphasized.

### ***Environmental Governance***

With the increasing issues about the environment either locally or internationally, the situation calls for prudent, effective, and efficient governance mechanisms. Environmental problems are often than not perceived as having behavioral, technical, or managerial dimensions thus increasing the attention being paid to environmental governance as holistic means to address these complexities. Studies at all scales from the local to the global became interested and focused on issues such as resource scarcity and conflicts, allocation and access, biodiversity conservation in forests, marine and atmospheric systems, and agricultural freshwaters. These works presented that governance is one of the most significant factors in ensuring or undermining the effectiveness of conservation and environmental management (Armitage, de Loë, & Plummer, 2012; Lockwood, Davidson, Curtis, Stratford, & Griffith, 2010)

The major objective of environmental governance is to manage individual behaviors or collective action in pursuance of public environmental goods and limited outcomes (Termeer, Dewulf, & Van Lieshout, 2010). Comprehending environmental governance



requires the understanding of how decisions related to the environment are formulated and whether resultant policies and processes lead to environmentally and socially sustainable outcomes. With this, the examination of environmental governance focuses on the capacity, functioning, and/or performance of the institutional, structural, and procedural elements of governance.

Is observed by the author that previous governance studies and frameworks tend to prioritize or even disregard certain significant objectives of environmental governance. There are works about adaptive and anticipatory governance that emphasize features that allow responsiveness, such as learning, foresight, innovation, and adaptation (Boyd et al., 2015).

On the other hand, narratives about good governance focus heavily on normative concerns about equity such as participation, fairness, and justice, as well as transparency and legitimacy, but tend to give less attention to effectiveness (Graham et al., 2003; Lockwood, 2010). Some scholars also put forward different proposals for more integrative sets of governance objectives. Moreover, recent literature on protected areas governance uses evaluative indicators under the broad but vague categories of quality, diversity, and vitality (Borrini-Feyerabend & Hill, 2015).

While there are various attempts to explore the nature and content of environmental governance, these works commonly call for an effective, equitable, responsive, and robust environmental governance. The central objective of environmental governance is sustaining or improving the ability of environmental systems to perform and produce resources for the survival of species and their habitat to promote biodiversity. Some of the characteristics of effective environmental governance include direction, coordination, capacity, informed decisions, accountability, and efficiency.



Direction is provided through precision in the formulation of vision, aims, goals, and the establishment of clear boundaries on action and scope (Graham et al., 2003; Lockwood et al., 2010). This establishes what effective action encompasses and sets milestones for achieving success.

The second characteristic implies the coordination of the roles, functions, and mandates of different governments and organizations in establishing systems of rules, ensuring the adequacy of management actions, and resolving tradeoffs (Abe, Brown, Ajao, & Donkor, 2016; Wyborn, 2015).

There is a need for active development of capacity, skills, and resources to enable the initiation of the planning processes and implementation of various actions. The planning process should significantly involve the integration of the best available knowledge so that there is an increase in the likelihood of effective outcomes.

Moreover, clear mechanisms to hold local officials accountable for any illegal activities can help ensure that mandated decisions are recognized, followed, and respected. Similarly, transparency about the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of all the created institutions supports this call for effective environmental governance. Also, when there is transparency regarding the approaches and rationales for decisions and outcomes of potential future or past actions, seeking accountability is possible and easy. Generally, effective governance requires a reasonable timetable, choice of management actions is guided by efficacy and deployment of public resources, and that costs and actions are commensurate with system productivity (Secco et al., 2014).

The second objective questions for an engagement in the decision-making process to produce socioeconomic outcomes that benefit everyone equally, fairly, and justly.





Equitable environmental governance starts with policies and processes that value respect and are inclusive of various approaches, values, cultures, knowledge systems, and protects the rights of diverse stakeholders (McDermott, Mahanty, & Schreckenber, 2013).

Additionally, it demands effective participation that is based on context and specific spaces, structures, and processes that allows inclusivity, representation, and participation of various stakeholders in the formulation of collective decision-making processes. Only when everyone is involved in the planning that all voices will be given an equal chance to be heard. The process and mechanism should not be exclusive only to a few stakeholders but accommodate the participation and involvement of everyone. When this happens, there is no monopoly of power, decisions are democratically discussed and debated, there is the maintenance of dignity, and everyone is well-represented.

This type of system enables everyone to equally enjoy the socio-economic fruits of good environmental governance. Socioeconomic benefits and burdens of conservation and environmental management are distributed fairly, and rights and responsibilities are shared and assigned commensurate to circumstances. Lastly, this approach is feasible when laws and policies are existing to protect local rights and tenure, prohibit abuses, and groups have easy access to justice to defend against any type of aggression or to demand compensation when rights are being abused or taken advantage of.

Responsive environmental governance should be flexible and adaptive both to dynamic environmental conditions. This arrangement features learning, anticipation, adaptability, innovation, and flexibility. Institutional and social learning is attained through continuous monitoring and evaluation so that after the implementation there is an opportunity for



reflection and assessment on the social and ecological performance of environmental governance.

When there is documentation and sharing of lessons learned, knowledge co-production and development of communities of production, collective goal as well as the ability to effectively manage and adapt to change is possible (Maida & Beck, 2016). Moreover, the knowledge and capacity to solve disturbances can be improved through institutionalizing anticipation, including consideration, analysis, and planning for the possible outcomes of whatever decisions are at disposal.

Adaptive governance is also possible through the institutionalization of spaces for dialogue, deliberation, reflection, and a clear outline of processes and steps that are needed to make sure that all government mechanisms about environmental management are regularly checked and updated. Since society is constantly changing and the demands are changing, a culture of innovation, flexibility, risk tolerance, and experimentation is needed in order to calibrate our environmental management and conservation approaches.

Further, environmental governance must be robust which means its institutions can survive through time, sustain good performance, and can cope with whatever challenges. This is attainable when legitimate institutions are guided by a collective vision, conferred with formal legitimacy, and perceived to be legitimate by constituents and stakeholders (Lockwood, 2010). Governance institutions in this area should be structurally connected horizontally and vertically, often enabled by bridging organizations, and characterized by positive social relations. There must be collaboration, knowledge, and information exchange among different networks, decision-making authority, responsibility, and tasks must be appropriately devolved. Responsibility and authority at lower scales need to be



matched with adequate support and oversight from higher levels. The local government must be in coordination with the national government; these two must be united by a single cause and, that power should be distributed properly and accordingly.

In general, governance is indeed significant in environmental management and conservation thus it implies the need for greater attention to understanding the myriad systems of environmental governance. The ecosystem of environmental governance requires that all its parts should be coordinated, well-informed, and consulted whenever there are decisions or actions to be made. Scholarly studies or works identify significant players in achieving environmental sustainability.

#### ***Actors in the Promotion of Environmental Sustainability***

The attainment of environmental sustainability in a locality demands collective participation of all the key agents or players such as the epistemic community, local government, community people, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.

It is universally believed that the government is tasked to advance the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of the communities, and, with this, the promotion of economic development while protecting the environment is one of the ways (Javier & Elazigue, 2011). Governance is necessary for outlining legal and appropriate measures needed in developing as well as keeping a successful locality. Thus, governing a place that aspires for sustainable development demands an effective manner of governance or management which highlights the roles of local and national public officials. It has become increasingly common for local governments to adopt a pro-economic development approach that centers on the market. However, this mechanism, in some instances, only promote parochialism wherein governance arrangements and resultants



policy directions benefited the few at the expense of many (Dredge and Pforr, 2008; Hall, 2008 as cited in Beaumont and Dredge, 2011). This scenario kills the advantages of environmental sustainability. Thus, it must be noted that public administration particularly a prudent policy formulation and implementation is significant in actualizing environmental sustainability in a locality.

Furthermore, community involvement is also recognized as important as local governance. Local communities are encouraged and expected to get involved in this issue. This is because they are better informed of the status, trend, issues confronting their community. People's participation in host communities can occur in different categories such as participation in sharing economic benefits, planning, implementation and operations, and participation in decision-making and management (Pretty, 1995). Thus, participation can range from an individual passively receiving money, to a whole community that is mobilized managing a tourism destination or organization.

Also, a non-governmental organization has a significant role in ensuring the ecological sustainability of a locality. They ensure that the interests of all stakeholders are taken into account, initiating consumer societies, they contribute to the development of policies and plans for the environment, assist the government in developing sound policies, assist the public and private sector as well as communities in developing specific environmental-friendly projects as well as in implementing, monitoring and evaluating responsible projects and lastly, serve as a liaison between the private sector and communities to generate community involvement and stronger private sector commitment to deliver education, training and bridging courses to local communities (Finnetty, 2001).



Lastly, think-tanks are also acknowledged as important agents in the promotion of environmental sustainability. Through knowledge production, they are expected to provide sufficient grounds in terms of policy formulation, creation of projects and action plans as well as policy implementation regarding the protection and preservation of the environment. They are expected to monitor and document the statuses, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the environmental landscape of a certain place for effective monitoring.

Generally, the above claims emphasize the necessity of effective local governance that could provide a platform for the engagement of all key actors or agents for successful environmental sustainability.

### ***Co-Production Model of Sustainability***

The co-production of public services means that services are not only delivered by professional and managerial staff in public agencies but also co-produced by citizens and communities (Brandsen and Honigh, 2015). This phenomenon has always existed, even before the term was coined, yet it is also a manifestation of an emerging governance paradigm in which collaboration and participation are more central (Bryson, 2014 as cited in Brandsen & Honigh, 2015; Lemos & Agrawal, 2006).” This follows the same concept of co-management and private-public partnerships as new modes of environmental governance highlighted by Lemos and Agrawal (2006). These new modes consider the complex and multiscale characteristics of environmental problems.

The definition of co-production that is commonly adopted was that of Ostrom’s article or her joint publication with Parks, that is:



*“...the process through which inputs used to produce a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not ‘in’ the same organization (p. 1073).”*

It was clearly argued that the provision of public services should not only be delivered by one agency but also co-produced by other relevant actors. Contextualizing this theory to the subject of this paper, local government officials, the academe, civil society, and non-governmental organizations are deemed to be key agents in promoting as well as fulfilling environmental sustainability.

Moreover, the sustainable development model is integrated with exploring the subject matter of this study. The sustainable development framework claims that the attainment of sustainability must be holistic. Moreover, it claims that sustainable development has three pillars such as environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, and social sustainability. Environmental sustainability is the third pillar and aims to advance human welfare by protecting the sources of raw materials used for human needs and ensuring that the sinks for human waste are not exceeded. This model is assessed through a careful analysis of the proportion of the volume of current consumption and production patterns with sustainable utilization of natural resources.

In this paper, this model is integrated and used to highlight the initiatives regarding environmental sustainability by the City of Puerto Princesa in Palawan. This is further explained by the illustration provided in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Co-production Model of Environmental Sustainability in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan

## Methods

The qualitative data presented in this paper was gathered from preliminary key informant interviews and document reviews. These were conducted during the extension service activities facilitated by the Palawan State University (PSU) in different barangays of Puerto Princesa City. The key information about the initiatives and practices on environmental sustainability was provided by 5 barangay officials who have a part in the partnership between the PSU Political Science Parliament and the Liga ng mga Barangay in Puerto Princesa City. The 5 local officials selected thru convenient sampling were the president of the Liga, his executive assistant, the 2 barangay captains, and the project manager of Oplan Linis in the City Government of Puerto Princesa. They were primarily asked regarding their views on local governance. For example, they were asked about the implementation of the RA 9003 and Anti-littering Ordinance in their barangay. They were further asked about the specific scheme, strategy, or program that they imposed in order to manage waste disposal efficiently.

The researcher also used documents and materials used by the PSU Political Science Parliament in conducting their extension services to the barangay. The documents were the pamphlets of the city government containing articles about its accomplishments and its website which provided data about local initiatives and best practices.

For analysis, the preliminary data gathered was organized into themes to attain the research objectives of this study. The researcher first identified the local initiatives and best practices based on the information provided by the key informants and the website. Using the co-production model of environmental sustainability, the data emerged into 4 themes as presented and discussed in the results and discussion section.

## Results and Discussion

Basically, "sustainable development" was defined as development that can meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). As interpreted by Rogers (2005), this definition established the need for integrated decision making that is capable of balancing people's economic and social needs with the regenerative capacity of the natural environment. There are different innovations in the local government which are related to good governance framework and sustainable development. Among them are the following: (a) Local Governance Innovations (Environmental Governance Framework); (b) Government Organization (GO) – Non-governmental Organization (NGO) Collaboration; and (c) Citizens' Participation or Involvement.

### *Local Governance Innovations: Environmental Governance Framework*

Like any other localities, the city of Puerto Princesa is also confronting environmental challenges. Thus, the local government is always discovering innovative mechanisms to





best address environmental problems. One of these practices is local governance innovations for the environment.

This is done through the involvement of the academe as well as the participation of various stakeholders. Environmental governance in Puerto Princesa City is visible through its Solid Waste Management System, environmental-related activities such as Oplan Linis, Coastal Clean Up, and *Pista Yang Cagueban* which are conducted annually.

In cooperation with the educational institutions in the City, students are encouraged and required to actively participate in these environmental activities. These enable the City to instill waste segregation and recycling practices at household levels. Hence, Puerto Princesa City is recognized and awarded as one of the cleanest and greenest LGUs in the country.

Added to this are the following practices by the Puerto Princesa city government: (a) capacity building tools are provided to all relevant agencies; (b) public-private partnerships are prioritized by the city government; (c) a multi-stakeholders' forum is conducted; (d) adoption of local citizens' charter is considered; (e) there is benchmarking; and, (f) LGU watchers are employed along with the active use of social media.

Generally, this mechanism calls for the establishment of an institutional landscape for multi-stakeholder 'participation in environmental rehabilitation, planning, and management. The above mechanisms are explicitly highlighted in the article of Magno (2008) entitled "Developments of Public Administration in the Philippines (Lazo, 2011).

*GO-PO Collaboration*



Before the enactment of the Local Government Code of 1991, nongovernmental organizations performed a significant role in fiscal-izing government policies, programs, and even those in political power (Lazo, 2011). However, the said function evolved; they are now considered as an alternative service delivery mechanism, innovators of effective development strategies that can be translated into actual policy, and advocates for alternative developmental policies (Brillantes, 2003).

In Puerto Princesa City, there are various NGOs that are actively involved in the protection and preservation of the environment. Among these NGOs are the following: (a) Environmental Legal Assistance Center, Inc (ELAC); (b) Conservation International; (c) Haribon-Palawan; (d) Kabang Kalikasan ng Pilipinas – World Wildlife Fund; (e) Nagkakaisang Tribu ng Palawan (NATRIPAL); (f) Sagipin Gubat and Dagat ng Palawan; and, other NGOs/POs enumerated as members of Palawan NGO Network Inc.

Palawan NGO Network Inc (PNNI) was formed in November 1991 by the mainstream non-governmental organizations and people's organizations. The development agenda of PNNI is to work towards sustainable development and recognize that local communities play a major role in the management of resources. They advance that access to Palawan's natural resources will be democratized in favor of the marginalized sectors towards effective and genuine participation in the development processes.

Despite the recognition that government-NGO collaboration is vital in the promotion of environmental sustainability, this is not always the scenario in Puerto Princesa City, or even in Palawan (in general). The government, with its pro-economic development agenda or plans, is always in conflict with NGOs thus instead of collaboration they are colliding in terms of their approaches regarding environmental sustainability. Several NGOs believed that most of the economic development plans and projects of the local



government are against environmental sustainability such as allowing coal-fired power plants, mining activities, loggings, and increasing the number of establishments.

In letters, GO and NGOs share a similar commitment, that is, to promote what is good for Palawenos. Under the Local Government Code of 1991, these agents (NGOs and POs) are regarded as effective conduits of the governments in the promotion of local autonomy (Lazo, 2011). They are useful channels for funneling support to needy communities.

### ***Citizens' Participation***

Aside from local governance innovations and collaboration between government and NGOs, citizens' participation is also deemed relevant in environmental sustainability. The 1987 Philippine Constitution in Article VI provided a new mechanism for people's initiative and referendum, allowing citizens' participation in the legislative processes. They are granted the right and privilege to be engaged in the policy-making processes. People's participation in host communities can occur in different categories such as participation in sharing economic benefits, planning, implementation and operations, and participation in decision-making and management (Pretty, 1995).

In Puerto Princesa City, through barangay general assemblies, the constituents are given opportunities to voice out their demands, concerns, and ideas relevant to environmental sustainability. They are also given the power to use social media to advocate their personal opinions regarding all issues in the city (or provincial) environment. Moreover, they are also encouraged to participate in all government activities particularly the Pista Yang Cagueban (a traditional environmental practice), coastal clean-up, and solid waste management.



Generally, it can be argued that community involvement regarding environmental sustainability is visible in Puerto Princesa City.

### ***Local Government – Academe Partnership***

Researchers in the academe are acknowledged as important players in the promotion of environmental sustainability. In Palawan, some educators engage themselves in various studies concerning the promotion and preservation of the natural and environmental beauty of the province. Some of these works involve monitoring and documenting the statuses, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the environmental resources of Palawan.

Specifically, Palawan State University maintains linkages with the local government, Environmental Legal Assistance Center, Inc (ELAC), Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD), and other government arms and non-government agencies. Partnerships are often realized through the extension domains or pillars of the University. Seminars, training, and even research collaborations are proof that collaborations and co-productions exist. Moreover, the participation of students, teachers, and administrators in different environmental initiatives of the local government is also prioritized and supported by the University. However, this aspect is still weak, and thus needs improvement in terms of consistency, sustainability, and identification of actual community projects that are grounded on research.

### ***Role of Political Decisions and Processes in the SDGs Promotion***

In the promotion of Puerto Princesa as an environment-friendly city, there have been various policies implemented which are beneficial to the environment. One example is an activity consistent with reforestation. This is the annual Feast of the Forest which was



aimed at planting around 2M trees increasing the forest cover of the city by 40-70% with an actual growth of 100, 000 seedlings expected to be planted.

There are various programs which are unique to the Puerto Princesa. First is the installation of a 'Materials Recovery Facility' in every barangay to promote recycling, reusing, and reducing garbage. This has been successful because the volume of garbage collection has been reduced significantly. Second is holding 'Love Affair with Nature' which seeks to protect and restore the volume of mangrove areas in the city through mangrove tree planting. Third, some barangays have sought the services of a **bioman** to help in waste management disposal. The City is one of the few in the country that has a sanitary landfill. But due to the consistent burgeoning of the population, there is the threat of closure due to over dumping. Of course, there is the continued implementation of the Anti-littering Ordinance.

The City also maintains cleanliness and beautification evidenced by the Oplan Linis Program which is a regular project of the City Government of Puerto Princesa since the leadership of former Mayor Hagedorn. There was a resolution for the designating a Drainage Clean-Up Day, and recently the City entered into a Joint Venture Agreement for the Provisions of Septage, Sewerage, and Sanitation Services with ECO-system Technologies Inc.

Because of these programs and activities, the city was pronounced a carbon-neutral city and a biosphere reserve by the United Nations. There are also added citations such as Galing Pook Award and Hall of fame Award for its Clean and Green Program. Of course, these awards would not have been earned without the support of the Barangay officials and the people of Puerto Princesa.



## Conclusion and Recommendations

The four local initiatives and best practices by the Puerto Princesa City government in promoting environmental sustainability are (1) local governance innovations; (2) GO-PO collaboration; and (3) citizens' participation; and (4) local government-academe partnership. These mechanisms are welcomed and integrated. However, the utilization needs to be improved, most especially the GO-PO collaboration and local government-academe partnership. It must be noted always that local governance arrangement is very important in attaining environmental sustainability in a locality.

It is apt for the local government to co-manage sustainable development with the community since its realization should include the grassroots. It is the local government that has direct access and communication to the local community. This could be done thru strict but incentive-based enforcement of environmental laws. In some barangays of Puerto, the officials exchange rice or grocery items for recyclable materials that people surrender. Of course, sustainability can be a way of life through repetition and consistent action. These are demonstrated by a systematic scheme of waste collection, encouraging *gulayan sa barangay* through composting. These little routine ways which are compatible with the lifestyle of the people are important. In coping with the effects of climate change, for example, some policies could be adopted. The Tapat Ko Linis Ko policy implemented in each community could help lessen the burden of Oplan Linis, especially in secondary and feeder roads. In this way, the people and the community work hand in hand in cleanliness and beautification. The Materials Recovery Facility maintenance will help reduce the volume of garbage in the sanitary landfill.

Thus, it is recommended that the city government should continue enhancing its local governance mechanisms about environmental protection and preservations particularly in terms of the solid waste management system, information, education campaign (IEC)



about environmental sustainability, and policy choices, and formulations. Despite having a pro-economic development approach, local officials should always be mindful of our intergeneration responsibility which is explicitly stipulated in the Constitution; we all have the responsibility to protect and preserve the ecological balance for the next generation. Moreover, NGOs, POs, the academe, and local communities should be given enough platform to participate in the policy-making process and be given due recognition in terms of their ideas and advocacies.

Environmental sustainability, indeed, quests for a collaborative effort of the local government, NGOs, POs, local community people, and the academe.

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## Do Clans Coordinate? Kinship-based Reciprocity and the Allocation of Infrastructure Programs and Projects at the Local Level

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### Introduction

Political dynasties are conventionally viewed as inimical to economic progress and national development exemplified through the entrenchment of kinship ties at the local level (Anderson, 1988; Coronel, Chua, Rimban, & Cruz, 2004; De Dios, 2007; Rivera 2011; Mendoza, Beja, Venida, & Yap, 2012; Tusalem & Pe-Aguirre, 2013; Rossi, 2014; Asako, Iida, Matsubayashi, & Ueda, 2015; Encarnacion Tadem & Tadem, 2016; Mendoza, Beja, Venida, & Yap, 2016). As dynastic clans have gradually diversified their authority and influence through expanding political power to different economic and business ventures engendering state capture, political families effectively managed to consolidate networks and alliances that can secure particularistic interests and generate electoral success (Machado, 1971; Gutierrez, 1994; McCoy, 1994; Rivera, 1994; Hutchcroft, 1998; Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2000; Teehankee, 2001; Simbulan, 2005; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008; Winters, 2011; Cruz, Labonne, & Querubin, 2017). Establishing vibrant political succession in the localities across key elective positions, political dynasties have engendered perennial dyadic ties with their constituents which can stifle electoral rivalry and undermine local development (Lande, 1965; Scott, 1972; Laband & Lentz, 1985; Kekvliet, 1995; Capuno, 2007; Solon, Fabella, & Capuno, 2009; Capuno, Quimbo, Kraft, Tan, & Fabella, 2012; Rossi, 2014; Querubin, 2016). To legitimize their unrivalled authority in the constituencies, ruling families have comprehensively served as the functioning political surrogates at the local level exemplified through the formation of regional and provincial parties which further enhanced their political machinery and expanded their social networks (Corpuz, 1965; Lallana, 1989; Simbulan, 2005; De Dios, 2007; Ufen, 2008;



Rivera, 2011; Cruz, Labonne, & Querubin, 2017; Teehankee, 2019). The persistence of dynastic families in the localities mirrors the volatile and weak institutions and mechanisms paving the way for the perpetuation of nominal parties and the cultivation of patron-client ties (Milne, 1961; Lande, 1968; Liang, 1970; Machado, 1971; Lemarchand & Legg, 1972; Scott, 1972; Lande & Cigler, 1979; Anderson, 1988; McCoy, 1994; Kerkvliet, 1995; Sidel, 1997; Teehankee, 2001; Kasuya, 2005; Manacsá & Tan, 2005; Winters, 2011; Teehankee, 2019). While the 1987 Philippine Constitution expressly prohibits the formation of political dynasties, the entrenchment of kinship associations integrally encapsulates how families successfully established their unmatched dominance and supremacy in the localities through occupying the key elective positions in the government. Thus, dynastic clans have fundamentally become the institutional backbone at the grassroots level as the constituents exclusively count on the services and programs offered by the political families in the absence of genuine political parties and the shaky implementation of effective policies and regulations which can engender transparency and accountability in public office (Milne, 1961; Corpuz, 1965; Lande, 1965; Lande, 1968; Liang, 1970; Machado, 1971; Lande & Cigler, 1979; Lallana, 1989; Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003; Kasuya, 2005; Manacsá & Tan, 2005; Simbulan, 2005; De Dios, 2007; Rivera, 2011; Winters, 2011; Teehankee, 2019).

As dynastic families consolidate political authority and broaden economic influence in the constituencies through occupying integral elective positions at the local level, politicians ensure that the flow of resources and goods become fully controlled to obtain distributive benefits which can be efficiently and cost-effectively allocated to their constituents exemplified through performing rent-seeking activities and extracting public coffers into private pockets (Machado, 1971; Gutierrez, 1994; McCoy, 1994; Hutchcroft, 1998; Teehankee, 2001; Simbulan, 2005; De Dios, 2007; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008; Rivera, 2011; Winters, 2011; Rossi, 2014; Cruz, Labonne, & Querubin, 2017). With the concurrent



hold on gubernatorial and congressional seats at the provincial level or the simultaneous occupation on mayoral and congressional seats in highly urbanized cities (HUCs) and independent component cities (ICCs) (De Dios, 2007; Rivera, 2011), political clans have completely secured unbridled authority and prominence in the localities exemplified through the control on the utilization of the internal revenue allotment (IRA) resources in local government units (LGUs) and pork barrel funds comprising soft and hard projects in the House of Representatives. In perpetuating political monopoly through simultaneously occupying fundamental elective positions, challengers can be discouraged from contesting the incumbent ruling families due to the absence of legitimate electoral competition exacerbated by the unhampered distribution of particularistic benefits to the constituents which can induce greater electoral support and expand political bases (Laband & Lentz, 1985; Simbulan, 2005; Capuno, 2007; Dal Bo, Dal Bo, & Snyder, 2009; Solon, Fabella, & Capuno, 2009; Rivera, 2011; Capuno, Quimbo, Kraft, Tan, & Fabella, 2012; Asako, Iida, Matsubayashi, & Ueda, 2015; Panao, 2016; Querubin, 2016). Due to the lack of strong institutions and vibrant processes and mechanisms in the government which can drastically curb the persistence of clientelism and patronage politics at the local level, social forces have fostered long-term influence in the communities exemplified through the proliferation of dyadic networks and the expansion of patron-client networks in the localities (Lande, 1965; Scott, 1972; Migdal, 1988; Migdal, Kohli, & Shue, 1994; Kerkvliet, 1995; Teehankee, 2001; Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003; Winters, 2011; Cruz, Labonne, & Querubin, 2017). Migdal (1988) and Migdal, Kohli, & Shue (1994) argue that the inability of the state to comprehensively perform vital duties and functions has enabled social forces in Third World countries to overshadow government institutions and processes and dominate the supply chain of goods and resources allocated to the constituents which can engender clientelist ties at the local level. Debunking the claim on the persistence of postcolonial weak states where the accommodation of social forces has fully deterred the effective operations of the formal structures and mechanisms of the



state, Rocamora (1995); Sidel (1997); De Dios (2007); Winters (2011) put great emphasis on the dominance and monopoly of local bosses in the constituencies through employing gold, guns, and goons vis-à-vis the perpetuation of terror and violence in the communities. To manipulate and control the state institutions and processes in the localities, bossism has strongly incentivized strongmen and political dynasties to broaden the scope of their extensive power and influence in the society through instilling fear and intimidation (Migdal, 1988; Rocamora, 1995; Sidel, 1997; De Dios, 2007). As Thompson (1995) extensively highlights the great prominence of sultanistic rule in the archipelago, the dominant political families constituting the oligarchic ruling class have consolidated unprecedented authority in the political, economic, and social fabric at the local level amplified by the pecuniary grants and particularistic favors received from the president.

This study analyzes how coordination schemes influence the allocation of local infrastructure programs and projects in the different municipalities and cities from 2016 to 2019. Using kinship ties as the primary vector in examining infrastructure earmarks, this paper takes a nuanced view on how dynastic families coordinate at the local level. Taking into account that the emergence of unreliable state institutions and processes has paved the way for the accommodation of social forces in the localities which can engender state capture in the localities (Migdal 1988; Migdal, Kohli, & Shue, 1994; Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2000; Abinales & Amoroso, 2005), ruling clans have fundamentally become the operational surrogates willing and capable of performing government roles and responsibilities exemplified through the delivery of public goods and services and the appropriation of particularistic programs and projects to the constituents (Corpuz, 1965; Lallana, 1989; Simbulan, 2005; De Dios, 2007; Rivera, 2011; Capuno & Panganiban, 2012). In the absence of genuine electoral competition, reigning political families have engendered great superiority and dominance at the local level through simultaneously occupying key elective positions across the gubernatorial, congressional, and mayoral



seats to comprehensively synergize and complement the performance of essential government duties and functions in the constituencies (Laband & Lentz, 1985; Capuno, 2007; Dal Bo, Dal Bo, & Snyder, 2009; Solon, Fabella, & Capuno, 2009; Capuno, Quimbo, Kraft, Tan, & Fabella, 2012; Rossi, 2014; Pano, 2016; Querubin, 2016). As political dynasties can be compared to stationary bandits who have opted to gradually improve and enhance their localities rather than become roving bandits who plunder and extract public goods and resources, Olsson (1993) elaborates that local development has been prioritized in the constituencies to fulfill the demands and interests of their constituents. Considering that kinship ties have been cemented and legitimized at the local level through the concurrent hold on the important elective government positions, ruling families can genuinely focus and direct their goals and initiatives towards promoting and advancing constituent welfare and well-being which can stimulate long-term progress and development in the localities.

Coordination denotes how local politicians efficiently integrate plans and policies that can sufficiently deliver goods and services and adequately implement programs and projects in their constituencies. Examining whether local chief executives (LCEs) in the provincial, city and municipal levels with identical party affiliation can generate higher national government support, secure greater local spending, and provide more service delivery outputs, Capuno & Panganiban (2012) found that LCEs in the same political parties do not influence the provision of devolved health services across local government units (LGUs). Using political parties as the institutional barometer to evaluate intergovernmental coordination in the delivery of health services, Capuno & Panganiban (2012) primarily sought to determine whether identical party affiliation can spur better outcomes. In this study, the key coordination schemes and patterns in the allocation of infrastructure earmarks have been statistically tested to find out how and when governors, Congress members, and mayors collaborate in the delivery of appropriations for public



works at the local level. Correlating the number of earmarked infrastructure projects with the kinship networks and party ties among district representatives, municipal and city mayors, and provincial governors, the incumbency status and electoral competitiveness of legislators in Congress and chief executives in the LGUs, and the poverty incidence in the localities, this paper empirically investigates how local programs and projects are effectively delivered to the constituents. Thus, it can be determined whether LCEs and Congress members genuinely coordinate through kinship networks or across party lines. Uncovering the coordination mechanisms and strategies adopted by politicians in employing resources and goods at the local level can substantively generate policy revisions and institutional outcomes which can bolster and revitalize structures and mechanisms amid the systemic persistence of unstable and flawed government institutions and processes which constantly impede sustainable progress and development in the constituencies.

The incorporation of the various infrastructure and local projects (VILP) earmarks in the study indicates how politicians secure particularistic benefits for their constituents. Although there are other different goods and services which can be empirically tested such as local government spending (Solon, Fabella, & Capuno, 2009) and health services (Capuno & Panganiban, 2012), this paper mainly focuses on the allocation of infrastructure earmarks at the local level since appropriations for public works can be conspicuously observed by the constituents which can stimulate greater electoral success. While the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) carries out the planning and construction of infrastructure programs and projects at the local level through the extensive monitoring and supervision of district engineering offices (DEOs) located around the country, Congress members and LCEs can legitimately propose and recommend infrastructure plans and projects in their respective constituencies in catering



to the interests and demands of their constituents and ultimately claiming the credit for the delivery of particularistic earmarks.

When the pork barrel scheme labeled as Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) was still being implemented by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) which permitted legislators in the House of Representatives to earmark targeted government appropriations, there have been soft projects dedicated to particularistic goods and services which extensively address immediate needs and concerns of the constituents such as scholarship grants, medical assistance, and solicitation requests and hard projects constituting the VILP allocations implemented by the DPWH which thoroughly enumerate targeted programs and projects in the constituencies. Meanwhile, the LCEs in the provinces, cities, and municipalities can allocate infrastructure earmarks through the employment of IRA resources designated by the DBM. As provincial governors and municipal and city mayors aggressively implement concrete programs and policies at the local level, the delivery of infrastructure projects and services has been systematically integrated to accelerate growth and development in the communities. Thus, examining infrastructure programs and projects in the localities can provide empirical evidence on how politicians efficiently allocate distributive benefits to their constituents through actively implementing coordination strategies and mechanisms in securing electoral motives and expanding political networks at the grassroots level.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. The next section comprehensively tackles the theoretical framework adopted in the study through investigating when and how governors, Congress members, and mayors coordinate in appropriating infrastructure programs and projects at the local level which can deliver credit-claiming opportunities. The third section extensively discusses the empirical data incorporated on the variables and the estimation approach used in the paper. The fourth section





thoroughly explains the statistical results and findings generated from statistical analysis through elaborating the coordination schemes adopted by the local politicians in allocating particularistic benefits at the grassroots level. The final section concludes the study.

## Theoretical Framework

As weak state institutions and mechanisms persist across the country exemplified through the perpetuation of clientelist networks (Lande, 1965; Lemarchand & Legg, 1972; Scott, 1972; Kerkvliet, 1995; Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003), the absence of clear-cut party lines (Milne, 1961; Lande, 1968; Machado, 1971; Lande & Cigler, 1979; Manacsa & Tan, 2005), and the monopoly on the flow and distribution of goods and resources in the localities exemplified through rent-seeking and wealth accumulation (Gutierrez, 1994; McCoy, 1994; Rivera, 1994; Hutchcroft, 1998; Teehankee, 2001; Simbulan, 2005; Winters, 2011), the strongmen, local bosses, and political dynasties have predominantly administered government duties and responsibilities through meticulously addressing the urgent issues and concerns in the communities and legitimately catered to the immediate needs and demands of their constituents through allocating particularistic programs and projects at the local level. Taking into account that the perennial failure of the state to wield substantive control and influence at the local level has inevitably paved the way for the accommodation of social forces in the constituencies (Migdal, 1988; Migdal, Kohli, & Shue, 1994; Abinales & Amoroso, 2005), the informal state and non-state actors engendered unprecedented dominance and supremacy in the localities through systematically intervening in the conduct of essential government roles and functions since formal political organizations and institutional processes cannot adequately respond and function in the constituencies. As Migdal (1988) saliently classifies developing and less-developed countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America as polities constituting strong societies and weak states, the unstable and ineffective government



institutions have been fully subordinated under the tutelage and control of the pervasive social forces generating rogue structures and processes in the localities. Thus, the emerging social forces can comprehensively perpetuate unparalleled authority and dominance at the local level through building social networks and political alliances at the grassroots level, nurturing dyadic ties with their constituents, and consolidating political and economic interests through dominating electoral competition which can fundamentally cement orchestrated state capture.

Due to the inability of the state to fundamentally regulate and govern the constituents through implementing rules and policies and appropriating programs and projects, the ruling oligarchy has engendered perennial supremacy and control at the local level. Mosca (1896); Michels (1915); Pareto (1917) comprehensively underscores how the ruling class has supremely obtained wealth and affluence through acquiring political power and securing particularistic interests at the expense of the general welfare. Exerting control in the appropriation of goods and services and the delivery of programs and projects, the reigning oligarchs have ensured that the fundamental government positions are principally secured in the localities. With formal government institutions and mechanisms located under the absolute control and manipulation of the local elites, the dominant political families have successfully perpetuated political succession through the inheritance of elective positions to the succeeding generations (Simbulan, 2005; De Dios, 2007; Rivera, 2011; Querubin, 2016; Cruz, Labonne, & Querubin, 2017). Gutierrez (1994); McCoy (1994); Teehankee (2001) have also comprehensively explained that dynastic persistence at the local level has further exacerbated in the post-EDSA period with pre-Martial Law ruling families and emerging new political clans systemically consolidating patron-client networks and perpetuating kinship rule in the constituencies. Hence, dynastic families have viciously created local parties and generated alliances and coalitions within their localities in expanding and legitimizing unparalleled authority and



influence at the grassroots level (Corpuz, 1965; Lallana, 1989; Coronel, Chua, Rimban, & Cruz, 2004; Ufen, 2008; Rivera, 2011; Teehankee, 2019).

In the formation of provincial and regional parties which are commonly affiliated to nationwide political organizations, ruling families have formally established dynastic persistence at the local level through securing key seats in the gubernatorial, congressional, and mayoral races to widen political clout and gain economic prosperity. Moreover, dynastic clans have also employed the use of arms and violence to safeguard interests and defend superiority in the constituencies as local bosses and strongmen perpetuate terror and instill chaos in curbing electoral competition (Migdal, 1988; Rocamora, 1995; Sidel, 1997; De Dios, 2007; Rivera, 2011). Disincentivizing potential challengers from contesting electoral races, political dynasties can spur local development and promote public welfare as the absence of legitimate threats to political supremacy and economic dominance motivates political families to secure goods and resources which can respond to the interests and demands of the constituents (Olsson, 1993; Solon, Fabella, & Capuno, 2009; Capuno & Panganiban, 2012; Capuno, Quimbo, Kraft, Tan, & Fabella, 2012). Nevertheless, perennial kinship rule can still produce detrimental outcomes in the localities exemplified through the monopoly on the control and distribution of goods and resources (Rivera, 1994; Hutchcroft, 1998; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008; Winters, 2011; Cruz, Labonne, & Querubin, 2017) and the decline of government output exemplified through the appropriation of programs and projects at the local level (Capuno, 2007; Mendoza, Beja, Venida, & Yap, 2012; Tusalem & Pe-Aguirre, 2013; Asako, Iida, Matsubayashi, & Ueda, 2015; Encarnacion Tadem & Tadem, 2016; Mendoza, Beja, Venida, & Yap, 2016). While dynastic entrenchment can initially stimulate actual progress and growth in the communities through the delivery of policies and programs that can improve the plight and well-being of the constituents, the perpetuation of kinship networks in the localities can gradually engender predatory



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relationships where ruling families deliberately engage in widespread rent-seeking activities which can broaden economic ventures and secure particularistic gains.

In this paper, there is an empirical examination of the coordination strategies and mechanisms employed in the appropriation of targeted infrastructure programs and projects in the localities. As formal institutions and processes perennially remain defective and unreliable, local politicians employ the different existing platforms and avenues where resources and goods can be efficiently distributed in the constituencies. To guarantee that the targeted goals and initiatives can be comprehensively reached at the local level, chief executives in the LGUs guarantee that vital government functions and tasks are administered and the essential goods and services are delivered to the constituents. Amid the lack of operational structures and processes which can effectively implement adequate policies and programs, politicians adequately depend on alternative schemes to enable themselves to seek recognition and engender visibility in the localities through earmarking particularistic goods and services and allocating constituent programs and projects at the grassroots level. Hence, the LCEs and Congress members can directly claim the credit for the allocation of distributive benefits to the constituents which can pave the way for greater electoral support and secure particularistic gains and interests.

Taking into account that this study emphasizes the coordination schemes employed by provincial governors, city and municipal mayors, and district representatives in the appropriation of infrastructure programs and projects at the local level, the empirical inquiry lies on when and how politicians coordinate with each other. While LCEs and Congress members perform distinct roles and responsibilities with the former expected to formulate bills and pass laws while the latter directed to implement rules and policies and allocate goods and services, there is consensus among politicians that securing local



interests remains at the forefront in serving the general public. As district members in the House of Representatives file bills of local application and appropriate particularistic earmarks in the national budget for their constituencies while chief executives in the provinces, cities, and municipalities release government funds through the annual IRA resources to initiate key programs and projects in the localities, politicians can actively coordinate with one another to integrally stimulate local development through improving the standard of living in the communities and reinvigorating the quality of life among the constituents. Using appropriations for public works as the empirical indicator of particularistic goods and services at the local level, this study investigates whether infrastructure earmarks can become a formidable resource for local politicians to invest time and effort and coordinate with other politicians in delivering targeted VILP allocations in the constituencies.

To comprehensively find out how LCEs and Congress members utilize infrastructure programs and projects in securing particularistic interests and consolidating electoral support in the constituencies, this study mainly examines whether kinship ties can generate more VILP earmarks in the localities. In the persistence of nominal political parties, politicians cultivate patron-client networks and perpetuate dynastic rule to generate distributive benefits which can be efficiently delivered to the constituents. Thus, identical party affiliation among politicians cannot induce greater infrastructure goods and resources at the local level. Since mainstream political institutions and mechanisms are essentially subsumed under the whims and caprices of bosses, strongmen, and political families who adequately exert power and influence in the localities, dynastic ties have predominantly overshadowed party lines in perpetuating political authority and widening economic prosperity. Thus, local politicians become more inclined to coordinate through kinship networks in securing particularistic benefits for their constituents which can generate electoral success. Rather than establish political



coordination through party lines, Congress members and LCEs prefer to actively coordinate with their relatives in the allocation of local programs and projects to ensure that mutual trust and confidence remain intact due to the recurrent party-switching during electoral cycles and the sudden change of alliances in the replacement of the national leadership.

Controlling for the incumbency status and electoral competitiveness of the politicians and the poverty incidence in the constituencies, this paper comprehensively incorporates other indicators that can explain the delivery of infrastructure programs and projects at the local level. Examining whether reelection status can motivate the strategic appropriation of greater particularistic goods and services to the constituents, local politicians are discouraged from allocating targeted programs and projects in the communities since electoral success in the succeeding election cycles can be obtained through consolidating clientelist networks and expanding political base while holding public office. Meanwhile, tighter electoral competition in local races can encourage LCEs and Congress members to deliver more VILP earmarks to defend elective positions amid the looming threat from political challengers. Further, localities with higher poverty incidence rates attract more appropriations for public works to hasten local development exemplified through the entry of business ventures and the establishment of trade centers and commercial hubs which can provide livelihood and employment to the constituents and economic security in the rural and underdeveloped areas. In the following subsections, this paper extensively discusses the key coordination strategies on dynastic ties and party alliances followed by other indicators comprising incumbency, electoral competition, and poverty incidence.



### *Dynastic Ties*

In the absence of stable institutions and mechanisms in the government exacerbated by the persistence of oligarchic rule at the local level and the perpetuation of clientelist networks between politicians and constituents, the proliferation of dynastic clans across the provincial, city, and municipal levels have clearly mirrored how dominant social forces secured unbridled authority and influence in the localities engendering state capture (Lande, 1965; Lemarchand & Legg, 1972; Scott, 1972; Migdal, 1988; McCoy, 1994; Migdal, Kolhi, & Shue, 1994; Kerkvliet, 1995; Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2000; Teehankee, 2001; Simbulan, 2005; De Dios, 2007; Winters, 2011). As political dynasties have operationally become the political surrogates which can perform government roles and functions, implement policies and programs, and deliver goods and resources, kinship ties remain the formidable scheme which can be employed by politicians in obtaining particularistic interests and establishing dynastic succession in the localities (Corpuz, 1965; Lallana, 1989; Hutchcroft & Rocamora, 2003; De Dios, 2007; Ufen, 2008; Dal Bo, Dal Bo, & Snyder, 2009; Rivera, 2011; Querubin, 2016; Cruz, Labonne, & Querubin, 2017). To consolidate political power across key elective positions and secure economic monopoly on the key industries in the constituencies, political families have legitimized dynastic rule through forming local parties and employing private armies to perpetuate fear and violence at the local level (Lallana, 1989; McCoy, 1994; Rivera, 1994; Rocamora, 1995; Sidel, 1997; Hutchcroft, 1998; Coronel, Chua, Rimban, & Cruz, 2004; Simbulan, 2005; De Dios, 2007; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2008; Asako, Iida, Matsubayashi, & Ueda, 2015). Hence, political clans appropriate more programs and projects in stifling electoral competition which can engender perennial kinship rule. Although diminishing electoral competition can encourage political dynasties to behave like stationary bandits exemplified through generating programs and projects and delivering goods and services which can effectively cater to the needs and welfare of their constituents, dynastic entrenchment can become detrimental in accelerating and revitalizing local development



since perennial kinship succession in the long-run can viciously perpetuate rent-seeking and exacerbate patron-client ties as ruling families secure particularistic interests (Laband & Lentz, 1985; Olsson, 1993; Rivera, 1994; Hutchcroft, 1998; Solon, Fabella, & Capuno, 2009; Winters, 2011; Mendoza, Beja, Venida, & Yap, 2012; Tusalem & Pe-Aguirre, 2013; Rossi, 2014; Encarnacion Tadem & Tadem, 2016; Mendoza, Beja, Venida, & Yap, 2016; Pano, 2016).

Examining the influence of dynastic ties on the appropriation of infrastructure programs and projects at the local level, this study hypothesizes that there will be more VILP earmarks in constituencies where one of the three key government positions does not belong to the same family. The presence of kinship associations between a mayor and representative, a mayor and governor, and a representative and governor in a locality can spur greater infrastructure allocations since not all elective positions are occupied by the clan. Taking into account that the kin has not concurrently held all the top government positions in the locality, there is a greater propensity for elected members to deliver more particularistic benefits for their constituents in maintaining political supremacy and stifling electoral competition. Meanwhile, there will be fewer infrastructure earmarks in localities where the family simultaneously occupies the gubernatorial, congressional, and mayoral seats. As electoral supremacy has been completely attained in constituencies where ruling dynasties took over the highest elective government positions, political clans are more hesitant to allocate targeted goods and services in the absence of vibrant electoral competition. Given that all the key elective positions have been simultaneously occupied, dynasties become risk-averse in generating local programs and projects as building political alliances and social networks and nurturing patron-client ties can provide greater leverage for families to expand political authority, and diversify economic interests to perpetuate kinship rule in the localities.



### *Party Affiliation*

As national and local political parties remain institutional vehicles for strongmen, bosses, and clans to compete in the elections, party affiliation has been systematically disguised as an effective tool for politicians to join alliances and coalitions out of convenience and transfer allegiance to the ruling party after the elections exemplified through the formation of supermajority coalitions in the House of Representatives (Milne, 1961; Corpuz, 1965; Liang, 1970; Lallana, 1989; Coronel, Chua, Rimban & Cruz, 2004; Kasuya, 2005; Manacsá & Tan, 2005; Ufen, 2008; Rivera, 2011). The systemic absence of genuine political parties in the government has paved the way for the inescapable proliferation of local factions and electoral cleavages brought about by the competing interests and opposing views of the party leaders (Lande, 1968; Liang, 1970; Machado, 1971; Lande & Cigler, 1979; Manacsá & Tan, 2005; Simbulan, 2005; Teehankee, 2019). Thus, party ties have been largely fraudulent and cosmetic organizations created by influential strongmen and local bosses in perpetuating authority and influence in the society exemplified through securing key elective positions in the provincial, city, and municipal levels for LCEs and in the district level for Congress members.

In an empirical study correlating the party affiliation between governors and mayors with the allocation of devolved health services at the local level, Capuno & Panganiban (2012) empirically discovered that party lines remain untenable in the delivery of health goods and resources which implies that identical party affiliation cannot explain the appropriation of programs and projects in the localities. Amid the unstable and weak party lines exacerbated by the ineffective government institutions and mechanisms, the programs and policies implemented at the local level can become perennially futile and incoherent due to the contending priorities of politicians when there has been a complete overhaul in the national leadership. In the persistence of nominal parties across national and local levels, politicians heavily depend on other institutional devices and platforms



where they can fully achieve targeted goals and objectives in their constituencies through the optimal performance of essential duties and functions and the adequate response to constituent demands and interests. Thus, political parties cannot legitimately behave in the government as operational political organizations that are fully competent and capable of delivering goods and services and securing particularistic interests for the constituents.

To evaluate how party ties elicit local infrastructure programs and projects at the grassroots level, this paper postulates that the identical party affiliation of the municipal and city mayors, district representatives, and provincial governors does not influence the delivery of VILP allocations in the localities. The LCEs and Congress members who belong to the same political party do not coordinate with each other in the appropriation of particularistic benefits in the constituencies. As long as party lines remain flawed and deficient at the local level, politicians will not risk cooperating with other party mates since the erratic shifting of political allegiances has become pervasive and rampant due to the nominal party discipline and incoherent ideological foundations of political parties. Hence, party affiliation remains unreliable and farce in examining whether politicians genuinely coordinate in the allocation of infrastructure programs and projects at the local level.

### *Incumbency*

As incumbent provincial governors, city and municipal mayors, and district representatives fully maximize the perks in holding public office, reelection status becomes instrumental in determining how politicians effectively perform in the localities exemplified through attending to the interests and demands of their constituents and delivering particularistic goods and services in the grassroots level which can engender greater support in the future election cycles (Solon, Fabella, & Capuno, 2009; Capuno &



Panganiban, 2012; Panoa 2016). Although the three-term limit rule indicated in the Omnibus Election Code of the Philippines strictly prohibits any incumbent Congress member or LCE from running for a fourth consecutive term, bench-warming provides leverage for local politicians who seek to preserve and maintain elective positions within their dynastic clans (Rivera, 2011; Capuno, Quimbo, Kraft, Tan, & Fabella, 2012; Panoa, 2016). When incumbent politicians finish their third consecutive term in office, kin members momentarily replace them through running for the identical position, mustering all the consolidated networks and alliances to guarantee uninterrupted occupation of political power, at the local level. In the meantime, term-limited incumbents occupy other vital elective positions in the localities through employing sufficient financial resources and banking on garnered political capital. Afterwards, the former term-limited incumbents reclaim their previous government positions through switching offices with kin members in the succeeding election cycle. Thus, incumbent politicians perpetuate electoral supremacy through securing all the key elective positions which cement dynastic entrenchment (De Dios, 2007; Rivera, 2011; Mendoza, Beja, Venida, & Yap, 2012; Panoa, 2016; Querubin, 2016). While fulfilling official duties and functions exemplified through implementing government policies and programs and appropriating distributive benefits in the constituencies can more likely secure reelection goals, unrivalled authority and legitimacy at the local level can be comprehensively grasped through incorporating political and social networks and expanding patron-client ties and implanting force and terror against potential electoral challengers (Rocamora, 1995; Sidel, 1997; Capuno, 2007; De Dios, 2007; Solon, Fabella, & Capuno, 2009; Rivera, 2011).

Assessing how incumbent legislators in Congress and chief executives in the LGUs generates allocation of VILP earmarks in the localities, this paper contends that reelection status discourages incumbents from delivering infrastructure programs and projects. Since incumbents can secure distributive benefits through extensively broadening



clientelist networks and perpetuating dynastic entrenchment to gauge electoral success, there has been a marked decline in the appropriation of public goods and services as local politicians depend on informal structures and mechanisms in generating unbridled influence and power (Capuno, 2007; De Dios, 2007; Rivera, 2011; Pano, 2016). However, there will be more infrastructure allocations in constituencies where the mayor, representative, and governor are all incumbents at the same time. Given that the three key elective seats are simultaneously occupied by incumbents, LCEs and Congress members are greatly incentivized to become stationary bandits who will adequately respond to the interests and demands of their constituents and fully promote the welfare and needs in the community (Olsson, 1993; Solon, Fabella, & Capuno, 2009).

### *Electoral Competition*

Taking into account that legislators in Congress and chief executives in the LGUs saliently incorporate reelection prospects in the succeeding elections, the extent and range of political competition become relevant and germane in probing how politicians deliver resources and goods to their constituents through allocating targeted programs and projects in the localities. De Dios (2007); Solon, Fabella, & Capuno (2009); Rivera (2011) underscore how electoral competition incentivizes local politicians to conduct essential duties and functions in holding public office in stimulating electoral support through claiming the credit for the allocation of particularistic programs and projects. Thus, governors, mayors, and Congress members devote substantial time and effort in addressing the interests and demands of their constituents and earmarking government programs and projects in securing public support and approval. As the number of challengers in the electoral races increases, there is a greater impetus for incumbent politicians to aggressively implement policies and programs and appropriate goods and services that can adequately cater to the welfare and needs of their constituents.



As politicians consolidate unprecedented authority and control through capturing key elective positions in perpetuating dynastic rule, Solon, Fabella, & Capuno (2009) posed that limiting competition can cement dominance and superiority which can further exacerbate poverty and underdevelopment in the localities. Hence, vibrant electoral competition can generate optimal and effective outcomes in the constituencies as incumbents become more inclined to comprehensively perform roles and responsibilities due to the looming threat from challengers in contesting political authority. Otherwise, politicians can disregard executing integral duties and functions in public office as the lack of genuine electoral competition allows them to forgo accomplishing integral tasks and responsibilities at the local level which can become inimical and consequential for their constituents exemplified through engendering suboptimal performance (Olson, 1993; Capuno, 2007; Solon, Fabella, & Capuno, 2009).

To investigate the effect of electoral competition on the delivery of infrastructure programs and projects at the local level, this study argues that rising political competitiveness encourages LCEs and Congress members to allocate greater infrastructure earmarks in the constituencies. In localities where there has been tighter competition, incumbent politicians deliver more VILP appropriations to spur greater electoral support amid the emergence of vibrant and formidable challengers. Thus, electoral competition determines the magnitude and degree of government output and productivity generated by governors and mayors in the LGUs and legislators in Congress to guarantee electoral security.

### ***Poverty Incidence***

When Congress members appropriate particularistic earmarks in the General Appropriations Act (GAA) and LCEs release government funds to deliver targeted programs and projects, the selection on where distributive benefits are strategically



allocated has been primarily contingent on the level of growth and development attained in the constituencies. Considering the scarcity of government resources enumerated in the annual national budget, local politicians should ensure that the allotment of public goods and services becomes cost-effective and efficient so that the poor and remote areas in the provinces, cities, municipalities, and barangays can be comprehensively prioritized in the appropriation of particularistic programs and projects. As Capuno (2007) mutually bridges governance and development through the provision of resources and goods at the local level, it has been elaborated that engendering good governance in the conduct of assigned duties and responsibilities and maintaining transparency and accountability in the government can pave the way for inclusive, comprehensive, and substantive development in the localities. In examining the influence of local development on the electoral accountability of LCEs, Capuno (2007) underlines that provincial governors in constituencies with high and low levels of development get reelected in subsequent election cycles while others fail to succeed in reclaiming their current positions. Since key development indicators such as the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Small Area Estimates of Poverty (SAE) are clearly overshadowed by the persistence of clientelist networks and the entrenchment of kinship ties in generating electoral success, local politicians predominantly bank on other alternative mechanisms and strategies to garner votes. Thus, local development initiatives can be achieved through imitating roving or stationary bandits where politicians can choose whether to amass public wealth in securing particularistic interests or accelerate genuine progress and advancement in obtaining distributive benefits (Olson, 1993; Capuno, 2007; Solon, Capuno, & Fabella, 2009).

Determining the impact of the rate of poverty incidence on the number of local infrastructure programs and projects, this study posits that constituencies with higher poverty incidence receive more VILP earmarks. Taking into account that socioeconomic



conditions remain inferior and unstable in underdeveloped areas, there is a greater likelihood that infrastructure goods and resources have been allocated to spur economic growth and development in these localities. In the construction and rehabilitation of public roads, bridges, and buildings as well as the repair of sewage and flood control systems, non-affluent constituencies can attract greater investment from domestic and foreign companies and firms which can pave the way for the proliferation of business establishments and commercial centers. Hence, there will be more employment opportunities for the constituents which can remarkably increase the quality and standard of living in the localities where great poverty and inequality persist.

### **Data and Methodology**

To find out how the kinship ties and party affiliation among Congress members and LCEs elicit greater allocation of infrastructure programs and projects at the local level controlling for incumbency, electoral competition, and poverty incidence, this study mainly adopts the negative binomial regression method as the estimation approach used in empirical analysis. As a count model variant under Poisson distribution, negative binomial regression incorporates overdispersion where the variance is greater than the mean (Hilbe, 2011; Wooldridge, 2012). The need to account for overdispersion rests on the presence of zero values in the data. Based on Table 1, the descriptive statistics show that there are variables with zeroes as the indicated minimum value. Therefore, the negative binomial regression method effectively serves as the appropriate count model in the study. A closer look at the minimum and maximum values denote that the variables on VILP, electoral competition, and poverty incidence constitute interval measures while the variables on dynastic ties, party affiliation, and incumbency comprise nominal values.

As presented in the summary statistics in Table 1, there are 1633 observations constituting highly urbanized cities (HUCs), independent component cities (ICCs),

component cities, and component municipalities. Under the official LGU classification formulated by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), HUCs are independent LGUs with high incomes and developed economies while ICCs remain geographically constituted but politically independent from the provinces. Meanwhile, component cities and municipalities are administered under the jurisdiction of the provinces. Based on the VILP records from 2016 to 2019 obtained from the DPWH, there are missing data from the Third District of Batangas constituting the cities of Santo Tomas and Tanauan and the municipalities of Agoncillo, Alitagtag, Balete, Cuenca, Laurel, Malvar, Mataas na Kahoy, San Nicolas, Santa Teresita, and Talisay, the First and Second Districts of Antipolo City, the First and Second Districts of Cebu City, the First and Second Districts of Zamboanga City, the First and Second Districts of Cagayan de Oro City, and the First, Second, and Third Districts of Davao City. The data sources for the empirical data are garnered from the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Commission on Elections (COMELEC), Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), and National Statistical Coordinating Board (NSCB).

Establishing the correlations tested in the study, the number of VILP allocations has been modelled as a function of the persistence of dynastic ties binding provincial governors, district representatives, and municipal and city mayors. The negative binomial regression model is expressed as:

$$VILP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{dynasticities} + \beta_2 \text{partyaffiliation} + \beta_3 \text{incumbency} \\ + \beta_4 \text{electoralcompetition} + \beta_5 \text{povertyincidence} + u$$

Based on the negative binomial regression model equation indicated above, the VILP serves as the dependent variable while dynastic ties and party affiliation operate as the main independent variables. The control variables in the study comprise incumbency, electoral competition, and poverty incidence. As elaborated in the variable definitions in





Table 2, there are different combinations for the coordination schemes on kinship associations and party ties since LCEs in the provincial, city, and municipal levels and Congress members in the legislative districts can be integrated into multiple mechanisms while the incumbency status and the competitiveness of the electoral races can be classified into gubernatorial, congressional, and mayoral positions.

Elaborating the conceptual and operational definitions enumerated in Table 2, it is important to discuss how the variables were constructed and where the sources of the empirical data have been obtained. Dynastic ties refer to the kinship networks between and among municipal and city mayors, district representatives, and provincial governors. Kinship ties can be determined by finding out whether the local politicians are filially related to the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity based on the Civil Code of the Philippines. The classification on whether the politicians are members of the same clan can be attributed to the empirical studies conducted by Mendoza, Beja, Venida, and Yap (2012); Mendoza, Beja, Venida, and Yap (2016); Querubin (2016) where the family identification approach constituting the first, middle, and last names were used to sort whether the local politicians belong to the same kin. While this incorporated operationalization remains crude and unclear due to the great probability that two politicians with identical last names are not members of the same kin, this identification approach has been implemented due to the inclusion of LCEs in the city and municipal levels who cannot be genealogically traced since the available records collated by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) primarily constitute dynastic ties between gubernatorial and congressional positions (Coronel, Chua, Rimban, & Cruz, 2004). Party affiliation pertains to the political alliances and coalitions forged by local politicians in the elections. Party ties can be classified through establishing whether LCEs and Congress members belong to the same political party or coalition. In the emergence of provincial and regional parties at the local level, there has been substantive anecdotal



research on the consolidation of alliances between local and national parties which can be used to determine whether the politicians become affiliated in the elections given that dynastic clans have established political parties in their respective localities to perpetuate kinship rule (Corpuz, 1965; Lallana, 1989; De Dios, 2007; Rivera, 2011; Teehankee, 2019). However, the shifting of political allegiances in-between elections clearly demonstrated through the rampant party-switching within the term of office cannot be thoroughly examined in this study due to the lack of available empirical data.

Incumbency distinguishes local politicians who have been reelected in the same position from those who are newly elected in office. While the three-term limit prohibits incumbents from seeking a fourth consecutive term, family members can substitute them as benchwarmers in the interregnum period and reclaim their positions after one term vis-à-vis swapping in key elective positions at the local level (Rivera, 2011; Capuno, Quimbo, Kraft, Tan, & Fabella, 2012; Panao, 2016). Thus, kin members who substitute chief executives in LGUs and legislators in Congress currently holding public office are also classified as incumbents. Electoral competition can be measured through computing the effective number of candidates in the electoral races. Adopting the operational definition on the effective number of parties formulated by Laakso & Taagepera (1979), electoral competition has been operationalized through obtaining the effective number of candidates since there are electoral races with numerous candidates brought about by the multi-party system enshrined in the 1987 Philippine Constitution and the prominence of nominal political parties which integrally engendered cleavages and factions across national and local levels. Thus, there can be an effective gauge on the legitimate number of candidates contesting in the electoral races. Poverty incidence denotes the rate of poverty at the local level. The poverty rate was based on the Small Area Estimates of Poverty (SAE) measured through integrating statistical indicators such as Provincial Poverty Thresholds, Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES), Labor Force Survey



(LFS), and Population Census (POPCEN). Comprising six reference years across 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, and 2015, SAE statistics provide an empirical measure that incorporates instrumental data in estimating poverty and underdevelopment in the localities.

## Results and Discussion

Based on the statistical results and findings indicated in Table 3, kinship ties remain the vibrant strategy where Congress members and LCEs genuinely coordinate in the delivery of VILP allocations at the local level. As the paper mainly contends that dynastic coordination has become the default scheme in the appropriation of infrastructure programs and projects in the constituencies, local politicians are more inclined to coordinate with their relatives. In the absence of stable government institutions and processes, chief executives in the LGUs and legislators in Congress rigorously look for alternative strategies and techniques to efficiently distribute particularistic goods and services to the constituents. The empirical results clearly indicate that kinship networks persist as the definitive informal structure which binds local politicians to coordinate in the allocation of targeted programs and projects. Since political dynasties can consolidate political alliances and social networks and foster dyadic ties at the grassroots level exemplified through addressing the interests and demands of their constituents and building rainbow coalitions in their localities, there is a greater propensity for ruling families to actively coordinate through integrating efforts and consolidating resources to secure particularistic interests. Thus, dynastic clans can comprehensively engender state capture through perpetuating political power through occupying the gubernatorial, congressional, and mayoral seats and controlling the key economic industries through eradicating legitimate competitors.



While the statistical findings generate an empirical correlation linking kinship associations and the number of infrastructure programs and projects appropriated in the constituencies, the dynastic combinations examined clearly denote contrasting outcomes. Taking a closer look at the kinship associations involving family members concurrently holding two major elective positions, it has been empirically proven that there are greater infrastructure earmarks allocated in these localities. This implies that the failure to simultaneously occupy all three fundamental government positions incentivizes political dynasties to systematically generate more particularistic benefits that can be distributed in the constituencies. As electoral competition persists when one elective position does not belong to the same kin, political families are strongly motivated to invest greater resources and devote more time to ensuring that the emerging political challengers cannot diminish their authority and influence. Hence, the dynastic combination where only two out of the three essential positions are concurrently held exemplifies the political behavior of stationary bandits who optimally perform in holding public office exemplified through accomplishing integral functions and responsibilities and responding to the immediate needs and demands of their constituents.

Meanwhile, political dynasties who have simultaneously occupied the gubernatorial, congressional, and mayoral seats appropriate fewer VILP earmarks in the localities. Since the ruling families have effectively obtained political monopoly through occupying all essential government positions, there is less propensity to allocate distributive benefits since electoral dominance has been fully achieved. Rather than establishing direct coordination to effectively deliver targeted programs and projects to their constituents, kin members are greatly inclined towards reinforcing clientelist networks and controlling the supply and demand chain of goods and resources which can fortify dynastic superiority and legitimacy. Similar to roving bandits, political families who have successfully won the three key elective positions can loot the public coffers through



circumventing policies and laws and eliminate political opponents through perpetuating violence and intimidation at the local level. Remarkably, the kinship combination of gubernatorial and congressional positions provides fewer infrastructure programs and projects as occupying these two integral seats at the same time can allow ruling clans to obtain particularistic interests through bridging local supremacy and unrivalled access to state resources. As dynastic Congress members and governors wield substantive influence and authority in the constituencies, fostering patron-client networks and expanding political capital can comprehensively pave the way for unprecedented state capture where formal institutions and processes are fundamentally subsumed under the vicious control and manipulation of ruling families. Echoing the monopolistic occupation on the three instrumental elective positions, political dynasties who have concurrently held the congressional and gubernatorial seats can also become roving bandits who have perennially erected fiefdoms through perpetuating kinship rule and diminishing economic competition at the local level.

Exploring the effect of party ties in stimulating active coordination among local politicians in the delivery of infrastructure programs and projects, the empirical findings also show that party affiliation cannot be used as a viable scheme in appropriating goods and services. Across all political combinations involving provincial governors, city and municipal mayors, and district representatives, party lines do not matter in the strategic appropriation of VILP earmarks in the constituencies. As opportunistic and futile political parties established on volatile ideological foundations are manufactured out of competing factions and cleavages, affiliated LCEs and Congress members are not entirely interested to coordinate with each other since loyalty and allegiance remain bleak and uncertain which has been further exacerbated by the deliberate party switching and fraudulent coalition building as particularistic interests are predominantly secured by the politicians. In the proliferation of national and local parties branched out from electoral



cleavages and factions and the creation of regional and provincial parties to effectively legitimize the dynastic rule of families, political parties viciously remain vehicles and apparatuses for the perpetuation and entrenchment of political power and economic control at the local level. Amid the incoherent government structures and mechanisms, local politicians generate coordination mechanisms and strategies where mutual trust and confidence can boldly thrive and deepen. Juxtaposing the kinship networks and party ties among legislators in Congress and chief executives in the LGUs, it can be concluded that local politicians are more inclined towards engendering dynastic persistence than strengthening alliances and coalitions due to the systemic impermanence of loyalty and allegiance among political parties. In sum, politicians do not count on party lines in formulating concrete plans and objectives in their constituencies exemplified through institutionalizing policies and programs which can accelerate inclusive development and increasing the standard of living in the localities and the appropriation of distributive benefits which can cater to the integral demands and interests of their constituents.

Evaluating the influence of the incumbency status of the legislators in allocating VILP earmarks in the localities, the empirical findings denote that reelection matters for Congress members and the concurrent incumbency in all major elective positions. The statistical results have clearly indicated that incumbent legislators generate fewer infrastructure earmarks in the constituencies. This empirically presents that Congress members do not strategically focus on attaining programmatic goals and initiatives. Rather, district representatives perennially engender patron-client ties exemplified through broadening dyadic networks and perpetuating rent-seeking acts at the local level. With unlimited access to national resources, legislators can obtain particularistic goals and interests through integrating complex webs and linkages and accumulating wealth and prosperity in the constituencies. Meanwhile, the simultaneous incumbency of provincial governors, district representatives, and municipal and city mayors deliver more



infrastructure programs and projects at the local level. Contrary to the hypothesis claiming that reelection status disincentivizes incumbent politicians to deliver particularistic benefits due to the circumvention of term limits exemplified through the practice of bench-warming among dynastic clans, the findings indicate that there is a greater propensity for incumbent LCEs and Congress members concurrently holding public office to optimally conduct instrumental government roles and functions. Like stationary bandits who genuinely attend to the salient needs and demands of their constituents, incumbent officials occupying key elective positions at the same time appropriate more VILP earmarks to spur enormous development outcomes and initiatives which can hasten modernization and advancement in the localities.

Linking the effect of the competitiveness of the electoral races with the allocation of local infrastructure programs and projects, the empirical results show that the degree of electoral competition has not influenced the targeted delivery of infrastructure earmarks in the localities. Diverging from the hypothesis indicating that the rise in the effective number of candidates integrally motivates incumbent politicians to appropriate particularistic benefits, the statistical findings do not establish correlation. While political competition integrally remains an empirical indicator in distributing public goods and resources, the results clearly demonstrate that the extent of electoral competition cannot elucidate the number of VILP earmarks allotted in the constituencies.

Assessing the impact of poverty incidence on the appropriation of infrastructure programs and projects at the local level, the empirical findings indicate that constituencies with lower incidence rates incur greater particularistic earmarks. Departing from the hypothesis postulating that localities with greater poverty incidence generate more VILP allocations to stimulate local development which can curb persisting socioeconomic conditions, more affluent constituencies receive greater distributive



benefits since well-off municipalities and cities can smoothly accelerate progress and development in a short period of time. Moreover, urban and prosperous areas constitute a greater number of votes in the elections which can further incentivize chief executives in the LGUs and legislators in Congress to provide distributive earmarks in wealthy localities. As local politicians claim the credit for the delivery of targeted goods and services at the grassroots level, it becomes optimally effective for Congress members and LCEs to prioritize rapid advancement and innovation in developed constituencies in securing particularistic interests and reaping electoral success. However, the wide socioeconomic gap in the countryside perennially exacerbates due to the inherent lack of foresight and anticipation in targeting development outcomes amid the pressing concerns and urgent needs of the constituents. Rather than promoting extensive development initiatives in constituencies with higher poverty incidence, politicians definitely possess ulterior intentions and motives through eliciting more infrastructure earmarks in better-off localities where there is a greater electoral investment. Thus, the entrenched issues and problems in poverty and underdevelopment remain vibrant and consequential across the entire country.

## Conclusion

Examining the coordination patterns and schemes employed by LCEs and Congress members in the targeted delivery of infrastructure earmarks in the constituencies, the study finds empirical support for the notion that kinship ties persist as the compelling determinant when and how local politicians actively coordinate in the allocation of particularistic benefits. As formal state institutions and processes have systemically become nominal and flawed, politicians search for other coordination mechanisms where they can effectively perform duties and functions in holding public office. In the perennial absence of nominal political parties exacerbated by the proliferation of local factions and





cleavages, politicians strongly cling on kinship ties in accommodating the interests and demands of their constituents which can generate electoral support.

A nuanced evaluation on how strategic kinship combinations affect the appropriation of infrastructure programs and projects empirically indicates the concurrent occupation of two of the three key elective positions secure more VILP allocations as ruling families are integrally motivated to appropriate targeted goods and resources since electoral supremacy remains decisively threatened with an unoccupied government position at the local level. Meanwhile, there are fewer infrastructure appropriations in localities where the dynastic clans have simultaneously occupied all three fundamental government positions. Securing completely the gubernatorial, congressional, and mayoral seats in the constituencies, political families have legitimately cemented unmatched authority and influence which disincentivizes them from comprehensively addressing the needs and demands of their constituents as patron-client networks and kinship rule are perennially cultivated and entrenched in engendering state capture. Remarkably, the dynastic combination of gubernatorial and congressional positions generates fewer VILP earmarks as the unprecedented access to national resources encourages ruling clans to rely on clientelism and rent-seeking in diversifying political authority into economic superiority and dominance at the local level. In a nutshell, political dynasties can become roving or stationary bandits (Olsson, 1993; Solon, Fabella, & Capuno, 2009). On the one hand, dynastic clans in localities where only two of the three essential government positions are concurrently held efficiently perform like stationary bandits exemplified through the effective implementation and execution of government roles and responsibilities. On the other hand, political families in constituencies where the congressional and gubernatorial seats are simultaneously occupied or all the three key elective positions are concurrently held viciously conduct official duties and tasks as roving bandits exemplified through the plunder of state resources and the perpetuation of armed violence at the grassroots level.



Appraising the dynastic coordination engendered by the provincial governors, district representatives, and municipal and city mayors in the allocation of infrastructure programs and projects at the local level, this study provides empirical validation on the persistence of kinship ties in Philippine politics. Amid the untenable and flawed state institutions and mechanisms, strongmen and local bosses have systemically perpetuated dynastic rule at the provincial, city, and municipal levels. In the absence of legitimate political parties and the persistence of clientelist networks, kinship associations have engendered state capture through consolidating unparalleled power and influence in the polities. Hence, strengthening institutions and processes can pave the way for the restructuring of the political system which has perennially hindered substantive progress and development in the Philippines. Rather than abruptly removing political dynasties, it is important to generate key structural reforms in the government exemplified through the rapid institutionalization of political parties, the complete abolition of the party-list system, and the drastic overhaul of the electoral structures and processes. As dynastic clans legitimately remain as the operational political association which implements policies and regulations and delivers particularistic goods and services and targeted programs and projects at the grassroots level, the eventual abolition of political dynasties should coincide with the establishment of genuine and stable structures and mechanisms which can adequately perform fundamental government roles and functions.

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## Appendix

**Table 1**

*Summary Statistics*

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
VILP	1633	22.63442	35.13992	0	606
Dynastic Ties between Mayor and Congress Member	1633	0.0667483	0.2496621	0	1
Dynastic Ties between Mayor and Governor	1633	0.072872	0.2600059	0	1
Dynastic Ties between Congress Member and Governor	1633	0.2584201	0.4379002	0	1
Dynastic Ties among Mayor, Congress Member, and Governor	1633	0.028169	0.1655062	0	1





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Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Party Affiliation between Mayor and Congress Member	1633	0.4972443	0.5001456	0	1
Party Affiliation between Mayor and Governor	1633	0.4984691	0.5001508	0	1
Party Affiliation between Congress Member and Governor	1633	0.4268218	0.4947675	0	1
Party Affiliation among Mayor, Congress Member, and Governor	1633	0.2841396	0.4511418	0	1
Incumbency of Mayor	1633	0.7428047	0.4372219	0	1

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Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Incumbency of Congress Member	1633	0.8236375	0.3812451	0	1
Incumbency of Governor	1633	0.8242498	0.380724	0	1
Incumbency among Mayor, Congress Member, and Governor	1633	0.5101041	0.500051	0	1
Mayoral Electoral Competition	1633	1.87043	0.5849376	1	6.125626
Congressional Electoral Competition	1633	1.73325	0.4806756	1	4.883575
Gubernatorial Electoral Competition	1633	1.866627	0.664056	1	4.689674
Poverty Incidence	1633	0.3002835	0.1764125	0.003	0.848

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**Table 2***Variable Definitions*

Variable	Definition
Various Infrastructure and Local Projects (VILP)	Number of infrastructure programs and projects in each locality
Dynastic Ties between Mayor and Congress Member	1 = if the mayor and congress member are related to each other; 0 = otherwise
Dynastic Ties between Mayor and Governor	1 = if the mayor and governor are related to each other; 0 = otherwise
Dynastic Ties between Congress Member and Governor	1 = if the congress member and governor are related to each other; 0 = otherwise
Dynastic Ties among Mayor, Congress Member, and Governor	1 = if the mayor, congress member, and governor are related to each other; 0 = otherwise
Party Affiliation between Mayor and Congress Member	1 = if the mayor and congress belong to the same political party; 0 = otherwise
Party Affiliation between Mayor and Governor	1 = if the mayor and governor belong to the same political party; 0 = otherwise
Party Affiliation between Congress Member and Governor	1 = if the congress member and governor belong to the same political party; 0 = otherwise
Party Affiliation among Mayor, Congress Member, and Governor	1 = if the mayor, congress member, and governor belong to the same political party; 0 = otherwise
Incumbency of Mayor	1 = if the mayor is an incumbent; 0 = otherwise



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Variable	Definition
Incumbency of Congress Member	1 = if the congress member is an incumbent; 0 = otherwise
Incumbency of Governor	1 = if the governor is an incumbent; 0 = otherwise
Incumbency among Mayor, Congress Member, and Governor	1 = if the mayor, congress member, and governor are all incumbents; 0 = otherwise
Mayoral Electoral Competition	Effective number of mayoral candidates (i.e. based on Laakso & Taagepera, 1979)
Congressional Electoral Competition	Effective number of congressional candidates (i.e. based on Laakso & Taagepera, 1979)
Gubernatorial Electoral Competition	Effective number of gubernatorial candidates (i.e. based on Laakso & Taagepera, 1979)
Poverty Incidence	Proportion of the Small Area Estimates of Poverty (SAE) in every locality

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**Table 3***Correlates of Various Infrastructure and Local Projects*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	VILP	VILP	VILP	VILP	VILP
Dynastic Ties between Mayor and Congress Member	0.567*** (5.03)	0.579*** (5.04)	0.610*** (5.29)	0.624*** (5.44)	0.458*** (4.72)
Dynastic Ties between Mayor and Governor	1.408*** (8.63)	1.436*** (8.73)	1.450*** (8.40)	1.422*** (9.31)	1.104*** (7.39)
Dynastic Ties between Congress Member and Governor	-0.412*** (-7.15)	-0.399*** (-6.97)	-0.356*** (-6.59)	-0.351*** (-6.33)	-0.270*** (-5.26)
Dynastic Ties among Mayor, Congress Member, and Governor	-1.035*** (-4.34)	-1.076*** (-4.57)	-1.123*** (-4.74)	-1.084*** (-4.84)	-0.792*** (-3.78)
Party Affiliation between Mayor and Congress		-0.141 (-1.46)	-0.130 (-1.53)	-0.104 (-1.32)	-0.0306 (-0.43)



Member				
Party	-0.156	-0.165	-0.130	-0.0308
Affiliation				
between	(-1.60)	(-1.90)	(-1.56)	(-0.42)
Mayor and				
Governor				
Party	-0.231*	-0.244**	-0.214*	-0.0564
Affiliation				
between	(-2.38)	(-2.86)	(-2.57)	(-0.75)
Congress				
Member and				
Governor				
Party	0.428*	0.427**	0.359*	0.174
Affiliation				
among	(2.28)	(2.61)	(2.33)	(1.27)
Mayor,				
Congress				
Member, and				
Governor				
Incumbency		-0.250*	-0.210	-0.207*
of				
Mayor		(-2.42)	(-1.94)	(-2.16)
Incumbency		-0.468***	-0.519***	-0.449***
of				
Congress		(-3.74)	(-4.41)	(-4.38)
Member				
Incumbency		-0.117	-0.0525	0.00358
of				
Governor		(-1.01)	(-0.46)	(0.04)



Incumbency of Mayor, Congress Member, and Governor		0.289*	0.272*	0.279*	
		(2.23)	(2.15)	(2.45)	
Mayoral Electoral Competition			0.0643 (1.59)	-0.0145 (-0.37)	
Congressional Electoral Competition			-0.173** (-2.83)	-0.0816 (-1.43)	
Gubernatorial Electoral Competition			0.0996 (1.89)	0.102* (2.15)	
Poverty Incidence				-1.604*** (-12.39)	
Constant	3.014*** (87.19)	3.131*** (35.36)	3.634*** (16.67)	3.567*** (14.59)	3.792*** (17.25)
Inalpha Constant	-0.477*** (-8.93)	-0.484*** (-9.51)	-0.512*** (-11.11)	-0.525*** (-12.08)	-0.638*** (-14.99)
<i>N</i>	1633	1633	1633	1633	1633
<i>AIC</i>	13054.3	13050.0	13010.5	12995.9	12815.9
<i>BIC</i>	13086.7	13104.0	13086.1	13087.6	12913.0

*t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$



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## Buddhism and Communism: The Case for Synergy in Modern Vietnam

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### Introduction

Religion in contemporary Vietnam is no longer orchestrated by the State, which is against the Communism ideology in an atheist community. Since Ho Chi Minh was in power to lead the revolution in Vietnam, he delivered an authentic strategy on the nation's faiths and beliefs to appeal for significant support from various social groups. The policy differed from the Church-State Separatism Policy by Chairman Mao in the neighborhood State that was critiqued by Welch (1961) stating that the basic policy of the regime is not to revise Buddhism and transform it into Marxism-Leninism but to let it die. In comparison, a local Buddhism, intertwined with the Vietnamese popular faith, has been mobilized to contribute to national communal solidarity to sustain the national independence and then enhance economic liberalization. In the specific collective society, Buddhism has not been challenging the political power but plays an important role to empower Communism. The result that such a dialogue exists accounts for a long historical background besides the non-orthodox religious belief among most Vietnamese citizens.

Vietnamese Buddhism has vigorous involvement in humanitarian work. The religious group has built fundamental trust in local society from generations to generations. In order to propagate the political message, the Communists established a relation with the Buddhism Association, step by step taking advantage of religious channels to conjure up nationalism in the public. In addition, the Buddhist philanthropy has vigorous involvement in humanitarian work. Religious group has built fundamental trust in local society, from generations to generations. Thus, the study established the research question and



research framework as:

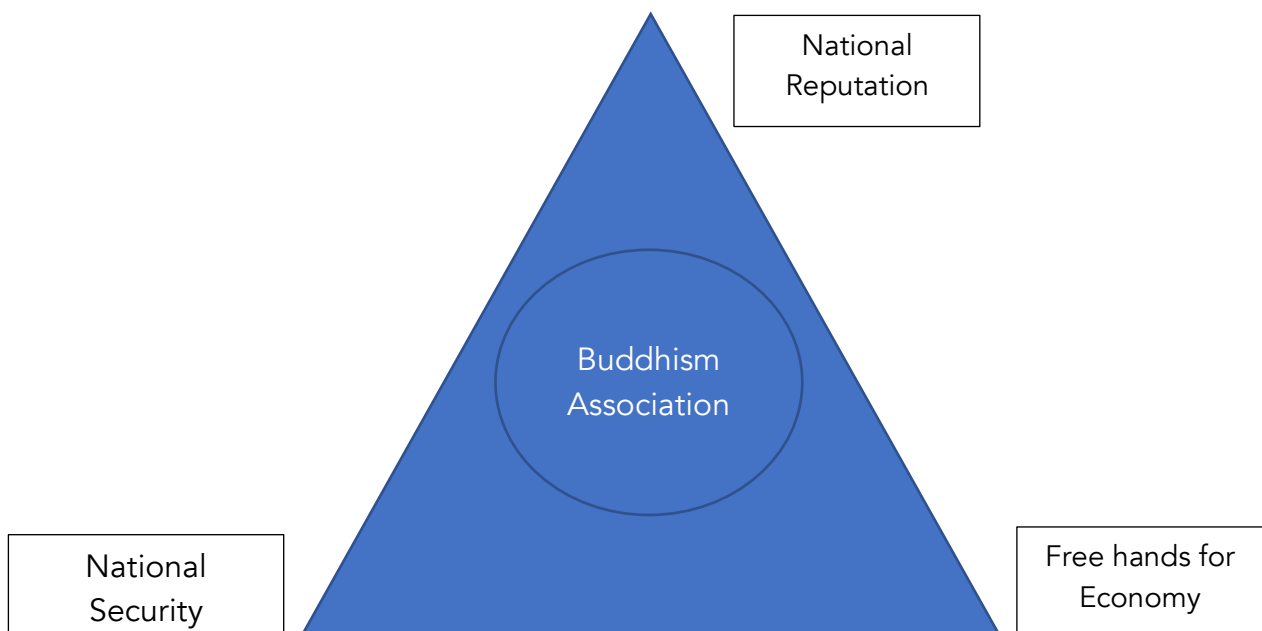
## Research question

How does Buddhism in Vietnam flourish in an atheist Communist regime?

H1: The central government uses the Buddhism Association as a communication tool to building trust in the public and among other countries in the regions- National Reputation.

H2: Buddhist Temples and the monks, revolution supported the unification process- National Security.

The free hands for economy in the "Doi Moi" period, therefore a transformative dialog was built between the State and the Buddhism Association to highlight national solitary and foreign aid under a faith-based enterprise.





## Literature Review

**Mahayana Buddhism Association**, around 700 years ago, in the Tran Dynasty, the King gave up royal life to establish a new Branch of Buddhism. His name is Tran Nhan Tong. Nearly 100 years ago, when the French colonized Vietnam, hundreds of monks and nuns removed their attires and joined the Communist Party to fight for the independence of the country. Around 50 years ago, a Buddhist monk immolated himself on a busy road of Saigon. He protested not only against the persecution of Buddhism by South Vietnam but also protested for the unification of the Country. Several Buddhism monks inspired by Quang Duc's illustration also immolated themselves. Around four years ago, China threatened Vietnam in Truong Sa-South China Sea; it placed an oil exploration system and built artificial islands. Immediately, several monks and nuns voluntary registered to build pagodas and stay on the Island. The national-religious solitary spirit has not faded away by the cause of time.

The prime location with many mineral resources made the country a targeting pie of the "big power". The historical-religious coincident involved with the war against enemy invasion. Buddhism teaching was famous in Vietnam around 2000 years ago. The Buddhist practitioners were respected in the monarch system, protected through the period of colonization. In 1975, having been influenced by the wave of the Soviet Union and China, the religion suffered from a light change but soon became renaissance. For the first time in history, a successful unification of Buddhism across Vietnam was established, named, Vietnam Buddhism Association. In a short time after the foundation of the only Buddhism organization in Vietnam, the Government even promoted this religion.

Tocqueville inspired the important connection of the group that "voluntarily give away" and the political system where civilians can get involved in the policymaking process.



None of the words relate to religion, albeit they have a similar aim: pursuing freedom. Buddhism is considered as one of the most peaceful religions (lack of internal and external conflicts). The practice of meditation helps people relieve their stress and go back to their original mind and soul. In some Buddhism branches, monks and nuns are advised to practice in the mountain or places where they are isolated from society. Thus it is easier to be relieved from material society. In contradiction, “for the Burmese of today, tired and demoralized by three decades of military rule, Buddhism plays a crucial role.” In the modern state, Buddhism is not only diverse but also engaged with social, political matters.

In Myanmar, Theravada Buddhism is the majority with a total monastic population, estimated at 8%, whereas Buddhists are around 87% of the population. The temple is called *Sangha* “feature of a religion that is based to a large degree on the notion of mendicancy as the principal way to salvation.” Burmese monks, instead of having a modest life in *Sangha*, become action groups in political and social issues. YMA (Young Monks Association) “was initially compromised almost solely as Sudhamma clergy specifically opposed to forces perceived as threats to Buddhism, such as colonialism and Communism,”(Bruce, 2003). The monks also became the cultural police, setting standards of dress; the monks became the “monastic spokesman for the army point of view.” Throughout history, the Buddhism style in the country can be explained as “politicized *Sangha*” or the “power of overturning the begging bowl,” and then militant Buddhism.

In comparison, in Taiwan, although Buddhism is one of the major religions, the Taiwanese Buddhist organization has been “fellow travelers” of the government under authoritarian rule. They also “avoid lending support to non-governmental organizations in the process of democratization and prefer cooperation with state officials.” They may



lack enthusiasm in a political revolution; instead, they can take advantage of the legal structure prevailing show Martial Law in Taiwan. The establishment of Foguangshan and Tzu-chi may show the fundamental role of the Buddhist institution in the society. They do not work directly with a political party but quietly exercise their influence “through informal channels within existing institutions in line with their conservative theology.” How the Buddhism organization in Taiwan adapted can “appear content with the current pre-market policies pursued by current governments, which implement most of the developmental state models” (Andre,2001).

In summary, the literatures showed how Buddhism performs under different rulers. Vietnamese monks are neither aggressive as Myanmar monastics nor reluctant to become involved in a political movement. The unique path that the Vietnamese adopted literally supports them to reach an “appropriate” relationship between religion and the State. In return, government policies in the development of Vietnam, even though under the Communist Party, are equally liberal as the legal system in Taiwan.

## **Method**

The historical analysis is based on the Religious Policies changed when the State Authority changed in a different period.



Periods	Institutional and model constitutional state	State Authority (Power)	Religious Policies	National Strategy
1946-1959	Democratic Republic of Vietnam	The people's government, equilibrium in race, ethnicity, genders, social classes and religious beliefs	Promoting Religious Freedom, communal solitary between religious and non-religious people, anti-discrimination among different religions.	National Reputation
1959-1979	Democratic Republic of Vietnam- the people's Democratic State	Communist ideology, the people's government, led by the working class	State does not impose any religions; citizens have the right to be religious or atheist.	National Security
1980-1991	Vietnam- State of Proletariat	The State Administrations stand for the right of the civilians.	State does not impose any religions; citizens have the right to be religious or atheist.	National Reputation and Free hands on Economics

***The Dawn of the Communist Era (1946-1959)- Building National Reputation***

The stages will be explained regarding to three historical events, followed by the Second Indochina War from 1946 to 1954, in which Vietnam was rescued by China and the Soviet Union. The French soldiers in Indochina received financial aid from the United States.



Despite having difficulties in sustaining the peace and stability in the domestic affairs, Ho Chi Minh insisted on the religious freedom policy for the citizens. He offered equal positions in the government assembly for the religious and non-religious officers.

In the next 20 years, the Buddhism crisis attracted international media attention on the religious issue in Saigon according to the immolation of Venerable ThichQuangDuc. The Southern government since then had conducted massacre towards the monks and nuns in Hue- the most traditional Buddhism city and other Southern provinces. The violent act aimed not only to regulate the Buddhist devotees but also to threaten the Communist members. The Communist in North Vietnam was blamed as assisting the crisis. In an assumption, the religious restriction in South Vietnam concluded a symbiotic connection for the Communist members and Buddhism devotees to arrange a coup on the discriminated government.

The national building period (from 1975 to 1990) was still under the pressure of the Cold War. Vietnam, on behalf of the Soviet Union, sent soldiers to Cambodia, known as the campaign of counter-invasion at Vietnam's national South-West border. The challenges of supporting neighbor country as Cambodia, dealing with Sino-Vietnamese border wars (1979), forced the government to appeal domestic support. re

**The first Religious Constitution-** In 1945, the Japanese, French, Chinese and British soldiers were in Vietnam. In March, the Japanese arranged a battle and rounded up the French Colonial Government without any difficulties. Ho Chi Minh noted that the French imperialist wolf was finally devoured by the Japanese fascist hyena. In the international battlefield, World War II was going to end. The armed forces of Communism Party named Viet minh (founded in 1932) were well prepared to wait for the right moment. As planned, when the Japanese surrendered after World War II, Viet Minh triggered the August



Revolution. They occupied the Central Administration Hall in Ha Noi, claimed as the Provisional Government.

On September 2nd, Chairman Ho Chi Minh read an independent speech in Ba Dinh Square. He declared the sovereignty of the new state, named as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. While the Japanese soldiers left, the Chinese soldiers head back to back up their civil war. French and British soldiers remained in the country on the Independence Day. Immediately after the victory day, the Provisional Government faced several challenges. The Japanese starved around two million people. French colonials with their "stupid strategy" made approximately 60% of the population unable to read and write. The government treasury was empty. Ho Chi Minh figured that the three main tasks for the country were to fight the hunger crisis, to enhance education, and to keep alarming foreign invaders.

The religious issue was placed in the central tenet of the State. The liberal attitude towards religion was based on two reasons. Firstly, Roman Catholics and Buddhist were the majority in the population. Almost all the priests and monks were well educated that studied in either Chinese or French schools. They seemed as the main resources to evolve the education level for the civilians. Secondly, religious solitary was one of the strongest weapon to prevent foreign intervention. As a result, the state instituted that "Religious freedom is the most important target of religious freedom policy is to protect the equal right of non-religious and religious groups. The protection also extends to the equilibrium among religions, especially Buddhism, Confucius, and Roman-Catholics." (Vietnam Constitution, 1946)



The Constitution was not only stated on paper; the Vietnam Government also practiced it in the administration system. For example, the former Minister of Ministry of National Economy was Roman Catholic- Minister Nguyen Manh Ha (1913-1992). The monk Thich Mat The was the National Assembly member. The priest Nguyen B'a Truc was vice National Assembly Secretary. By having a tolerant manner, Ho Chi Minh was considered as the most innovative leader in the world at that time.

The French Government attempted to restore colonialism, backed up by the British. After battles and retreats in Saigon, Hue, Ho Chi Minh soon realized the Military and the new government were devastated after continuous fights. On March 6th, he proposed to sign an agreement with the French representative by which the Democratic Republic of Vietnam might become a "free state" in the French Union. In return, France can keep its soldiers and progressively withdraw in the next five years. The deal had not been successful; Ho Chi Minh decided to go to Paris to negotiate with the Central Government. The French lieutenants in Indochina were rather aggressive. He suspected that Paris politicians would try to leave Vietnam. Hence, on November 20, the Haidpg lopincidents caused massive Vietnamese casualties. On December 19, 1946, the Viet Minh attacked the French base, declaring the first Indochina War.

Throughout 1950, the Chinese Communist Party won the Civil War. They formally recognized the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, offering large supplies of weapons and logistic assistance. In addition, the Soviet Union also forced Britain and America to recognize the Associate State of Vietnam. The phenomenal support from the two great Communism states brought a menace to the opposite army. The French requested aid from the US to continue the war. Truman signed about \$15 million to support the French. The Americans officially started to get involved with Indochina War.





### *The National Unification (1959-1979) – Sustaining National Security*

**The Challenge- Buddhism Restriction** This period was one of the most complex periods for the religious activities in Vietnam. The South government had a negative reputation on religious discrimination. The Bconsequence became anxious. The Buddhism crisis in 1963 attracted international attention, thus contributing to a breakdown of the dictatorship in South Viet Nam. The North in the meantime failed to transform itsomy situation; however, the government managed to work with Buddhist leaders to establish the Buddhism Association in around 10 Northern provinces. As can be seen, in the historical national context, secular Communism asserted a symbiotic object with religious groups, so they can make a revolution to against Ngo Dinh Diem (South President).

Ngo Dinh Diem was who had been appointed as the Prime Minister of South Vietnam is a Catholic. He was favored by the US government, with the promise of establishing a strong anticommunist government. Between 1955 and 1961, the USA poured \$1.65 billion into South Vietnam, making that country the fifth largest recipient of US aid at the time (Robert and Olson, 1996).

Wesley Fishel, a political scientist at Michigan State University (MSU), led the MSU team to assist President Ngo Dinh Diem with training and advice on matters of refugee resettlement, chilpce education, and police administration (Latham, 2006). The expert demonstrated to an American audience about an optimistic vision of South Vietnam modernization. He elided the increasing problems of Diem's corruption and dictatorial regime. Incidentally Vietnam was placed in the midst of a nation-building struggle. Latham (2006) expressed that gt society was a product of political miscegenation: one with a traditional base, influenced by Confucian, Taoism and Buddhism ideas and values, topped by the weighty superstructure of Western organizations, principals, laws, and techniques. Indeed, if the government leaders were more objective to the mass



psychology of the public sphere, they would find a way to calm the negative feeling on Buddhism and other traditional religions. However, Diem and his family published legal policies, reinforcing the citizen's feeling that the government was building a Catholic State. For instance, the Morality Law, banned gambling, dancing, beauty contests, martial art competitions and cockfighting. Nguyen (2012) stated in relation while working for the South Vietnam government that Catholicism was a condition to granting some favors- a job, a new position, and promotion. And a small number of priests in each area were powerful. Their requests for some kind of local and military material such as lumber, metal sheets or cement, and military trucks, were always approved

Buddhist monks, meanwhile, never dreamed of receiving such favors. He added that the SaiGon (Ho Chi Minh City after 1975) government did not recognize any of the Buddhist factions as the official church representing the majority of Vietnamese Buddhists but only as groups of Buddhists under the status of the nonprofit association.

**Buddhist group support-** In 1955, the Government launched the Land Reform Program, which was considered as a favor of the Communist Party. Despite the fact that the Revolution affected the government reputation among the public and the elites, the monastic members insisted on their political vision. This is due to the fact that the government endeavored to maintain the properties that belonged to the sacred places. The target of the Land Reform was to share agriculture products, and living spaces among people with different social classes within the country. Many party leaders were not familiar with the paper work in the office. They struggled to establish how governmental management system. Consequently, after two years, Ho Chi Minh publicly admitted the government false. The public trust on the new government was steeped down but Chairman Ho gained that religious followers. For instance, in the Land Reform Program, when the government collected agriculture land to share for the farmers, temples or



church land were excluded. To guarantee a material life for the monastic, the government reduced tax on temple and church property.

**Buddhism Anger in the South-** The rise of a problematic government was a must in Hue (the ancient capital of Vietnam) on Buddha's Buddhist striped flag flew illegally. The movement started to condemn Diem and his presidents. In BinhDinh and other coastal provinces, Buddhist protests continuously exposed. South Vietnam believed the Communists were behind the scene. For illustration, all the protests were well planned. English-language placards were displayed. The leaflets and messages in English were published and handed out on the street. The international press raised significant concern over the events.

The reaction of the Diem administration; he asked for extra powers to expand the army. He acted aggressively in killing and arresting monks and nuns. In Hue, around 400 monks were backed up by thousands of civilians to resist military Special Forces for about 8 hours. South Vietnam pointed out that its power authoritarian was being threatened. Buddhism protests raged quickly and uncontrollably. The execution session from Diem had a strong negative effect on his own officers and enlisted men in terms of morality. They were soldiers who somehow still worshipped the Buddha privately. Rumors and fears accumulated in the South soldiers. The Buddhism fire kept escalating all over the State. Local government turned not to obey the central order. The military *junta* made a ridiculous mistake by releasing hundreds of captured Communist intelligence agents operating in the South. They believed that it was an exchange to calm the Buddhist Anger. In some extension, it was also the signal of uncooperative action from the military. The Diem Government was weakening. The anti-Diem protests started from his administrators. Many in the military silently prepared for the coup. His relation with the



U.S government also experienced a critical period. Washington attempted to suspend aid to SaiGon.

The Gulf of Tonkin crisis in August 1964 created a moral season to deploy 50,000 soldAam. The Americans were not alone. The British made their clear opposition to the war, whereas the UAS allies such as Australia, Korea, Thailand, New Zealand, Philippines and Spain also contributed soldiers. The number of “foreigners” (over half a million servicemen) transformed Saigon and other coastal provinces rapidly. Leisure life was invested along with military fund. Several nightclubs and luxury hotels were built. Despite the fact that the new President of Vietnam (Nguyen Cao Ky) was also Roman Catholic, he had no intention attention of deducting the leisure services. Unfortunately, they have not imagined that events and parties turned out to be faing attedacks for the Communists. Religious societies in South Vietnam were diverse in this period. The Roman Catholic people who fled from the North were abandoned when the Diem Government colla it well plannedpsed. They were rk in rubber tree fields. Gradually, their opposition with Communism Party ceased. They became potential supporters for the upcoming offensive on the American Embassy in SaiGon.

### ***The Doi Moi period (1980-1991) National Reputation and Free Hands on Economics***

Lebow (1996) stated that when there’s a clash of preferences among parties, the bargain is a search for advantage through accommodation. In another discussion, Fisher&Ury (1981) outlined strategies by each party so the negotiation may generate “options for mutual gain.” David Bohm (1985) claims that “if it’s necessary to share meaning and share truth, then we have to do something different.” The difference that the modern policy makers are doing relates to a revolution in rituals and practices in Vietnam. The socialist state, in return, has had to accommodate the values and interests that individuals and localities bring into rituals. The state entered into a “transformative dialogue” with its



antecedents, thereby leading to new rituals that reflect the interests of paying respect to the martyrs, their families and the Buddhist temples. as Hy Van Luong stated “dialogic restructuring of rituals;” which shows changes in the ritual sphere to have been shaped in an ongoing dialogue e between state and social interests (Luong, 1994).

Domestically, the South office personnel who were evacuated by the U.S. in 1976 took advantage of Vietnam’s weakness period. By 1987, there were a number of organizations established with the aim of overthrowing the Communism government. ghey propagated the public and launched an arms struggle to pressure the government. In many countries such as France, Australia, and Canada, Vietnamese shops and restaurants flew the South Vietnamese flag to attract media attention. The cost to maintain soldiers in Cambodia exaggerated the socialist economy. The pressure on the middle and lower class tended to increase as farmers’ (80% of the population) demands to reform the cooperative system grew, and, on the other side, the Center’s procurement requirement also rose. Luong (2003) convincedAln ougapoliticians in particular. Fearing the loss of their peasant support base, they became vocal spokespersons for change within the party and government apparatus. They found allies among the generation who had earlier thought that collectivization in the north had gone too far.

The political instability, crippled economy, and failure in foreign affairs led the government to practice a macro renovation (DoiMoi). Vietnam wa to change isnto a market economy. The fundamental turn was similar to thporestroikatin Russia. Policy makers needed to collect manpower from diverse social cadres. Religion was used to gathgr the public spheres. The Vietnamese government in the late 1980s was highly committed with the Buddhism Association to gain trust from the public. A large amount of government fund was sent for reconstructing and maintaining several temples and pagodas across the country. Churches and the Roman Catholic citizens’ lives were also



innovated. Those outstanding religious leaders were allowed to join the government system and contribute their opinion on culture and society issues.

Another moral reason for the insurgence in the 1980's was the millions of soldiers (heroes) that the country lost in the war. Many bodies were lost and buried at the front and never brought home. Those fortunate enough to find the remains (and many did not) carried these home to have final funeral rites. In case the body was found by the State, it was placed e public site to wait for the family to claim it.y (2003) commented that it should be well noted that official support for the commemoration of the war dead was confined. The government took responsibility to arrange a funeral or it was the family's choice to install the spirit to the Buddhism temples.

As a result, the Government dedicated the War Veteran Day on July 27th to encourage the martyr's family members to go for worshipping. Furthermore, several religious ceremonies were conducted (mostly Buddhism and Roman Catholic) sevy al those who passed away unde rver and se The State also devised special policies to assist the family. This has been the traditional morality attitude that was carried after the August Revolution succeeded (1945). The demand for religion in Vietnam grew and was seized from this morality action. In the development period, the State spends more expenses to search for the missing martyr's body. Taylor (1983) defined tha theme rdunning throughout Vietnamese religious history is the worship of historical heroes, particularly those who played significant roles in protecting Vietnam from foreign invaders.

## Discussion

The Communist Party step by step extends the liberty in joining different religious groups for Vietnamese citizens. The historical engagement, challenges, and support between the theological power and the political power built a degr trust in the relationship. Buddhism



highlights a strongly local charismatic in different regions; Vietnam is not an exception, the religion committed with Vietnamese religious-cultural habitants. Taylor (2007) confirmed "it's all about the history." According to the historical change, the Communist and the Religious find mutual benefit in working together. To some extent, Ibhpuers bargain with others to designate their mundane aim on national independence and economics. In the next chapter, the study alternates the lens on religious-cultural habits of Vietnamese civilians demonsntnnormousg the long-term humanistic work of Buddhism. The societal flourishing on Buddhism engagement helped the group to thrive through different historical events or political forces. The "unique religious identity" that Soucy (2012) commented on Vietnamese Buddhism also transforms the quiet religion to an active Social Mediator. As a result, mutual revenues are created between the single-party state and faith-based groups to achieve three main targets: retaining the national security (peace), assisting economic development, and preserving social morality.

Vietnam conceded international praise on solving the religious freedom issue in comparison with other countries in the region. The Communist grip is gradually replaced by an enthusiastic manner to join the development world. King (2014) conducted an interviety in the U.S. State Department, stating that they think things are slowly getting better in Vietnam and that they are already much better than they are in China. The comparison between China and Vietnam seems irrelevant, though both states are regulated under the Communist Party. The barriers that the big brother, neighbors, and intruders had are different in a vulnerable country as Vietnam. The preferred resemblance is dedicated to Cuba. The population of the Roman Catholics in the country is that of the majority, similar to the number of Buddhists in Vietnam. Studying both countries' situations, a theoretical framework on state and religion policy is potentially revealed.



In 2016, the 12th National Congress revealed the Draft of Law on religion for the public channels. The ideology of “socialization” is step-by-step preceded by the government and practiced by the euphemism of privatization. Vu, Bailey & Chen commented that “religious freedom” is largely seen as a political issue rather than a “human rights” one. As a result, the Vietnamese and Lao governments have strongly restricted the ability of citizens to engage in religious practice. The harsh statement can be considered as the opposite view on the soar of society networks to engage in advocacy. The situation in the country nevertheless indicates that individual religious freedom is respected by the local government. Religious organizations are absorbing better government administration services. The contemporary affinity of Buddhism and the Communist state is the outcome of a long negotiating process. Soon, the enquiry remains for legal channels to resolve religious-based conflicts that may not be solved by dialogue.

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