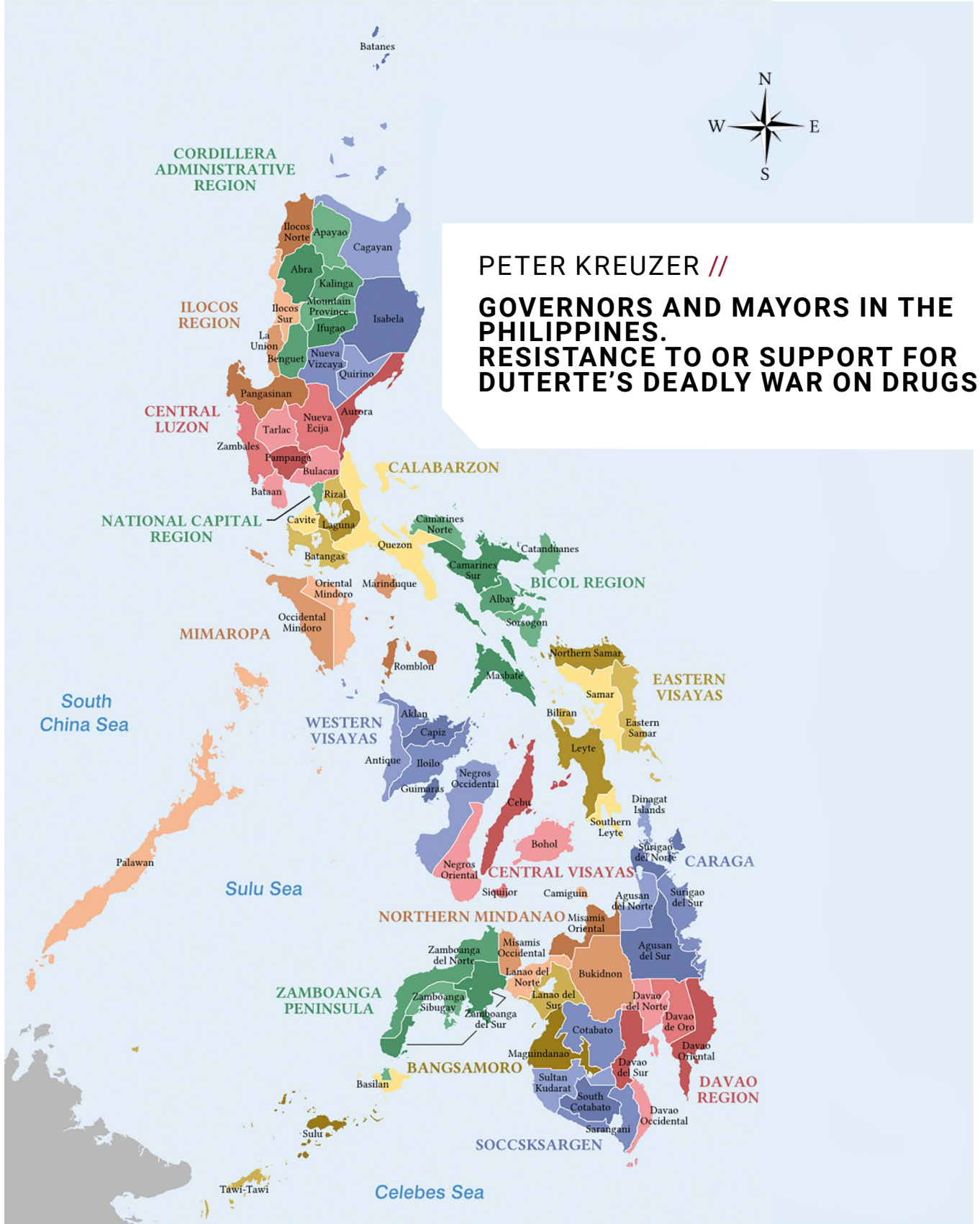


# PRIF REPORT

PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE FRANKFURT / LEIBNIZ-INSTITUT HESSISCHE STIFTUNG FRIEDENS- UND KONFLIKTFORSCHUNG



PETER KREUZER //

**GOVERNORS AND MAYORS IN THE PHILIPPINES. RESISTANCE TO OR SUPPORT FOR DUTERTE'S DEADLY WAR ON DRUGS**



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Labelled map of the Philippines.

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When Rodrigo Duterte took office as the President of the Philippines on June 30, 2016, his campaign focus on illegal drugs as a national security problem that necessitated an iron-fisted response became government policy. Duterte gave carte blanche to the Philippine National Police (PNP) to kill drug pushers and dealers at will as long as they could somehow claim to have been acting in self-defense. Thousands of suspects died at the hand of police officers and vigilantes who understood Duterte's rash rhetoric as an invitation to participate in a state-led, nationwide killing spree.

However, killings were not uniformly spread across the Philippines, but focused on highly urbanized regions and especially the National Capital Region (NCR) and the adjacent regions of Central Luzon and CALABARZON (regs. 3 and 4a) as well as the urbanized metropolises of the Visayas and Mindanao (Cebu and Davao). It was hardly noticed that there was not only huge variation between rural and urban environments, but also within regions consisting of otherwise fairly similar local government units (LGUs). This spatial as well as temporal variation of police use of deadly force within the urbanized core of the Philippines was accompanied by huge variation in the related phenomenon of vigilante killings.

These differences in local reaction to a central government policy militate against explanations of police violence centering on specifics or deficiencies of police organization, ideology, culture, or patterns of policing. Given that the Philippine National Police (PNP) is a national organization with uniform training, structure and policy of career advancement, uniformity would be expected rather than variation. Structural explanations also fall short, given that many of these urban LGUs are as similar as could be expected under real-world conditions.

In the Philippines, national politics are crucial as an explanation for the campaign in the first place: by fiat of the president. This report argues that local politics are crucial as an explanation for variations in local implementation of the campaign against illegal drugs.

The point of departure for the argument is the observance of variation in patterns of local governance in the field of citizen security that results in either 1) the development of local networks including the local branch of the PNP and thus in local ownership of security governance or 2) in the mere coexistence of local government institutions and the local branch of the PNP, and thus a security governance led and dominated by the local PNP.

The first type of local security governance strengthens local PNP commitment to local networks and solutions and establishes a horizontal group of task-oriented actors bound together by mutual trust and joint experience. This horizontal bonding and binding complements the otherwise exclusive vertical bond of the PNP branch to the center. It requires active LGU chief executives who make local citizen security governance part and parcel of their political agenda and bridge the formal institutional divide between the local PNP branch and local governmental, quasi-governmental, and non-governmental institutions that play various roles in local security governance. Successful establishment of such local security governance networks enhances local PNP resilience to central directives in times of conflict between local and central aims or strategies. The bonds established in these networks also provide the levers for local chief executives to commit the local PNP branch to local solu-

tions in times of externally induced crises and shocks. By utilizing previously established trust, LGU executives can, to a significant extent, counteract the escalatory top-down dynamics emanating from the national leadership.

The second type of local security governance enhances PNP bonding with and loyalty to the PNP hierarchy and minimizes its commitment to local actors. Here, a passive local political leadership largely avoids the politically unrewarding topic of crime control, leaving this to the local branch of the PNP. Lacking established task-oriented networks embedding the local branch of the PNP, the local PNP leadership acts as an unquestioning enforcer of orders and policy lines coming down through the organizational hierarchy.

The bulk of this report consists of a comparison of seven structurally fairly comparable LGUs, six of which are located in the northern half or directly north of the NCR and directly adjacent to each other (see map on cover). With Davao City, a seventh LGU is included, the metropolis of the Philippine South and for decades governed by the current president and now by his daughter Sara Duterte-Carpio. Because a fundamental characteristic of Philippine politics is that all politics is personal and familial, the individual chief executives are at the core of the analyses.

The analysis of local government reactions to Duterte's having given carte blanche powers to those carrying out the campaign showed a high level of activism of the leaders formerly active in citizen security governance. This was designed to strengthen the bonds of the PNP to the local security-related environment. In all three cases, police and vigilante killings rose only modestly during the initial year of Duterte's presidency, when central pressure was strongest.

By contrast, the four formerly passive chief executives gave prominence to symbols of political submission to the new administration and largely left the implementation of the national policies to the local branch of the PNP. This not only resulted in a huge spike of deadly police violence during the first year of the war on drugs. It also facilitated excessive levels of vigilantism that seem to have gone unchecked in these LGUs.

The result of this analysis is highly ambivalent.

The violence-inhibiting spin-off of local chief executives taking an activist stance on crime control is the upside of an otherwise often negative dynamic when local elites establish local fiefdoms that can be utilized to maximize their personal political control and economic interests. Given the prevalence of personality and family-focused politics controlled by the political elite and demanded by the vast majority of the electorate, the rule of law will, for the time being, continue to be narrowly confined to the rule of individuals. And given that surmounting the rule of persons is impossible for the time being, any hope of change relies on the emergence of a larger number of active political leaders exhibiting political visions for their constituents that go beyond expanding of personal and family power, authority and wealth.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In May 2016 Rodrigo Duterte was elected president of the Philippines on the promise to rid the country of illegal drugs in a three- to six-month period. From Duterte's first full day as president on July 1, 2016 to May 31, 2020, there were 5,722 persons killed by the police in the course of the ongoing campaign, according to official data from the Philippine National Police (PNP) (#RealNumbersPH 2020). Of these 2,144 (37.5%) died during the first six and a half months (Government of the Philippines 2017).

Given that the Philippine National Police is a national institution owing its loyalty to the president and with a fairly uniform organizational culture, a fairly uniform reaction to the *carte blanche* issued by the president legitimating the killing of suspects would be expected. Only structural differences between local government units (LGUs) should influence the intensity of the national war on drugs at the local level, such as for example differences in urbanization, poverty and inequality or differences in the magnitudes of drug-related as well as other forms of serious crime such as intentional homicide or robbery. However, in the Philippines, local reaction varied widely between LGUs that were fairly similar in many other respects.

This report focuses on variation between seven highly urbanized LGUs (five independent cities and two provinces), six of which are situated in the northern part of the National Capital Region (NCR = Metro Manila) or directly to the north of the NCR (see map on cover). They were chosen because they are similar in many respects, as similar as possible in a real-life setting in the Philippines.<sup>1</sup> Thus, if structural variables were of crucial explanatory value, broadly similar reactions to the president's instructions would be expected. However, local levels of deadly police *and* vigilante violence varied dramatically. Three LGUs (Valenzuela City, Pampanga province, Davao City) reacted only in a very muted way, whereas in the four others (Caloocan City, Manila City, Quezon City and Bulacan province) fatal police violence exploded, accompanied by high levels of vigilante killings.

This report provides a political explanation for these differences in police use of fatal force at the local level. It is argued that in the Philippines the role of local government and especially its chief executive should not be underestimated. While this argument might seem fairly obvious, it has largely escaped scientific scrutiny. If subnational politics can influence local police behavior for better or worse, it may be argued that police reform is bound to underperform or fail, as long as the dynamics emanating from this political environment are not considered.

The argument advanced here for the case of the Philippines is based on two salient points. First, there is a huge dependency of the local branches of the PNP on local government financing. Second, local chief executives at all subnational levels of politics wield significant disciplinary and operational control over the local PNP. Crucial for the actual relationship is how these opportunities for local intervention are utilized.

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1 See the online appendix for a comparative presentation of poverty rates, population growth and density, ratio of police officers to population, and levels of index crime (figures 5, 11; tables 3, 5). Download: [hsfk.de/Report0520-Appendix](https://hsfk.de/Report0520-Appendix)

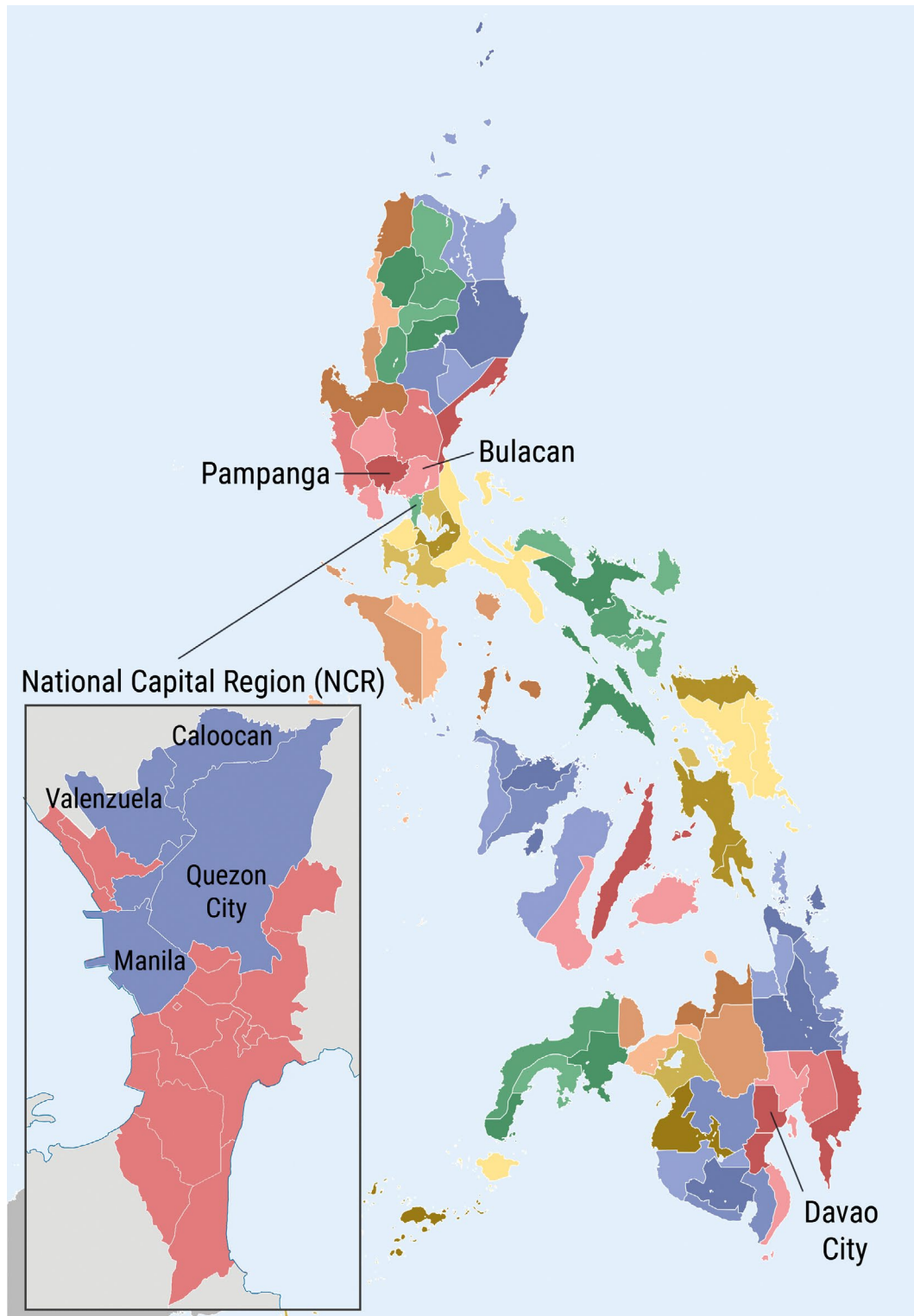


Fig. 1: Map of analyzed provinces and cities (Templates: Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://bit.ly/38PAZCP>, edited)

Here, the personality of the chief executive comes into play, as in the Philippines all political power and authority resides in the individuals who fill the chief executive positions. It is sufficient here to mention terms such as simply “boss,” a selection of case studies of “local politics in the Philippines” (Lacaba 1995) as well as “bossism,” a concept of elite capture of the Philippine state (Sidel 1999). Others link bosses to their families, speaking of the Philippines as “an Anarchy of Families” (McCoy 1994) leading to “power without virtue” (Azurin 2008), “booty capitalism” (Hutchcroft 1998), and an “anti-development state” (Bello 2005) or an “oligarchipelago” (Almeida 2012).

This report argues that, prior to Rodrigo Duterte winning the presidential election, local chief executives differed with respect to the salience of citizen security in their political agenda and the role of local government-based networks in the provision of citizen security. Two extremes, the active versus the passive local government chief executive can be distinguished:

Active chief executives make citizen security and crime control an important part of their political agenda and aim at local ownership of the local policies. These chief executives establish dense networks of actors, including the local branch of the PNP. These actors are tasked with various aspects of citizen security. Joint development of security policies, as well as joint or cooperative implementation aim at establishing local ownership. Local initiative and regular interaction can also bring about the inclusion of the local branch of the PNP into the group of state, quasi-state and non-state actors that share responsibility for local citizen-security governance.

City, provincial and municipal police directors are administratively subordinated to and expected to act as local representatives of the higher echelons of the police hierarchy. In LGUs with active chief executives, vertical bonds and accountability of police directors may be counteracted by local patterns of cooperation and the informal ties of mutual trust and obligation. In times of conflict between vertical and horizontal loyalty, local chief executives have at least a fair chance of influencing “their” police director. In the case of Duterte’s war against crime, formerly active LGU leaders reacted by outwardly signaling general but limited support for the presidential campaign. At the same time, they reinforced local networks that enabled them to enhance their informal control over and bonds with the local PNP. As a result, they mitigated the escalatory dynamic emanating from the higher levels of the police hierarchy.

Passive chief executives evade making this politically unrewarding field of local politics part of their political agenda, leaving it to the legally responsible state institution, the PNP. This results in the mere coexistence of LGU and the local branch of the PNP. Given the lack or scarcity of past experience of joint activity, mutual trust and commitment are largely absent. In these LGUs, vertical accountability of the police director reigns supreme. Confronted with demands for fealty and loyalty to the center, as was the case during the initial year of the Duterte campaign, these chief executives signaled punitive stances and ostensibly strong support for the center. As previously, actual crime-control was left to the local PNP director. Thrown back on the vertical ties to the higher levels

of the PNP hierarchy, local police directors opted for a more violent strategy of crime control that satisfied the center's demands.<sup>2</sup>

Given that in the Philippines the decision for an active role in security governance is primarily reached by the local chief executive, local ownership can function to the advantage or detriment of local public interest, depending on the interests of the chief executive. In general, such undermining of bureaucratic lines of command and control through informal, extra-institutional bonds of loyalty and belonging is viewed highly critically. The clientelist logic directly contradicts core principles of the rule of law and bureaucratic insulation against political interference. In this specific case, however, the clientelist rationale serves as the basis for successful resistance to radical demands emanating from the center that went squarely against lawful policing.

This report provides an initial exploratory analysis of seven LGU chief executives' policies with respect to citizen security prior to Rodrigo Duterte's term in office as president and their reaction to the anti-crime campaign in the wake of his election. The primary focus is on the initial year of Duterte's presidency from July 2016 to June 2017, when both police and vigilante fatal violence peaked.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide information on the legal framework for the LGU-PNP relationship at the subnational level as well as data on patterns of police use of deadly force for the LGUs under study for the decade preceding (2006–2015) and the first three and a half years of the Duterte presidency (7/2016–12/2019). Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the case studies that provide the empirical meat on the conceptual bones of this report. Chapter 6 concludes this report by pulling the various threads together and discussing what the results suggest for the future of Philippine democracy and research on police violence.

## **2. POLICE-POLITICS RELATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES AT THE SUBNATIONAL LEVEL**

The Philippine National Police is a national multi-level institution divided into several layers down to the municipal level. Despite the appearance of a multi-level hierarchy with clear lines of command and control, the PNP is only weakly insulated against political interference at all levels of subnational government.

For police directors at all levels there are varying maximum tenures in their position, meaning police directors at the provincial and city level are generally replaced within two years. Local chief executives have a strong voice in the selection process for police directors, as they can pick their favorite from a shortlist. Further, local chief executives at all levels down to the municipality are deputized as representatives of the National Police Commission. In this function they convene and

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<sup>2</sup> For a graphical representation of the two different forms of local security governance see the online appendix, Figure 1.

chair the peace and order councils, develop and oversee public safety plans. Mayors also “exercise operational supervision and control” over the local PNP, meaning that they have “the power to direct, superintend and oversee the day-to-day functions of police investigation of crime, crime prevention activities [...]” They can decide on the utilization of local PNP personnel and units, impose certain disciplinary penalties for minor offenses on the local PNP personnel and also recommend the recall or reassignment of the chief of police and the appointment of new members of the PNP (see No. 8551, further: Republic Act No. 6975, No. 7160). It is an irony that mayors also control and supervise the anti-gambling operations within their jurisdiction, given the multitude of reports linking local government executives to rent-seeking from illegal gambling.<sup>3</sup>

What makes local chief executives potentially even more powerful is that the PNP budget is far from sufficient to cover the costs of policing. Thus, the LGUs are responsible for providing a substantial proportion of maintenance and investment costs, often paying for water and electricity, footing the bill for gasoline, buying new motorcycles, cars, and weaponry, augmenting police officers’ pay, providing the premises for police offices and fairly often also paying for modernization of buildings, etc. Thus, to a large extent the PNP is national in name, but can be local in practice, if LGU chief executives decide to make use of their legal powers and the economic dependency relationship.

### **3. LOCAL POLICE USE OF DEADLY FORCE BEFORE AND DURING THE DUTERTE PRESIDENCY**

Duterte’s war against drugs and the *carte blanche* given to police and vigilantes alike unleashed a sudden torrent of deadly violence. However, this violence spread unevenly throughout the various LGUs. The highest level of violence (both in absolute numbers and adjusted to population) has been observed in the densely populated NCR, adjacent Central Luzon, and CALABARZON, as well as the metropolitan regions of the middle and southern Philippines, in other words, Cebu and Davao. This is in line with violence patterns of the pre-Duterte decade. Figures 1 and 2 below<sup>4</sup> show that the average level of deadly police violence before and during Duterte at the national level was below that of many highly urbanized LGUs analyzed in this report. The two figures also show that neither the magnitude nor the temporal patterns were uniform within the selected group of highly urbanized LGUs.

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3 For a detailed overview of the legal basis of local LGU-police relations with a special focus on the LGUs in the anti-drug policy, see Lischin 2018. Lischin argues for a detailed analysis of local-level politics in this sphere, hoping that this can show how “barangays and cities can curtail the potentially criminal excesses of the central government in the maintenance of peace and order.”

4 The respective data for violence in the pre-Duterte and Duterte periods were compiled by the author and the ABS-CBN Investigative and Research Group, respectively. For details on the datasets, see the online appendix (Figures 2 and 3), which also provides the exact data underlying the graphic representations. For comprehensive overviews of pre-Duterte and Duterte data on magnitude and spatial as well as temporal variation in police violence, see Kreuzer 2016, 2018, 2019.

What we see are highly individualized temporal patterns and overall magnitudes of police violence for the pre-Duterte decade. This translated into fundamentally different reactions of the various LGUs in the wake of Duterte being elected (7/2016–6/2017).

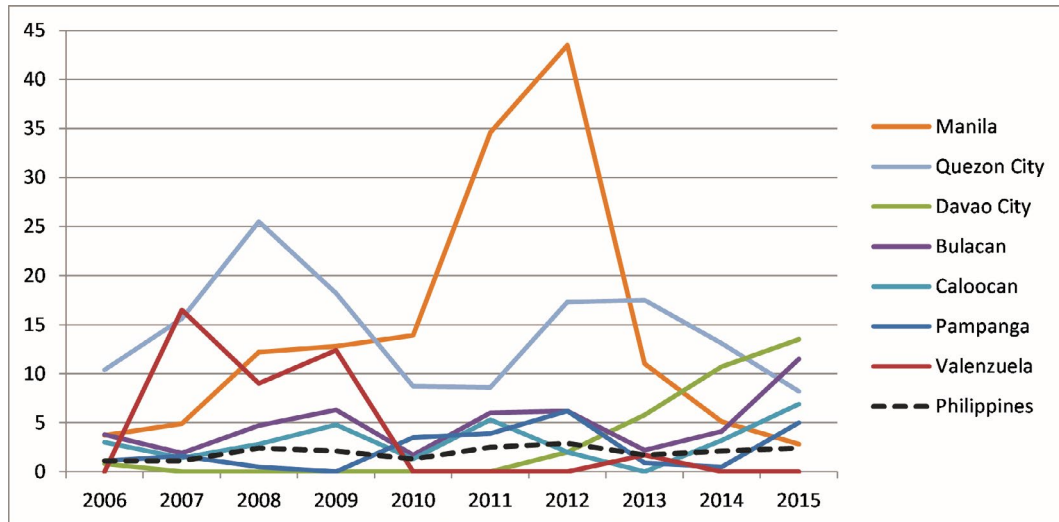


Fig. 2: Suspects killed by PNP per million population per year 2006–2015

To reiterate, the focus of the following analysis is on explaining one specific period in time: the first year Duterte was in office as president from July 2016 to June 2017. Here we see a strong bifurcation (Figure 2 below), with four of the highly urbanized units, Manila, Quezon City, Caloocan and Bulacan reacting strongly to the center's appeal, whereas the other three units hardly reacted at all. While the Davao City reaction was somewhat higher than the overall Philippine average, the other two units, Valenzuela and Pampanga, had lower than average reactions. The difference becomes even more pronounced, when the reported cases of vigilante killings during the first year of the Duterte presidency are added in. Documented vigilante killings stood at 1.3 per million population for Pampanga, 3.2 for Valenzuela, and 3.0 for Davao City, contrasted with 24.4 for Quezon City, 26 for Manila, 27.9 for Bulacan, and a staggering 88 for Caloocan (ABS-CBN dataset). While the three units that were comparatively low with regard to deadly police violence were also able and willing to control vigilantism during the initial phase of the Duterte campaign, the other four were either not capable or unwilling to stop vigilantism.

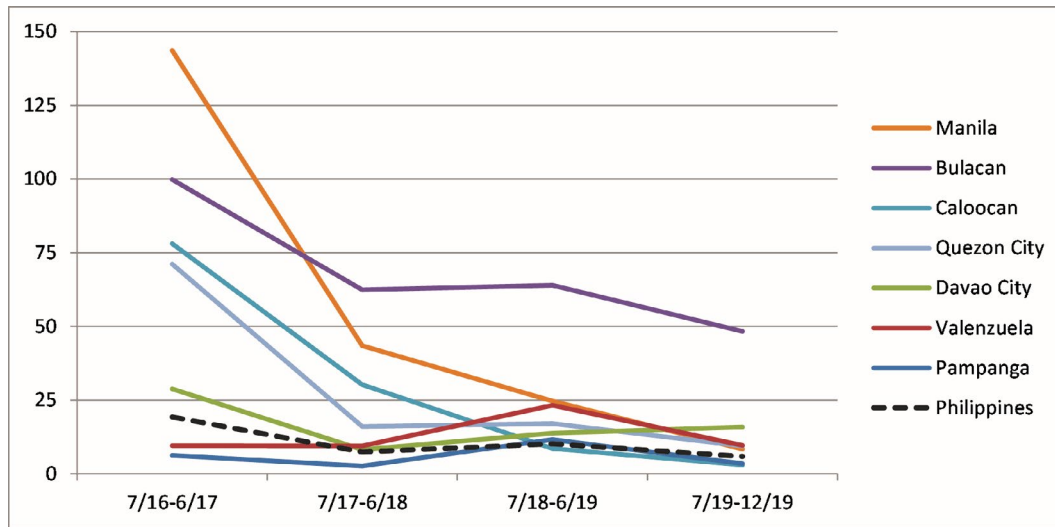


Fig. 3: Suspects killed by PNP per million population per year 7/2016 to 12/2019

#### 4. MITIGATING THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN: THREE ACTIVE CHIEF EXECUTIVES

The following analyses focus on three LGUs with chief executives who shared a strong interest in citizen security that preceded the Duterte campaign by several years. All three had an image as tough and discipline-oriented politicians and reacted to the Duterte campaign in ways that reduced the predictable impact of the presidential injunction to kill. Otherwise the three display fundamentally different leadership personae, ranging from rationalist reformer to caring patron to tough strong (wo)man. While all three were equally able to curb violence dynamics emanating from the center, local dynamics driving police use of deadly force differed, with the most hardline stance by Davao City mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio resulting in a somewhat higher overall number of police killings during the first year of her father's presidency. This clearly signals that "local ownership" need not translate into low police kill rates, even though it seems to translate into strong local resilience and capacity to blunt national excesses.

The case studies follow a broadly parallel design. They give a short introduction to the background of the chief executives, and provide core information on the pre-Duterte magnitude and patterns of police use of deadly force and on police and vigilante killings for the initial period of the Duterte campaign from July 2016 onwards. Then they analyze the three chief executives' public statements on citizen security and LGUs' prior practices in this area before July 2016. Finally, they detail how the chief executives reacted to the Duterte campaign both with respect to their policy stances and the local practice of implementation of the national push against crime.

#### **4.1 THE GATCHALIAN BROTHERS: RATIONALIST MANAGERS OF VALENZUELA**

From 2004 to the present Valenzuela has been governed by members of the Gatchalian family. The political rise of the family goes back to 2001, when the heirs of a business dynasty began translating their business acumen into political power after Sherwin, one of four brothers, was elected congress representative of the first district of Valenzuela. In 2004 he became city mayor. Since then, the Gatchalian brothers have accumulated political power as mayor, congress representative and, since 2016, also as senator (for an overview of political positions held by three of the four brothers and their economic background, see the online appendix: "Gatchalian").

##### **4.1.1 FATAL POLICE VIOLENCE BEFORE AND DURING THE DUTERTE PRESIDENCY**

In Valenzuela City pre-Duterte police use of deadly force was "bifurcated" into a long period of almost zero killings (2006, 2010–2015, with a total of one suspect reportedly killed by the police) and a short period of three years, 2007–2009, during which 21 suspects were killed. Operational leadership for these operations seems not to have lain with Valenzuela City Police but with Police Special Forces and the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces. With Valenzuela police in command, the use of deadly force was very rare. From 2010 to 2015 Valenzuela police killed about 0.28 suspects per million inhabitants and year. The ABS-CBN dataset suggests that this low level of police use of deadly force translated into a comparatively muted reaction to the Duterte administrations proclamation of a war on crime. During the first six months six suspects were reportedly killed, five of them in the initial month of July 2016. There was only one documented suspect killed for the whole of 2017, 16 reported for 2018 and five for 2019 (see Figure 2 above). The overall rate over the past three and a half years, from July 2016 to December 2019, stood at 9.5 killings per million population and year, which is about the same as the rates for the years 2015 to 2019 for Phoenix (Arizona). As will be shown below, this is lower than the pre-Duterte average for the neighboring cities of Manila and Quezon. In Valenzuela, vigilantism played no role in the war on crime. While there were four cases of vigilante-style killings reported in more than three years, it is doubtful that these are linked to the police campaign, as targeted killings have been and still are a widespread phenomenon in the Philippines, often unrelated to state-orchestrated violence.

##### **4.1.2 LOCAL CITIZEN-SECURITY BEFORE DUTERTE**

From the outset of their political engagement in Valenzuela in the early 2000s the Gatchalian brothers have publicly voiced a tough anti-crime stance, and over time have developed a crime-control ideology that on the one hand emphasizes supporting and modernizing the local PNP, and on the other hand embedding the PNP in a dense network of local government affiliated crime-control activities.

At the core of the Gatchalian brothers' conception of crime control and local LGU-PNP relations are the concepts of professionalism, managerialism, and discipline, as well as a cooperative relationship between local institutions and the local PNP and shared responsibility for citizen security. Ideologically, the local chief executives have linked crime to poverty and lack of opportunity for the poor, arguing:



“Employment is empowerment [...] it does not only improve living conditions [...] but reduce the underlying social glitches of poverty [...], such as crimes” (Sherwin Gatchalian quoted in Valenzuela Government 2012). This link between poverty and crime was given even more prominence under Duterte, when Sherwin Gatchalian argued:

We cannot win the war on drugs without waging a war on poverty at the same time [...]. Otherwise, poor Filipinos in desperate situations will always be tempted to turn to crime if given no other option to escape from crushing poverty. (Gatchalian 2016, see also Gatchalian 2018)

This focus on poverty as a root cause of crime was translated into politics. In 2006 Valenzuela’s official poverty level was higher than Quezon City’s and on a par with Caloocan, Manila. In 2018 it was the second lowest in the NCR, second only to Makati’s, in other words, the core business center’s poverty level (see online appendix, Figure 5). By taking responsibility for citizen security, the mayor also made clear that he would not “use the police as scapegoats for security lapses” (Wingatchalian 2015).

Unlike many other LGUs, Valenzuela had an active city peace and order council years before Duterte became president, with the mayor taking a symbolically prominent role in its activities, as, for example, when awarding cash incentives to policemen and social workers for their crucial roles in the crackdown on a human trafficking syndicate (Valenzuela Government 2011a), or regularly supporting the local PNP with a new “modern” head-quarters, a large carpark, a large quantity of other equipment and a city crime laboratory, all parts of a wider “Valenzuela Police Station Capability Enhancement Program.”

This “distributive policy” may be categorized as a fairly normal practice. In Valenzuela it is complemented by activities that go beyond the expected normal behavioral style. The symbolism of linking police, LGU and organized civil society became an important ingredient of local policy. In 2011, contrary to all established practices, the new city police director was not chosen by the city mayor from among five recommendations by the Philippine National Police. Instead the “City Government organized a Multi-Sectoral Selection Committee [...] to involve the public in the selection process” (Valenzuela Government 2011b). When two years later, the City police was provided with 40 motorcycles for their newly created Tactical Motorized Riders (TMR) group, this new force was linked to a newly established volunteer group “Valenzuela Riders Against Criminals” that was expected to “act as ‘force multipliers’ to the TMR to maintain peace and order” (Valenzuela Government 2013). Thus, local ownership was to be established, with the police bound to and included in the local group of responsible agents for citizen security. Symbolically, citizen security was rationalized as a core task of local government, an indispensable requirement for development. Davao City, where Rodrigo Duterte had been mayor for most of the past three decades, had been regarded as a positive role model already years before Duterte became president. In 2014 Sherwin Gatchalian argued that “in any country and locality, peace and order is very important. [...] And I can see that the local government of Davao City is really serious about the peace and order” (Wingatchalian 2014a).

Valenzuela leadership had also been explicitly focused on the fight against drugs and drug crime since 2015 before Duterte took office as president. It implemented a holistic approach that defined drug

dependency as a health issue and the fight against illegal drugs as an inclusive endeavor uniting government, police, civil society and “every city resident” (Valenzuela Government 2015). Core strategies advocated included the teaching of livelihood skills as alternatives to selling drugs and the promotion of community activities as a deterrent against drug abuse, improved access to healthcare, housing, and justice, and heightened vigilance. Repression was only one segment in a wider no-tolerance policy, and the repressive component was to be clearly within the bounds of the rule of law. Sherwin Gatchalian, an outspoken proponent of the death penalty, cautioned in 2014: “before we even talk about death penalty, there should be reforms in the police and judiciary first. [...] If we impose death penalty, there is a huge possibility that the innocent will be put on the death row even without credible evidence” (Wingatchalian 2014b).

#### **4.1.3 LOCAL CITIZEN-SECURITY DURING THE DUTERTE CAMPAIGN**

When Duterte became President and initiated his war on drugs, pre-established networks and mutual trust in the sphere of crime-control could be utilized by the mayor to insulate the LGU to a significant extent against the trend of sharply increasing use of deadly force by police.

Crucially, the Valenzuela mayor took the initiative with a twofold strategy: on the one hand supporting the government campaign, on the other, reducing its effects at the local level. He aimed at enlisting local government units and civil society, so that the local PNP would be embedded. While the police ostensibly took up the nationally prescribed anti-drug strategy, this was augmented by a local “VC Cares Plus” program. This aimed at ensuring that drug users surrendering to the authorities were taken care of by local officials and doctors and also provided with “job placement assistance once they have completed the treatment” in the context of a “Community-Based Wellness Program” that aimed at helping “the identified drug suspect-surrenderees to immerse them back in their communities and encourage them to renounce their drug addiction” (Valenzuela Government 2016a). The Valenzuela Anti-Drug Abuse Council (VADAC) and the local PNP launched a local campaign “Valenzuelanos Ayaw sa Droga” [Valenzuelanos do not take drugs] that activated the “Barangay Peacekeeping Action Teams” (BPATS) (Valenzuela Government 2016b). Students were also approached and activated as members of the Student Anti-Drug Abuse Councils. Tok-Hang operations, in other words, police officers contacting drug suspects in order to convince them to turn themselves in to the authorities, seem to have been consistently “composed of the PNP, barangay official, VADAC official and a CSWD [City Welfare and Development] personnel” (Valenzuela Government 2017).

The mayor also reiterated his prior stance that the local government

wants to extend not only moral but also economic support to drug offenders who are willing to adhere to the government mandates and change their lives for the better. [...] the local government is treating drug dependency as a health issue and, therefore the local government should address these needs by the constituents as part of its social welfare services. (Valenzuela Government 2016c)

The LGU, in this case the Anti-Drug Abuse Council (ADAC), also managed to signal its preference for rule of law-based behavior by, for example, providing lawyers and paralegals “to assist the local policemen in building cases that strongly stand up” (Valenzuela Government 2016d). In addition, the local ADAC, the city prosecutor’s office and the regional trial court collaborated in a seminar teaching local policemen how to correctly handle drug-related cases (Valenzuela Government 2016e). Signaling the importance of rule of law-based policing, Mayor Gatchalian personally visited the first batch of local police officers who completed the training. He also offered an incentive of P 100,000 for teams that successfully *convict* a drug offender in court (Valenzuela Government 2016d). This contrasts with a number of LGUs, where police officers were offered financial rewards for *killing* suspects. The mayor’s brother, newly elected Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, assumed the same stance at the national level. Barely 10 days into the Duterte campaign, he appealed to the PNP and the National Police Commission to stick to the rule of law:

The criminals involved with the drug trade should be brought to justice, but justice also mandates that they be given their day in court. I have no problem with sending drug lords to their death, as long as they have been convicted of their crimes in court [...]. Justice must not be handed down through unjust means. (Wingatchalian 2016)

Aimed at remedying the weakness of the police in building cases were other LGU activities. Valenzuela led the way in providing sniffer dogs for the city police (Philstar 2018) thus enhancing chances of proving drug possession in a legal way. Valenzuela also provided new police vehicles equipped with a global positioning system and dashboard cameras, enabling better documentation and control of police activities. While incomplete, available data on the share of city budget appropriated to the PNP suggest that the local government also actively “bought” local police loyalty. Whereas in the years preceding Duterte official annual appropriations in the proposed budgets stood at 5 to 6 million Philippine Pesos (PP; approx. 80,000 €), this rose to 8 million PP in 2017 and more than 20 million PP per year (approx. 322,000 €) from 2018 to 2020 (Valenzuela Government no date). This represents only a fraction of the financial assistance provided by the LGU. Patrol vehicles, guns, ammunition and sniffer dogs totaled about 66 million PP (>1 million €) for 2018. In addition, the LGU also seems to have provided personal incentives to the local police. Hard data only exist for 2017 when the city government augmented the salaries of the local policemen with 17 million Pesos, with the police director receiving an additional P 4,000 per month (Badilla 2018).

These measures combine into an overall strategy maximizing the local character of the police force. In 2018 the mayor expressly stated that Valenzuela aimed at a “self-sustained police force” (Philstar 2018). A “self-sustained police force” may work out differently depending on local conditions. In this case it worked as a violence-mitigating device, being controlled by strong, hardline but rule of law-focused local political leaders, who perceived citizen security as a core element in their portfolio as chief executive. Based on past establishment of local ownership of crime-control policy, the LGU could successfully superimpose horizontal local commitments and allegiances in cooperative problem-solving over the top-down demands for PNP allegiance to waging the war on drugs.

## 4.2 LILIA PIÑEDA: THE TOUGH BUT CARING PATRON OF KAMPAMPANGANS<sup>5</sup>

From 2010 to 2019 Pampanga was ruled by Governor Lilia Piñeda. From 2013 to 2019 her son Dennis joined her as vice governor. Due to term-limit rules Lilia could not contest the 2019 gubernatorial elections, so the mother-son team decided to switch positions. Since then Pampanga has been ruled by Dennis Piñeda, with his mother as vice governor (for details on the political positions of family members, see the online appendix: Pineda).

### 4.2.1 FATAL POLICE VIOLENCE BEFORE AND DURING THE DUTERTE PRESIDENCY

When Lilia Piñeda won the 2010 contest for governor, crime-control was one of the initial foci of her work and police use of deadly force patterns changed immediately (see Figure 3 below and Figure 6 in the online appendix). All 2010 incidents with police use of deadly force occurred after her election to governor.

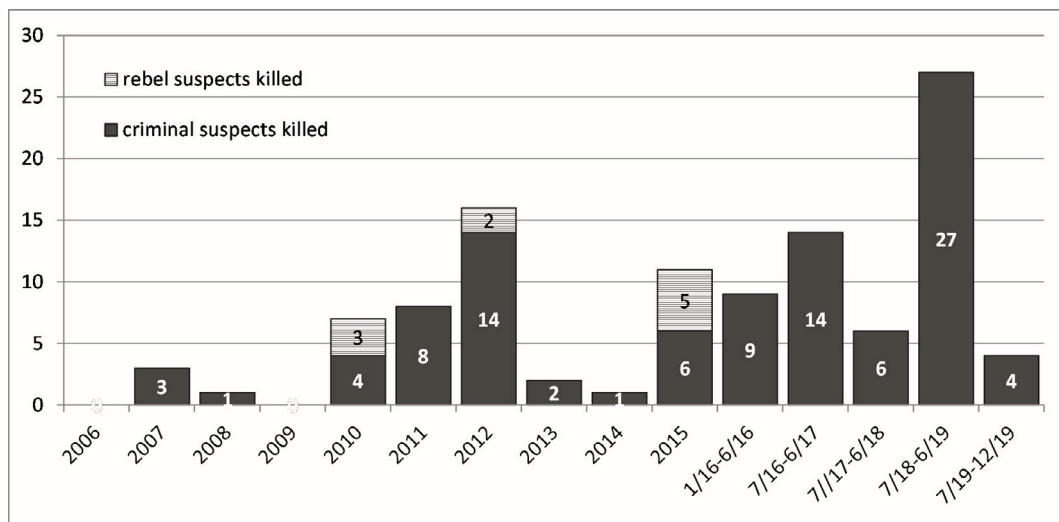


Fig. 4: Suspects killed by the police in Pampanga 2006–2019

For Pampanga the overall rate of police killings per million inhabitants for the pre-Duterte decade from 2006 to 2015 stood at 1.9 suspects killed per million population. For the governorship of Lilia Piñeda from July 2010 to June 2016 it stood at 3.7, if the very specific cases of police-rebel encounters are excluded. Of these 44 suspects, a full seven were killed by the police in May and June 2016, after the election, but before the inauguration of Duterte as president. Yet, in July 2016 already police violence seemed partly under control. After six killings in June, numbers came down to four in

<sup>5</sup> Kapampangan is an ethnolinguistic group living principally in Pampanga and adjacent regions. In a political sense it stands for the people of Pampanga.

July. Also, vigilantes played no role in Pampanga. For the three and a half years from July 2016 to December 2019 ABS-CBN recorded a total of only six cases, a low number by Philippine standards.

But, how is the spike during the third year of the Duterte presidency to be explained? A more detailed analysis suggests that this spike in violence is largely linked to the tenure of Nicolas Salvador as provincial police director (see online appendix, Figure 7). During his short seven-month stint in office from May to December 2018, 19 suspects were killed by the police. Salvador's case suggests that police directors who exert control with an overly hard hand may not remain in office for long in Pampanga – in this case Salvador was replaced by a director with a great deal of local experience, among other things as city director of the Pampanga capital, San Fernando: Jean Fajardo, who was in this position until October 1, 2020.

To sum up: as far as can be ascertained, the Duterte war against drugs left hardly any trace on patterns or magnitude of deadly police violence in Pampanga. Then how did the local government manage to thwart the dynamics in play at the national level?

#### **4.2.2 LOCAL CITIZEN-SECURITY BEFORE DUTERTE**

Although she displayed a different leadership style from the Gatchalian brothers, Lilia Piñeda also adopted citizen security as part of her policy agenda from the early days of her governorship. At the core of her leadership persona is the caring patron.

Lilia Piñeda is regularly referred to as “Nanay” (mom) and described as “the ‘mother’ of all Kapampangans with her genuine maternal affection,” with an overarching focus on “politics for the poor and downtrodden” (Manabat 2015b) and “the champion of the sick and the poor” (Pavia 2010). Her almost saintly image has even been reinforced by the local clergy (see: Lacson 2012, Nanay Foundation 2019: XVI).

One core segment of Lilia Piñeda's caring image has been a tough anti-drug crime stance and a strong focus on law and order. While she shared the vision of the later Duterte campaign – a drug-free society – her strategy was different: “We need to ensure the rehabilitation and safety of the drug users and jail the pushers” (Piñeda 2014 quoted in SunStar Pampanga 2014a). At the core of her thinking was a rather simple disciplinarian attitude, expressed after a 2015 visit to Davao City, when Piñeda emphasized copying Duterte's “political will [...] in enforcing laws and ordinances that may result to the greater benefits of the Kapampangans” (SunStar Pampanga 2015).

Like other provincial governors, Piñeda regularly supported the provincial PNP with hardware of various types, but at the same time she strengthened the capacity of the local barangays to cooperate with the police, for example, by strengthening the Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Councils (BAD-AC), with the aim of making the LGUs “effective partners of the local police and elected officials in strengthening our efforts in the prevention of crime and maintenance of peace and order” (Piñeda quoted in Sun.Star Pampanga 2014b).

Already two years before Duterte was elected president, the Aquino government focused on crime in the *Oplan Lambat Sibat* [Operational Plan Net and Spear],<sup>6</sup> a nationwide anti-crime drive that also spearheaded the “one time, big time” (OTBT) operations that were to become a hallmark of later Duterte-period police practice. When the superordinate national and regional level of the PNP tried to push for a tougher anti-crime policy from 2014 onward, she reacted by further embedding the provincial police in a network of social control already established in a rudimentary fashion in the preceding years. Thus, in 2014 she created a task force that cooperated with the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and the Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Councils. She also held various anti-drug summits signaling the provincial government’s leadership in the anti-drug campaign, and gave prominence to provincial government support to the Central Luzon Drug Rehabilitation Center. Already in 2014, civil society organizations like the homeowners’ association were involved in the governor’s campaign against drug crime.

In the context of *Oplan Lambat Sibat*, the new Central Luzon regional police director Rudy Lacadin instructed his subordinates “to neutralize at least 50 percent of your drug personalities within two months” in order to avoid replacement (Lacadin quoted in Manabat 2015a). Piñeda broadened the informal control of the police and strengthened her campaign against drugs with a specific focus on local village watch organizations. In 2015, for example, she lauded the efforts of the approximately 10,000 *bantay bayan* members (informal village watches organized in the Bantay Bayan Foundation) for their help in the fight against drugs that led to the arrest of approximately 2,000 “drug personalities” in the province in 2015 (Pampanga Provincial Government 2015, see also Sapnu 2014).

#### 4.2.3 LOCAL CITIZEN SECURITY DURING THE DUTERTE CAMPAIGN

When Duterte started his nationwide war against drugs, Piñeda reacted swiftly. Similarly to other provincial governors, she released success stories about 10,000 drug suspects surrendering within the first two weeks of the campaign. She also adopted the rhetoric of an all-out war against drugs. At the same time the provincial government and many municipalities utilized significant parts of their intelligence funds to “combat the proliferation of illegal drugs” (Pampanga Provincial Government 2016a). This money was allocated for a rehabilitation program (Dalan Ning Pamagbayu; Path to Change).

Repeatedly, the governor publicly stated her core aim: to avoid killings of fellow Kapampangans. To avoid fatal violence, she asked drug users to surrender, saying: “nobody will be killed here in Pampanga. (Pampanga Provincial Government 2016b). She also stated that “I don’t want any Kapampangan dead because of illegal drugs. We’ll give them another chance. I’m going to meet their parents or their families because they are responsible for the drug suspects. (Pampanga Pro-

6 *Oplan Lambat Sibat* was conceptualized as “a deliberate, programmatic, and sustained approach taken by the Philippine National Police to combat criminality nationwide. It uses both wide dragnet and intel-targeted operations to catch small-time criminals and repeat offenders” (Junsay, Mary C./Lyscka J:G. Brucal/Emher Antonio/Rowena E. Mojares 2017).

vincial Government 2016c). And emphasized that “I am the mother of the Kapampangans. Tell the surrenderees [*sic*] that I cannot protect them if they will go back to their bad habit of using illegal drug. I tell you, it will cost them their lives” (SunStar Pampanga 2016).

This message was complemented by strategies strengthening social control in the communities on the one hand and informally reducing the autonomy of the police on the other: she first requested the provincial police director and the local police directors not to knock on the suspects’ doors but let the village chiefs take on that duty, i.e., establish an official local civilian presence to witness the Tokhang-operations (knocking at suspects doors and asking them to surrender). She also provided significant financial support to the provincial PNP and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA). She promised educational and livelihood assistance to former drug suspects who surrendered. Already in August 2016, she established the *Cabalen* (Fellow Kapampangans) Drug Watch of barangay officials, *bantay bayan* members, health workers and activated a women’s group with several thousand members organized by her several years earlier (*Nanay* community volunteers), to help monitor their own and other peoples’ families more closely (Punto 2016).

By 2017, Pampanga also had a fairly strong program in place that provided additional options by employing drug offenders, who turned themselves in, in various short-term jobs in the local administration (Sunstar Pam-panga 2017). The provincial government even “ordered all chiefs of police [...] in the province to employ and make the drug reformists productive to help and augment the income of their families through livelihood and training programs” (Pampanga Provincial Government 2017).

In the case of Lilia Piñeda, the combination of caring mother and strongman personality, as well as the credible anti-drug policy that established local leadership in citizen security clearly predates the advent of Duterte as president. In 2016 it allowed provincial governor Piñeda to make use of pre-existing networks and established practices in order to broaden LGU control over police interventions in the war on drugs. Thus, police use of deadly force was kept under control, as were vigilante killings.

#### **4.3 SARA DUTERTE-CARPIO: PEACE AND ORDER AS “THE BACKBONE OF ALL ECONOMIES” IN DAVAO CITY**

Davao City is “Duterteland.” The current president was mayor of Davao for most of the years between 1988 and 2016. Since 2007 his children have taken to politics with his son Paolo as barangay chairman, vice-mayor and current congressman, his other son Sebastian as vice-mayor since 2019, and his daughter and political heir as vice-mayor (2007–2010) and mayor (2010–2013; since 2016; see the online appendix for more information about the Duterte family in politics).

### 4.3.1 FATAL POLICE VIOLENCE BEFORE AND DURING THE DUTERTE PRESIDENCY

In the 1980s Davao City was dubbed the “murder capital of the Philippines” (Branigin 1985). According to the public myth, this city was “tamed” by a public prosecutor turned mayor, Rodrigo Duterte, who during his more than two decades as mayor did not shy away from utilizing a death squad in his quest to rid the city of crime. This “victory” came at the price of approximately 1,400 crime suspects killed by the death squad from 1998 to 2015 (Picardal 2016).

This city seems an unlikely choice as an example of an LGU where police use of deadly force remained controlled in the wake of the presidential call to kill all suspects if they dared to resist (Kreuzer 2016). Given the *carte blanche* provided by the president, either a rash of police killings, or an excessive level of vigilante killings, or both, would be expected.

However, the ABS-CBN dataset suggests a limited spike in police use of deadly force during the first months of the campaign, followed by a stabilization at the highest pre-campaign levels of approximately 17 killings per million inhabitants per year, albeit with a rising tendency from 2017/18 to 2019. Even more surprising is that this coincides with the very low number of five suspected vigilante killings in the initial phase and only one additional case in August 2019. For an explanation of this surprising finding it is necessary to turn to the current mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio, who had already worked with her father as vice-mayor and mayor from 2007 to 2013 and was her father’s preferred choice as his successor in 2016.

### 4.3.2 LOCAL CITIZEN SECURITY BEFORE THE DUTERTE PRESIDENCY

At first sight, Sara Duterte-Carpio provided continuity from her father when she took over as mayor for the first time in 2010. In her first state of the city address she emphasized that “Peace and order is the backbone for all economies.” However, examination of the details of her planned policies shows a rather broad conceptualization of crime control, focusing on “a drug-free workplace and widespread drug testing, on volunteer assistance to the police and seminars of the PDEA in schools, financial assistance and health care for the barangay *tanods* (community volunteers appointed by the barangay council for assistance in the spheres of peace and security). In addition, Sara Duterte-Carpio decided to shift budgetary allocations towards social development “because the first duty of government is individual security and family enhancement” (Duterte S. 2010).

With respect to citizen security, Sara Duterte’s stated objective was “to reduce crime every month until it is at a level at which people can no longer notice the crimes being committed” (quoted in: Durianburg 2011). Clearly a hardliner, she also invented a complex system of cash incentives for the solution of various types of crime. The highest incentives were for murder with P15,000 (approx. 250€) for every five cases of murder, and 5,000 for every five rape or drug cases “solved and cleared.” That “solved and cleared” could *not* mean killing a suspect was pointedly driven home by her, when she ordered the relief of a police chief after a suspect was found dead under suspicious circumstances. She explained her action to then Davao City police director Ronald Dela Rosa:



I would like to remind you and the entire DCPO [Davao City Police Office; P.K.] that to allow murders similar to that [...] to continue happening makes a mockery of your capacity to lawfully protect and serve Davao City according to your sworn oath [...]. I should emphasize to all DCPO personnel that there is no shortcut to good police work that builds a case against the suspect. (Durianburg 2012)

Sara Duterte-Carpio's hardline stance always prioritizes security over all other potentially competing values. Thus, in the conflict between individual liberty and security, security is always given priority, as for example in the establishment of a city-based public safety and security command center and an anti-crime unit (DC-ACU) as well as the installation of hundreds of closed-circuit television cameras (CCTV) in public areas. These and other measures have been widely commended in the local press as effective means for making Davao "a safe, secure city" (Edge Davao 2013a). The Tok-Hang operations conducted by the Davao City Police Office (DCPO) since 2013 were also fully supported by the local population. The campaign was said to have "resulted in the surrender of two dozen 'drug personalities' and the subsequent arrest of nearly 500 others in 2013" (quotes: Nawal/Fernandez 2015). Overall, the local population was satisfied with the handling of peace and order by the DCPO (a 77% approval rate; Ateneo de Davao University 2014: 87).

Sara Duterte-Carpio and her father's paradigm of peace and order as the backbone for economic development was well received locally, especially as it was integrated into a fairly holistic program for social and economic advancement that included a host of progressive policies, for example, in the spheres of gender and environmental protection. No wonder that when Sara Duterte-Carpio stepped aside as mayor for her father in 2013, she received excellent ratings from the local business and bureaucratic elite. Sara Duterte-Carpio is described in outstandingly positive terms in a way that also links social and economic development, on the one hand, and an iron-fisted anti-crime stance on the other, as two sides of the same coin (Edge Davao 2013b).

#### **4.3.3 LOCAL CITIZEN SECURITY DURING THE DUTERTE CAMPAIGN**

Similar to the Gatchalian brothers and Lilia Piñeda, Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio successfully upheld local LGU control and thus local ownership over local police strategy of crime control in the wake of her father's proclamation of a PNP-led war on crime. Upon her return to the position of Davao City mayor in 2016 she issued a very simple overall political message: "I want our constituents to have gainful employment, decent housing, educated and healthy children, able to eat three meals a day, and to be safe and secured in their daily activities" (Davao today 2016a). With respect to the government anti-drug campaign, she stated: "I assure you that the city government will always give priority to intervention programs and initiatives for the rehabilitation of the citizens who are using drugs" (Davao Today 2016b).

Unlike the other two LGUs discussed above, Davao City governance has been and still is disciplinarian, with a host of city ordinances that regulate and limit social life in various ways. Many of

these ordinances impinge directly on local citizen security, such as, for example, one requiring all businesses employing 10 or more persons to establish a drug-free workplace and accept regular mandatory drug testing of 10 percent of their workforce (City Ordinance No. 0506-13), a liquor ban that prohibits bars and other establishments from selling alcoholic beverages after 1:00 a.m., an anti-smoking ordinance that effectively bans public smoking, a curfew for minors aged 18 years and under from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., an internet café ordinance that regulates minors' access, and a noise ban effective from 9 p.m., to mention only a few. These are all strictly enforced by the police and the local government units, with the clear aim of disciplining the population, if necessary at the expense of individual liberties.

More closely related to the core policy of crime control are a number of local programs that link police and auxiliary forces, such as, Oplan Iron City (launched in May 2017), which strengthens neighborhood watch programs, Oplan Lambat Bitag, and Oplan Bulabog, which targets car theft, among others, or Oplan Iron Fortress, which is directed at strengthening community support and Davao City Shield 911 (mostly the creation of a motorcycle quick reaction team from November 2019 onwards).

What emerges in the case of Davao City is an overall picture of a "big brother" version of government based on an integrated, control-based system of crime prevention and control that aims at the disciplining of the whole citizenry. Without the presence of Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, actual practice has become less violent than might have been expected four years ago. Instead, under Sara Duterte-Carpio's mayorship, the police seem to have shifted to a hardline strategy that nevertheless largely follows bureaucratic rules and laws and thus results in a reduction of police and especially vigilante use of deadly force.

Davao City reacted strongest to the presidential campaign amongst the three cases with active chief executives. After a lull in 2017/18 police use of deadly force rose again in the following years to levels clearly higher than those of the other two LGUs. This fits the difference in strategies propagated by the three chief executives, with Sara Duterte-Carpio being clearly the most repression- and police-oriented amongst the three. Thus, while Davao City local ownership of security governance was equally capable of mitigating the dynamics of the central government campaign, the big-brotherly local style of security governance that is largely implemented via aggressive policing coincides with higher levels of civilian victimization.

#### **4.4 ACTIVE CHIEF EXECUTIVES, LOCAL OWNERSHIP AND RESILIENCE AGAINST EXTERNAL DEMANDS**

Despite significant differences in the overall leadership personae of the three chief executives analyzed above, the three cases demonstrate the effects of a common decision to make citizen security a core element of the chief executives' political personae and leadership profile and a policy that establishes local citizen security as a joint LGU-PNP endeavor. Vertical loyalty of the local PNP branch has been complemented by strong horizontal local bonds. The activation of these blunted the provision of a *carte blanche* by the president for the killing of crime suspects. All three chief ex-

executives profited from their established legitimacy as active law-and-order politicians. This enabled the local police to avoid choosing sides in a potential conflict between LGU and a central administrative authority and to stick to local practices without compromising ties to and good relations with the higher echelons of the police hierarchy or politics at the national level. In this context it was irrelevant that one of the three (Gatchalian) had been a core supporter of Duterte's opponent Grace Poe in the contest for president and another one (Piñeda) had supported Liberal Party candidate Mar Roxas in the 2016 elections. These three LGUs show that local government was not the powerless victim of central directives but had realistic options for blunting the deadly dynamism. Variation in police use of deadly force levels during the latter Duterte years show that local ownership is no panacea against deadly police violence as such.

## **5. YIELDING TO THE NATIONAL CAMPAIGN: FOUR PASSIVE CHIEF EXECUTIVES**

This chapter focuses on four cases where police use of deadly force and vigilantism quickly spiraled out of control once Duterte took over as president. All four cases are close to Valenzuela and Bulacan. While leadership personae of the respective chief executives differed, they share a fundamental disinterest in questions of citizen security, and left this to the local police. Similarly to the Gatchalian brothers and Lilia Piñeda, the chief executives of Bulacan, Quezon City, Manila and Caloocan backed the wrong horses in the 2016 presidential elections. However, other than the first-mentioned two, these four emphasized ingratiating themselves again with the presidential camp. To varying degrees all four signaled support for the President's war on drugs.

### **5.1 BULACAN PROVINCE – A DISINTERESTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT MEETS HARDLINE POLICE DIRECTORS**

#### **5.1.1 FATAL POLICE VIOLENCE BEFORE AND DURING DUTERTE PRESIDENCY**

Bulacan police's use of deadly force was fairly high with 146 suspects killed during the decade from 2006 to 2015, although, a full 34% (i.e., 50!) were killed within a period of one year only from October 2014 to September 2015 (see Figure 8 in the online appendix), after which police killings reduced to close to zero for a few months. With growing prominence being given to Duterte's election campaign and his ideas about an all-out war on crime, police use of deadly force in Bulacan rose to 22 killings during the five months from February to June 2016, thus returning to the high level of the previous peak. During the first year of the Duterte presidency Bulacan police killed 292 suspects (i.e., 24 per month). The second year from July 2017 to June 2018 saw 229 killings, the third 259, and the fourth from July 2019 to June 2020 159.<sup>7</sup> Based on a population of approximately 3.3 mil-

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7 Bulacan is the only province, where the provincial police itself provided a detailed and by all indications credible reporting system on all kinds of police operations from 2012 to the present, with a minor gap in 2018 and a larger one

lion, this is a staggering rate of close to 90 killings per million population during the first year of Duterte and close to 50 during the fourth. This is all the more dramatic in view of the fact that police use of deadly force was only one pillar of repressive anti-crime violence during the first phase of the Duterte campaign. To this already outstanding rate, the vigilante killings of 94 suspects (7/2016–6/2017) must be added. Whereas during this period the rates of vigilante killings per million population were 1.3 in Pampanga, 3.2 in Valenzuela and 3.0 in Davao City, it stood at 27.9 in Bulacan (see online appendix Figure 4). Whereas the first three cases signal that vigilantism could be controlled, Bulacan signals that it also could be given free rein.

In Bulacan, two hardline police officers had comparatively long terms in the top provincial position, Romeo Caramat (4/2016–4/2018) and Chito Galves Bersaluna (5/2018–10/2019). The actual kill rate was almost identical for Bersaluna and his predecessor Caramat (22.1 and 21.3 suspects killed per month). It only fell somewhat during the terms of office of Bersaluna's successors Emma Libunao (12/2019–1/2020; 14 killings per month) and Lawrence Cajipe (since 2/2020), who had an average of 10 killings per month until August, when the number went down to 4 and finally to 1 killing in September 2020.

### 5.1.2 A PASSIVE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND HARDLINE POLICE DIRECTORS

Again, local politics, or more precisely the combination of political and police leadership play an important role in accounting for the statistics just cited. Neither before nor during Duterte's anti-drug campaign did the Bulacan provincial leadership provide any leadership with respect to questions of peace and security. Instead it avoided this topic by leaving it to the local police directors.

This proved fatal, as there was a succession of two hardline provincial police directors who aimed at reducing crime by all means, when the superordinate bureaucracy adopted this as policy. The hardline orientation of the first of these two, Romeo Caramat, was strengthened by the recognition given to him by then president-elect Rodrigo Duterte, who rewarded him and one of his subordinates "with P300,000.00 for their dedication in fighting the drug menace in their locality" (Manila Bulletin 2016), in June 2016. This strengthened the police director's vertical loyalty to the president's anti-crime stance, and simultaneously signaled the future president's expectations to local political executives.

Whereas in Valenzuela, Pampanga and Davao City, local governments took the lead in determining how to proceed in the campaign against drugs, this was left to the police in Bulacan province. The governor did not even provide a minimal level of security against police aggression for lower echelon local officials, such as, for example, when provincial police director Caramat threatened that non-cooperative barangay chairmen (village/ward leaders) might "run out of luck" and be killed by

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of six months in 2019. The following data derive from these PNP-reports (<http://bulacanpnp.com/>; currently only the 2020 reports are still online) and on the author's dataset for earlier years. For the gaps in the years 2018 and 2019 the PNP data have been replaced by ABS-CBN data. For a detailed presentation by month, year and police director since 2012, see the online appendix in Figure 8.

unidentified assailants (Marshall/Chalmers 2016). The local government response remained decidedly weak. Governor Sy-Alvarado<sup>8</sup> expressed criticism only once, in October 2016, when he called for action against the operators and financiers of the drug business and not against the users and small-scale pushers: “This is the only solution I can see to stop the killings in our beloved province” (Politiko South Luzon 2016). Yet, almost at the same time, police director Caramat clarified the local police strategy: “It will be bloody [...] You have a problem with dengue. You think you can solve it without killing mosquitos?” (Marshall/Chalmers 2016).

This language provided the background to the vicious campaign – unopposed by local politicians – that dehumanized drug suspects, both users and pushers alike, in a way that strongly departed from the cognitive and normative framework for police use of deadly force in neighboring Pampanga and Valenzuela. The Bulacan chapter of the league of municipalities “expressed its 100 percent support,” perceiving the campaign only in the context of “intensified operations of the police” (Politiko Central Luzon 2017). Local politicians in Bulacan completely ignored the vast number of suspects killed in their province and only noted its positive effects on investments. The provincial governor’s comments on a provincial Peace and Order Council meeting have the same tenor. Sy-Alvarado commended the Bulacan police: “While we are creating an atmosphere that is very conducive to business investors, the anti-crime offensive by our policemen has also created an atmosphere not conducive to criminals and lawless elements” (Gamos 2017).

The difference from the neighboring province of Pampanga is striking. Whereas in Pampanga drug addicts were perceived as fellow Kapampangans and therefore *not* as legitimate targets of police use of deadly force, the dominant perspective in Bulacan was completely different. When 32 suspects were killed on a single day in August 2017, Jose de la Rama, Bulacan head of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP), the national organization of lawyers (!), stated:

It’s better to see 20 drug addicts dead than see 20 innocent women or children raped and killed (by drug addicts). [...] “The policemen are just doing their job. [...] The police must be serious in their drug operation in the province and the officers must be commended for doing their job. (Philippine Daily Inquirer 2017)

It is only consistent with such views that a few days later the municipal police director of Norzagaray was honored for “recording the most [*sic*] number of drug suspects killed during police operations [...] from July 1 to Dec. 31, 2016” by provincial Governor Sy-Alvarado and police director Caramat (Inquirer 2017).

This local government reaction, a combination of neglect, indifference and support for hardline police operations did not come out of the blue when Duterte took office as president in 2016. As mentioned above, in earlier years crime control had been left up to the police and citizen security had been a political non-topic. The important link between police and local government units and com-

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8 On the Sy-Alvarado family in Bulacan politics, see the online appendix: Sy-Alvarado.

munities that was prominent in the pronouncements of the Gatchalian brothers, Lilia Piñeda and even Sara Duterte-Carpio was completely absent in the case of Bulacan. This left security-related decision making exclusively a matter for the police.

The potential consequences of this lack of interest by the LGU in the sphere of peace and security and a tough PNP anti-crime approach had already become visible in 2014, when new incentives emerged from the national level for a tougher stance on crime with “Oplan Lambert Sibato” (Operation-Plan Net and Spear) pushed by then Secretary for the Interior and Local Government Mar Roxas. Unlike Pampanga and Valenzuela, the new focus on large-scale police operations had immediately been implemented in Bulacan under Police Director Divina since late 2014 and resulted in a surge from 12 to 50 killings in one year. This pre-Duterte escalation of police violence drew neither praise nor blame from provincial politicians. It went completely unnoticed by both the political class and local media alike. With an indifferent provincial government, an absence of networks bridging LGU and local PNP branches, as well as a center-oriented, hardline police leadership, core dimensions for a violence-prone war on drugs were in place in 2016.

This was aggravated by the provincial government’s bad choice of whom to support politically in the 2016 elections. Shortly before the elections, Governor Sy-Alvarado, Vice-Governor Daniel Fernando and a large number of mayors and other local officials quit their old party, the National Unity Party (NUP), which supported Duterte. They joined the Liberal Party, thus signaling their support for Duterte’s opponent for office, Mar Roxas.

With the “One Bulacan Program for Rapid Industrialization” (PRIDE) the provincial government had been working on a host of projects aimed at establishing Bulacan as a premier industrial hub for the National Capital Region. Bulacan government was also eyeing extensions of its special economic zones, and actively wooing Chinese investors among others. A new international airport for the NCR was also in the pipeline. While good links to the national government had previously been important for approvals and financial support, they became even more crucial under Duterte, on account of the latter’s “build-program” that promised vast numbers of infrastructure projects for Bulacan, such as, for example, railway projects that could link the province and its (future) airport to the center of Metro Manila. This need for clientelist access to the president and his entourage was a further building block for provincial government ideological support for and non-interference in the police-driven execution of the national policy, as understood by a succession of hardline police directors.

## 5.2 QUEZON CITY

For the past decades Quezon City (QC) has to a large extent been Belmonte land, even though the family teamed up with an actor, Herbert Bautista, for close to two decades. From 2010 to 2019 Bautista was city mayor, encircled by Belmonte family members in various political positions. Josefina Belmonte, the three-term vice-mayor took over Bautista’s position in 2019.

In the run-up to the 2016 elections both mayor and vice-mayor figured prominently in the Liberal Party election campaign and thus not only backed the wrong horse, but, from the perspective of Duterte, actually backed the worst horse. Vice-mayor Josefina Belmonte was the national chairperson of the “Leni [Robredo] for Vice-President Movement” and campaigned nationwide for the Liberal Party candidates. In addition, Josefina’s nephew Christopher “Kit” Belmonte, one of the family’s representatives in the House of Representatives (Quezon City 6th district) had just taken over as secretary general of the Liberal Party and Josefina Belmonte’s father won his third and final term as Congressman (Quezon City 4th district). Put simply, the election victory of Duterte was a danger to both the political and the economic foundation (Philstar Media Group) of family power (for details of the Belmonte family’s political and economic basis, see the online appendix: Belmonte).

### **5.2.1 FATAL POLICE VIOLENCE BEFORE AND DURING THE DUTERTE PRESIDENCY**

Before the 2016 elections, the problem of illegal drugs or the wider problem of crime control had not been a core interest of the Bautista/Belmonte government. While there were regular ordinances propagating awareness, nothing further happened after the establishment of a City Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Center in 1993. The only news that linked the mayor to anti-illegal drug efforts occurred when he slapped a suspect, who had just been caught by the police on drug charges and had refused to answer the mayor’s questions in 2014 (GMAnews.online 2014). Despite the liberal leanings of the LGU top leadership, the high levels of police use of deadly violence in QC appears to never have bothered them, even though QC already had a notable record of police use of deadly force in the decade before Duterte (see Figure 1 above and Figure 2 in the online appendix). The 10-year average stood at 14.3 killings per million population and year; in our sample surpassed only by Manila with 14.5. The 2016 reaction to Duterte not only resulted in a police kill-rate of 71 for the first year, but also in an excessively high rate of vigilante killings (24.4 per million inhabitants; see online appendix Figure 4).

### **5.2.2 A PASSIVE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP APPEASING DUTERTE**

After the election victory of Rodrigo Duterte a first step to ingratiate the Belmonte family with the incoming administration was the support for the new president pledged by House speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr. for the remnants of the Liberal Party, many of whose members of congress had already switched to either Duterte’s PDP-Laban or other parties allied with Duterte.

Despite this move, Duterte made it clear that he was casting a critical eye on Quezon City. On his first day in office, a new police director, Guillermo Eleazar, was appointed to Quezon City and 32 officers were relieved of their duties and transferred to Mindanao (GMAnews.online 2016). Only a few days later, President Duterte singled out former Quezon City police director Edgardo Tinio as being involved in illegal drug trade. By August the number of dismissed QC police officers had further risen, with the new director Guillermo Eleazar arguing that the vast majority of them had been involved in illegal drugs (Politiko Metro Manila 2016a).

Mayor Herbert Bautista did his best to dissociate himself from the police, even asserting that up to 2016 the Quezon City Police District (QCPD) directors had always been appointed by the PNP without any consultation with him. He also claimed that “it is imperative that the District Director is given full administrative and operational control over the QCPD’s rank and file,” even though legally the mayor is entitled to a strong say in this respect (Politiko Metro Manila 2016b). Around the same time, it became public that the brother of the mayor, City councilor Hero Bautista had tested positive to drugs. Simultaneously, the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC), a nationwide NGO, filed a complaint with the ombudsman to investigate the Quezon City mayor and his brother over the drug situation in Quezon City (Bonquin 2016).

Small wonder that the Quezon City government became almost invisible and mute on the topic for the next few months and left the initiative to new QC police director Eleazar, who pushed for a hard-line policy. More than one year after the beginning of the campaign, in November 2017, QC Vice-Mayor Joy Belmonte meekly commented that the rash of killings in Quezon City was a

complex problem [...] Some of [the killings] were related to drugs. Some of them weren’t. Some of the others, I think, are just an excuse, and it’s really hard. So, I don’t want to be judgmental and say that these are just because of the President. (Evangelista, Gabuco & Garcia 2017)

Ignoring the vast number of killings in QC, the vice-mayor even claimed at a conference that QC’s approach was showing good results: “Data from the Quezon City Police District indicate that our collective efforts have led to a considerable decrease in drug-related crimes in QC and the downgrading of our villages to lower levels of affectations” (Mateo 2017). A few weeks earlier, during a lull in the anti-illegal drugs campaign, when the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) had taken over operational control and killings became less frequent, Quezon City barangay captains brought a resolution to the president, approved by QC city council and supported by then Acting Mayor Belmonte, asking for the PNP to be placed back in control of the campaign (Politiko Metro Manila 2017).

These moves signaled a complete turnaround of Liberal Party standard bearers. In 2019 mayoral candidate Joy Belmonte, who had already shifted party allegiance from Liberal to Duterte’s PDP-Laban in 2017, allied her own local *Serbisyo sa Bayan* Party with the *Hugpong ng Pagbabago* (HNP) of Duterte’s daughter Sara. Belmonte actually argued that she wanted Quezon City to be at the forefront of the changes promised by Duterte, and claimed: “What President Duterte and Mayor Sara have fought for is change for the good of our country, and I, as well as my fellow candidates from the city and the national candidates we support aim to deliver that” (Inquirer 2019).

This turnaround allowed Belmonte to become somewhat more active in devising a more broadly framed anti-drug crime policy aimed at regaining some control over the campaign in QC. She now stressed that a strengthening of the Barangay anti-drug abuse councils and enhanced cooperation



with volunteer informers and peer group organization was to be at the core of this policy.<sup>9</sup> In addition, she took up a concept from Davao City that made employers responsible for a drug-free workplace through, among other things, random drug testing. She also established a comprehensive database managed by the newly activated City Anti-Drug Abuse Advisory Council on all admitted drug users in QC (Mateo 2019). Thus, in Quezon City the local chief executive is slowly moving in the direction of local ownership and bridging networks, suggesting a higher level of local resilience in any future external shock.

## 5.3 MANILA

### 5.3.1 FATAL POLICE VIOLENCE BEFORE AND DURING THE DUTERTE PRESIDENCY

At first sight, the case of Manila, unlike the cases of Bulacan, Quezon City or Caloocan, seems to be a paradox. Whereas pre-Duterte police use of deadly force levels had been quite stable, with minor fluctuations in the other LGUs, Manila City levels fluctuated strongly from very low levels in 2006 and 2007, intermediate levels during the next three years and highly excessive levels in 2011 and 2012 (74 killings in 2012) to a sudden drop in 2013 and a further drop to only five reported killings in 2015, fewer than half the 11 suspects killed in Caloocan in the same year. Despite the huge temporal variation, the average annual kill rate in Manila was almost identical to the one in Quezon (both 14 killings per million inhabitants) for the decade from 2006 to 2015. This is more than four times the pre-Duterte average for Caloocan (3.1). Despite the outstanding drop of police killings in the years immediately preceding the Duterte presidency, Manila reacted most explosively to Duterte campaign, with a police kill rate almost twice as high as those of Quezon City and Caloocan.

### 5.3.2 POLITICAL OPPORTUNISM OF A CHIEF EXECUTIVE

In Manila one initial question is why police use of deadly force dropped by such an unprecedented degree in the years after 2012. Put simply, this seems to have been because Joseph Estrada won the

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9 This shift was based on local experiences in Barangay Culiati, notorious in past years as a drug-infested no-go area for the police. Barangay Culiati and especially its Salam Compound are special with respect to a tightly knit Muslim minority population. It is important to note that the initiative for this shift did not lie with the QC government, but the QC police and dates back to 2017. At that time the QC police established their "QC Muslim Community Drug-Clearing Project" that in certain respects relied on "racial profiling," as it targeted Muslim drug dealers and sought to make use of the local leaders of the tightly knit Muslim communities, "because they form a 'solid group'" (Enano 2017). Police and local community representatives established a highly functional cooperative relationship that allowed for a minimization of killings.

As QC police director Guillermo Eleazar had already noted in 2017, the Salam Compound: "used to be very notorious and impenetrable. But because of their concern, the community worked together with the barangay and the police, and it was effective" (Enano 2017). As a local Muslim police commander remarked in 2019 on the very specific scope of this project: "We worked together, about seven tribes, Maguindanaoan, Maranao, Tausug, Yakan, Iranon, Sama Gangingi, and Balik-Islam. We formed a Peace and Order council, so we have been peaceful here for the last two years" (Panti 2019; translated by P.K.). Actually, it was traditional tribal social control that worked in this case.

2013 elections for mayor. He won against Alfredo Lim, former police general, ex-Secretary of the Interior and Local Government and ex-Senator. Alfredo Lim was famous or notorious as the “Dirty Harry” of the Philippines. Lim advocated and implemented an iron-fisted anti-crime strategy – a strategy that translated into a rash of killings during his second term in office. Joseph Estrada on the other hand was popular among the urban poor for his image as an outlaw and strongman based on his starring roles in numerous action movies from the 1960s to the 1980s. Often overlooked is that at no point during his long political career did the strongman image correspond to Estrada’s practice of governing, neither as mayor of San Juan City (1969–1986) nor later in various other positions, including his term as president (1998–2001). When he stood for mayor of Manila City in 2013 he campaigned on a promise to end the policy of his predecessor, who, as Estrada critically remarked “takes the law in his own hands” (Rodriguez 2013). Estrada clearly signaled a different approach linking crime to poverty: “Hungry stomach [...] knows no law” (Evangelista 2013). Yet, while he managed to put a cap on police killings in Manila, his rhetoric was not matched by other political action. While Estrada doled out rewards to police officers, he had no vision of any strategy for citizen security. The Manila City Anti-Drug Abuse Council (MADAC) was only created in June 2016 after the election of Rodrigo Duterte and the discovery of various drug labs in the city. This came on top of the problem that Estrada, as almost all other chief executives in the sample under investigation, had backed the wrong candidates in the national elections. Unlike the other local chief executives discussed above and below, Estrada had no support from a family network in governing Manila City. This made him overly reliant on vertical links to the national administration. Small wonder that Estrada aggressively followed the lead of the president, proclaiming:

What our President (Rodrigo Duterte) is doing is right. Our country is already in danger. Let us all unite, and finish off these druggies [...]. The police cannot (do this) on their own. The barangay chairs are needed. The barangay tanods. They know who the drug pushers and users are in each barangay [...]. Rub them all out. Let’s finish them. (Mangunay 2016)

Estrada very quickly succeeded in re-establishing a positive relationship with Duterte, as could be seen by his being invited to become godfather to Sara Duterte-Carpio’s third son in March 2017 and the presence of Rodrigo Duterte at Estrada’s 80th birthday party. Afterwards, police use of deadly force in Manila City dropped significantly.

However, also in the following years the mayor gave no prominence to a city-based approach to citizen security, except for a small program dating from his time as vice-president (1992–1998) that provides for some drug education in schools (DARE program). Otherwise Estrada regularly repeated his pledge to make Manila City drug-free until he lost to Isko Moreno Domagoso in the 2019 election. After less than half a year in office, the latter pointed out that the Estrada administration had not allocated any city funds to the anti-drug campaign at all during the previous three years (Edera 2019).

Throughout his mayorship of Manila, Estrada acted as a political opportunist. When a strong stance against police violence suited his political aims in his contest against Alfredo Lim in 2013 he positioned himself accordingly and managed to bring police violence down to extraordinarily low

levels. In 2016 he completely shifted his stance to remedy the negative effects of his prior decision to support Duterte's political opponent. As soon as the new alignment had accomplished its purpose of securing the political link to the Duterte administration, violence patterns reverted to lower levels starting in mid-2017.

## **5.4 CALOOCAN**

### **5.4.1 FATAL POLICE VIOLENCE BEFORE AND DURING THE DUTERTE PERIOD**

Police shoot-out levels in Caloocan were less than a quarter of those in neighboring Manila and Quezon City during the decade before Duterte and also slightly lower than those in Bulacan and Davao City. Despite this, police violence exploded during the first year with Duterte in Malacañang Palace. Even more noteworthy than the leap in police use of deadly force was the exceptional rate of vigilante killings. During the first year of Duterte, vigilante and unaccounted-for killings constituted a full 60% of the total documented cases in Caloocan. Among the earliest victims were several barangay officials (Palatino 2019). Most prominent was Barangay 188 chairman Edres Domato, "widely known as a drug lord" (Badilla 2016). This specific pattern lends credence to suggestions that many of these killings were aimed at hiding "the identities of the politicians and police officers involved in the illegal drug trade" (Galupo 2016). Whereas vigilante killings had already dropped dramatically during the second year, police killings fell more slowly, but were down to pre-Duterte levels by the second half of 2019, when Caloocan reported the lowest police killing rate compared to all other units under consideration.

### **5.4.2 PREEMPTING THE THREAT OF BEING LINKED TO "NARCO POLITICIANS"**

Caloocan Mayor Oscar Malapitan<sup>10</sup> qualifies as a passive chief executive with respect to citizen security prior to the 2016 elections. In his case, passivity coincided with the public perception of Caloocan as a hotbed of drug crime in the National Capital Region and long-standing rumors that the mayor and family members and political allies had strong links to local druglords. The most serious allegations dated from 2012, when the police found nine kilos of crystal meth in a SUV "owned" by Malapitan's running mate for vice-mayor, Antonio Almeda (Ramos 2012). In 2013 the United Movement Against Drugs targeted Almeda, the mayor, and his daughter, Sharon F. Bautista, then barangay captain in Caloocan City, as alleged "narco politicians" (Manila Times 2013). In 2013 this posed no problem to the mayor and his allies, because the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) stated that it would not investigate cases of politicians allegedly accepting drug money. The situation changed with the 2016 election campaign of Rodrigo Duterte, who repeatedly declared that he would order the PDEA and PNP to pursue "narco politicians." With rising approval ratings

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10 On the political fortune of the Malapitans, see the online appendix: Malapitan.

for presidential candidate Duterte, the mayor shifted towards an expressly hardline anti-drug abuse stance, arguing that

for my second term, we will declare an all-out war against drug pushers and drug syndicates, put up a rehabilitation center for drug victims, and institute a reward system for informants. We will strengthen the Caloocan Anti-Drug Abuse Council to initiate proactive projects in all schools. (Agoncillo 2016a)

As soon as Duterte had won the election, Malapitan became a prominent supporter of the president-elect's policy line. During the preceding years the city government's so-called "anti-drug campaign" had no specified funding and consisted of no more than a few educational and sports activities. Malapitan already declared an "all-out" war against drug crime several weeks before Duterte took office as president. He offered a bounty to the public and the police for tips and for the arrest of criminals. He also ordered local barangay captains to provide him with lists of drug personalities, threatened criminals that they might end up dead if they resisted arrest, and declared a curfew for minors effective from July 2016 onwards (ABS-CBN News 2016). The mayor now wanted to "hunt and crack down on everyone who is associated with drugs. We will not stop until we completely diminish drugs in Caloocan" (Agoncillo 2016b). He seems to have acted out of concern that he might be targeted as a "narco politician." This can at least be deduced from a comment made by Caloocan police director Bartolome Bustamante: "If the head will speak, others will follow. Before, policemen are apprehensive to go after anti-drug law violators; now we know we have a backup" (Agoncillo 2016b).

### **5.5 THE DEADLY EFFECTS OF PASSIVE AND OPPORTUNISTIC CHIEF EXECUTIVES**

The chief executives of Bulacan, Manila, Caloocan and Quezon City represent variations on a common theme. None of them gave emphasis to questions of citizen security or crime control before the 2016 election campaign. Local civilian institutions under the direct or indirect control of the city governments dealing with citizen security remained weak. Networks offering a bridge between LGU and local PNP for establishing mutual trust were not established. In all four cases the chief executives bet on the wrong horse in the 2016 elections. Even worse, in two of the cases, the chief executives were directly or indirectly linked to illegal drug trade and consumption. Both faced the risk of being named in any official or unofficial list of "narco-politicians" at the president's pleasure and run the risk of being killed by vigilantes.

Lacking a secure network of interacting local agents of crime control encompassing the local police, all four local chief executives decided on a rather similar course: to let the police run the show. Two of them, Malapitan and Estrada, went further and followed the political lead of the anti-drug campaign in their baili-wicks. Bulacan's Sy-Alvarado and Quezon's Bautista and Belmonte, all without prior displays of strong-manship, chose to evade the issue and give free rein to their police directors.

## 6. CONCLUSION

While the results of the above analysis are still preliminary, they indicate that it is worthwhile to bring a strong focus on politics back into research on police use of (deadly) force. The focus on the sub-national level of politics further refocuses attention in a field of research that tends to seek explanations for problematic police behavior within the institution itself.

When politics come into play, it is normally at the national level, at exceptional times, such as, for example, when national leaders from Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines to Thaksin Shinawatra in Thailand and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil call for a war on crime, a *ManoDura* (iron fist) or *Mano Superdura* as in El Salvador under presidents Francisco Flores and Antonio Saca. Media and scholarly debate often create the impression of a fairly uniform pattern of fatal (and non-fatal) police use of force in specific countries, but in fact this need not be the case. Local variation among subnational political units is high in countries with a long-standing practice of excessive fatal police violence, such as the United States or Brazil. It is also high in countries with campaign-style excesses, such as Thailand and the Philippines. The preliminary results provided in this report suggest that detailed analyses of spatial (and temporal) variation of police (and other forms of repressive) violence and their relationship to local politics may provide some important insight for minimizing the occurrence of such violence.

In the above exploratory analysis of a small number of Philippine LGUs, the focus was on the political personae of chief political executives at the level of province and independent city. This is due to the fact that in the Philippines not only are politics always local, but they are also centered on families and individual political leaders, who normally build their power from the bottom up, and it is individuals or individual representatives of locally trusted families and not parties who are elected, from the lowest level of barangay to the highest office in the land.

The present analysis has shown that politicians differ with respect to the salience of citizen security in their thinking and of their position on strategies of crime control. The present sample suggests that during periods without crisis, crime control tends to be higher on the agenda of political hardliners, for whom it is a fitting part of their political profile, whereas for all others it is more a political burden that does not promise any political returns and is thus better left to the police. In times of crisis, as, for example, when an active national chief executive takes over and demands an iron-fisted war on crime, this seems to result in a paradox: Whereas former hardliners dampen police and vigilante violence, the others either actively support the crackdown on the drug trade or at least tolerate the excessive violence perpetrated by police and vigilantes.

Thus, we find executives who actively localize crime control during “normal” times, enmeshing the local branch of the PNP into horizontal networks with local governmental and non-governmental organizations. Such behavior may be described as typical of local government bent on subverting top-down central control of the local branch of a national bureaucracy and is generally associated with clientelism, corruption, sub-optimal performance and state weakness. However, in the context analyzed here, it functioned as a moderating device. Thus, a second paradox emerges: Local political

leaders who had been fairly successful in localizing or subverting top-down control of crime-control policy were not only able but willing to redirect local police practice and proved capable of containing violence dynamics emanating from the national center.

A final paradox is that active and passive chief executives do not differ in any systematic way with respect to their personalist conception of politics or their populist presentation of their policies. Modernist representatives of an efficiency-focused policy orientation like the Gatchalian brothers, traditional caring patrons like Lilia Piñeda, standard bearers of liberalism like the Belmontes, strong(wo) men like Sara Duterte-Carpio and traditional politicians like Oscar Malapitan or Joseph Estrada share the same fundamental understanding of politics as a personal or family affair. Expressed in simple terms, in the arena of Philippine politics there is no alternative to the highly personalized politics of the past or present. To a significant extent Philippine politics is a rule of individuals and not of law or bureaucratic regulations, an important characteristic which constrains strategies for preempting future excesses of police or other state/elite-linked repressive violence.

Personalism and familism are not only dominant because there are no alternatives on the supply side of politics. They prevail because these patterns of ordering the social and political world fit the role expectation of political leadership held by the vast majority of Filipinos and Filipinas (Kreuzer 2020). A politician who does not meet this expectation will lose at the polls. Therefore, reform efforts aiming at strengthening state institutions, political parties and the rule of law are bound to fail, if only because they would run squarely counter to the demand-side for patronage and personalistic structuring of an integrated politico-economic sphere. Further, recipes that focus on security sector reform are clearly insufficient, as the problem and its potential solutions are primarily situated in the political realm.

A key lesson can be drawn from the comparison of passive and active mayors and governors. If active local security governance during normal times provides an option for counteracting repressive national level initiatives, liberal politicians should not avoid this politically otherwise unrewarding issue of citizen security and leave it to the law enforcement agencies in non-crisis times. Instead, they should make security governance a regular and important part of their political agenda. Security governance may be an inconvenient issue for local politicians. However, leaving it to hardliners in "normal times" undermines liberal claims that there are superior alternatives to the iron fist. In countries with high levels of crime, support for an iron-fisted anti-crime strategy will only collapse, if liberal politicians establish an alternative policy that succeeds in providing „law-and-order“ without the use of extralegal means.

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PETER KREUZER //

**GOVERNORS AND MAYORS IN THE  
PHILIPPINES.  
RESISTANCE TO OR SUPPORT FOR  
DUTERTE'S DEADLY WAR ON DRUGS**

Rodrigo Duterte has become infamous for his war on drugs in the Philippines that cost the lives of thousands of Filipinos. However, killings were far from uniformly spread across the country. Otherwise comparable local government units even reacted in fundamentally different ways to the "license-to-kill" granted to the police and vigilantes by the President.

Peter Kreuzer shows that local government makes a big difference. Local governments with leaders who had made public safety a key component of their political agenda even before Duterte took office used established practices and good contacts with the local police to neutralize central government directives. By contrast, heads of government who had left the politically unprofitable issue of public security to the police tolerated or supported the escalatory dynamics emanating from the political center. How these dynamics developed in practice is illustrated by an analysis of seven local government units.

Dr. Peter Kreuzer is a senior researcher in PRIF's research department "Intrastate Conflict." In his research he focuses on Philippine domestic politics, violence in multiethnic societies, and maritime conflicts in East and Southeast Asia.

