

*Asymmetrical Interests, Disjointed Capacities:
the Central-Local Dynamics of Political Violence*

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Why does political violence occur in a weak state with an unconsolidated democracy? The real puzzle is when it does not occur. I argue that interests and capacity can result in political violence, but why violence is used, when it starts, and why it ends is contingent upon central-local dynamics. *Central-local dynamics* are the resolution of strategic and particularistic interests coupled with the capacity afforded by powerful national and local political actors to use violence in response to threats.

In Northern Luzon, the so-called “Solid North” bailiwick of the Marcos dynasty and its immediate environs, elections account for most of the violence that occurs. Interactions between national and local elites were visible during elections, but account for little else in the intervals between them. Levels of violence were relatively low, the lowest across the cases.

In Eastern Visayas, the New People’s Army (NPA) of the communist insurgency posed a serious threat. Attacks against the military and police left multiple casualties among state security forces. The army believed that the NPA had infiltrated hundreds of villages and compromised locally elected officials. The central government stepped up its counter-insurgency operations, brutally and illegally targeting civilians. The NPA was eventually driven down, their ranks crippled further after successive natural calamities. In Central Luzon, state security forces were directed against civilians and community organizers to protect economic interests of powerful local politicians—not least of which was the Cojuangco-Aquino family.

Southern Mindanao saw the most violent among the cases, but neither insurgency nor elections was the proximate cause. A majority of the incidents were vigilante-style killings in Davao City. The Davao Death Squad could not have resulted in the egregious level of lethality if national elites and the central government had not enabled Duterte, then city mayor. Unlike other cases however, the withdrawal of central support did not stop Duterte nor cease the violence. And we are all too familiar with the epilogue to that story.

Violence in democracies

The coercion of the citizenry is *the* essential tool to accumulate and maintain power in autocracies.¹ Democracies, in contrast, are expected to have developed more

¹ Francisco Herreros, "The Full Weight of the State: The Logic of Random State-Sanctioned Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 43, no. 6 (2006): 671. See also Ronald Francisco, "The Dictator's Dilemma," in *Repression and Mobilization*, ed. Hank Johnston and Caroline Mueller Christian Davenport (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2004), 59. George Lopez, "National Security Ideology as an Impetus to State Violence and State Terror," in *Government Violence and Repression*, ed. Michael Stohl and George Lopez (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1986), 74.

non-coercive ways of managing contention, opposition and protest.² A stable democracy habituates state and non-state actors to the resolution of political conflict through constitutionally legitimate processes,³ accommodating demands through institutions such as political parties and elections with a minimum of conflict.⁴ Comparative evidence suggests that democratic political institutions inhibit violence “across time, space, measurements and methodological techniques.”⁵ Why then might political violence persist in democracies? There are three key explanations: the failure of democratic consolidation, the persistence of authoritarian legacies, and state weakness.

Partly free states undergoing democratization commit higher levels of severe violations than both consolidated democracies as well as stable authoritarian regimes.⁶ In unconsolidated democracies, elections are regular but the use of coercion and other forms of manipulation may be pervasive. These “imperfect” democracies have “somewhat higher levels of freedom” than authoritarian regimes, but may deploy state violence with little constraint.⁷ Moreover, mechanisms integral to democratization such as elections blur the line between centralized state violence as well as particularistic, often decentralized political violence.⁸ Elections may exacerbate violence in places with a history of armed conflict or communal tensions.⁹

Ultimately, the argument is limited by its circular reasoning: violent repression occurs in democracies because they are not fully democratic. Instead of assessing the institutional deficiencies of “failed” democratization against an idealized type, scholars have instead paid attention to continuities from authoritarian rule. Specialized state agencies of coercion and violence, as well as rules, patterns and practices of an authoritarian past may remain durable in the democratic present.¹⁰ The military’s role may be preserved or expanded into such areas as drug interdiction,

² Ted Robert Gurr, "War, Revolution and the Growth of the Coercive State," *Comparative Political Studies* 21, no. 45 (1988): 54.

³ Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 44.

⁴ Steve Poe and C. Neal Tate, "Repression of Human Rights to Personal Integrity in the 1980s: A Global Analysis," *The American Political Science Review* 88, no. 4 (1994): 855-56. Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al., "Thinking inside the Box: A Closer Look at Democracy and Human Rights," *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (2005): 442.

⁵ Christian Davenport, "State Repression and Political Order," *Annual Review of Political Science* 10, no. 1 (2007): 11. See also Poe and Tate. Also Mesquita et al.

⁶ Helen Fein, "More Murder in the Middle: Life Integrity Violations and Democracy in the World," *Human Rights Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1995): 184.

⁷ Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 9-16.

⁸ See for example, Jacqueline Klopp, "Ethnic Clashes and Winning Elections: The Case of Kenya's Electoral Despotism," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 35, no. 3 (2001).

⁹ Kristine Höglund, "Electoral Violence in Conflict-Ridden Societies: Concepts, Causes, and Consequences," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21, no. 3 (2009): 413-14. See also Steven Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Also

¹⁰ Katherine Hite and Paola Cesarini, "Introducing the Concept of Authoritarian Legacies," in *Authoritarian Legacies and Democracy in Latin America and Southern Europe*, ed. Katherine Hite and Paola Cesarini (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 2004), 4. Christian Davenport, "The Promise of Democratic Pacification: An Empirical Assessment," *International Studies Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (2004): 542. Gurr, 49.

counter-insurgency and crime fighting.¹¹ These “everyday forms of state coercion” that constitute “routine politicking, intelligence work, and military operations” do not overtly challenge civilian rule but may result in violence.¹²

Such studies raise the importance of the quotidian dimension of the encroachment of security forces in the public sphere. However, an authoritarian past may not fully clarify why violence might resurge then recede in a democracy. Nor does an authoritarian past readily account for particularistic violence generated by elections. Moreover, if similar kinds of violence might persist regardless of regime type, then does the explanation lie elsewhere?

The ability to monopolize the legitimate use of force to the exclusion of other forces in society is integral modern state. Administrative, legal, extractive and coercive organizations structure relations between the state and society as well as within society; the existence of competing, well-organized social groups implies a weaker state that is less autonomous from society.¹³ Migdal argues that states are weak where they are unable to establish their predominance over networks of local strongmen, whereas certain social structures with highly centralized institutions may foster the development of strong state capabilities.¹⁴

Weak state, flawed democracy

Unsteady democratic consolidation and state weakness are common tropes in scholarship on the Philippines.¹⁵ The underlying argument is that self-interested elites prey upon the Philippine state. This, in turn, constrains the quality of democracy by depriving voters of meaningful choices. Different approaches vary in which elites they identify, the mechanisms by which they dominate and the role that political violence plays. Hutchcroft emphasizes that oligarchs and cronies plunder a neopatrimonial state for particularistic advantage.¹⁶ Moreover, the introduction of elections under American colonialism prioritized the setting up of institutions for representation over the establishment of a centralized bureaucracy—reinforcing the provinces as sites of political power.¹⁷ Some authors examine on asymmetrical,

¹¹ For instance, as a consequence of their subordination to political parties, the militaries in Colombia and Mexico continue to maintain a presence in the local state and contribute to growing violence in urban centers and the regions. Anthony Pereira and Diane Davis, "New Patterns of Militarized Violence and Coercion in the Americas," *Latin American Politics and Society* 27, no. 2 (2000): 7.

¹² Anthony Pereira cited in Jorge Zaverucha, "Fragile Democracy and the Militarization of Public Safety in Brazil," *Latin American Perspectives* 27, no. 3 (2000): 8-10.

¹³ Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 7.

¹⁴ Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988).

¹⁵ See, for instance Aurel Croissant, "From Transition to Defective Democracy: Mapping Asian Democratization," *Democratization* 11, no. 5 (2004).

¹⁶ Hutchcroft applies and adapts this Weberian analysis to the banking sector. Paul Hutchcroft, *Booty Capitalism: The Politics of Banking in the Philippines* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 8-15.

¹⁷ Paul Hutchcroft and Joel Rocamora, "Strong Demands and Weak Institutions: The Origins and Evolution of the Democratic Deficit in the Philippines," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 3, no. 2 (2003): 270.

patron-client relations that formed the basis of local politics.¹⁸ McCoy and others focus on political families who sought to transform their electoral offices into lasting political dynasties with a strategy of rent-seeking, typically in the capital, and political violence against opponents, in the provinces.¹⁹

The dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos from the imposition of martial law in 1972, until his fall in 1986, disrupted oligarchic rule. Anderson observes that Marcos became the “supreme *cacique*” through a reversal of the traditional flow of power: he exploited the state and enhanced it as an instrument for plunder; he divided the oligarchy by favoring his cronies and mercilessly attacking his opponents; with American support in the climate of the Cold War, he nurtured and politicized the military as an instrument of social control and a counter to insurgencies of a reinvigorated Left and of secessionists in the South.²⁰ The ouster of Marcos is typically marked as a return of oligarchic domination.²¹ However, intra-elite arrangements of oligarchic rotation and the moderation of political violence may have been “damaged beyond restoration.”²²

Perspectives on the formation of a ruling, oligarchic class and the neopatrimonial framework agree on the assessment of a “weak” Philippine state: it is beholden to particularistic interests, cast as self-serving family enterprises or a dominant class; its bureaucratic apparatus is ineffective and has no monopoly over the use of force.²³ After Marcos, moreover, the politically mobilized military and security apparatus became sources of “ambitious elite figures and would-be oligarchs.”²⁴ Furthermore, Sidel reflects the heightened importance of coercion in his characterization of local political bosses that achieve monopolistic control over both coercive and economic resources in their bailiwicks. He argues that local bosses are constrained from establishing durable political dynasties where the public sector dwarfs private wealth, so they tend to rely more on crime and violence.²⁵

¹⁸ Carl Lande, *Leaders, Factions, and Parties: The Structure of Philippine Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 78. See also James Scott, “Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia,” *The American Political Science Review* 66, no. 1 (1972): 92. Also Allen Hicken, “Clientelism,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 14 (2011): 290-92.

¹⁹ Alfred McCoy, “An Anarchy of Families: The Historiography of State and Family in the Philippines,” in *An Anarchy of Families: State and Family in the Philippines*, ed. Alfred McCoy (Wisconsin: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1993), 20-22; 24.

²⁰ Benedict Anderson, “Cacique Democracy in the Philippines: Origins and Dreams,” *New Left Review* I, no. 169 (1988).

²¹ Hutchcroft and Rocamora, 276. See also Eric Gutierrez, Ildefonso Torrente, and Noli Narca, *All in the Family: A Study of Elites and Power Relations in the Philippines* (Diliman, Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy, 1992).

²² Jeffrey Winters, *Oligarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 137-39; 206.

²³ However, some neo-Marxists contend that social forces alone cannot explain the weakness of the Philippine state and the persistent underdevelopment of the country. Bello *et al.*, for instance, argue that relations of dependency with the United States and institutions of neoliberalism have impaired the relative autonomy of the state from the oligarchic class. Walden Bello *et al.*, *The Anti-Development State: The Political Economy of Permanent Crisis in the Philippines* (London: Zed Books, 2004), 282-86; 304.

²⁴ Winters, 206. See also Renato Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (Quezon City: Tala Publishing Corporation, 1978), 401-02.

²⁵ John Sidel, *Capital, Coercion, and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 19, 50.

Sidel argues that bossism, as an “inter-locking, multitiered directorate” signifies the Philippine state’s predatory “strength”.²⁶ In contrast, Abinales maintains that the diagnosis of the state’s weakness remains analytically useful because the crucial question is this: how does a weak state govern? He argues that capacity is not determined by the state’s ability to dominate society but instead influence it, provide a focus for politics where institutions are hollow and find a middle ground with other centers of power.²⁷ A weak state governs through mutual accommodation with local strongmen.

The scholarship on the Philippines underscores the futility of conceptualizing democracy or the state in normative terms. Elections are gamed to the advantage of an entrenched elite. Both incumbents and challengers will deploy all sorts of underhanded and even criminal strategies in order to win elections, including violence. The basic argument for the persistence of violence in Philippine politics because of state’s accommodation with society is plausible. However, theorizing why political violence has surged in the post-authoritarian period is focused mainly on electoral violence and struggles over public office. This does not extend to an explanation for a period of ruthless state violence against activists that intensified in the mid-2000s throughout the country.

Violent repression without authoritarian reversal

In 1986, people took to the streets and catalyzed the collapse of the Marcos dictatorship. Corazon Aquino, who was believed to have won a snap election against Marcos, was installed into office. National and local elections have proceeded regularly since then. In 2001, however, a second uprising unseated the popularly elected president Joseph Estrada after the failure of a senate impeachment process on corruption charges against him. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, then vice-president, assumed Estrada’s office and completed his term. She ran and won in the 2004 elections. However, a recording of a phonecall between Arroyo and Commission on Elections official Virgilio Garcillano, allegedly the rigging the count, was made public in June 2005.²⁸ Opposition politicians attempted to impeach Arroyo but her allies defeated each attempt in Congress.

Arroyo remained in office until the end of her term; elections in 2010 turned the government over to Benigno Aquino—Corazon’s son. Arroyo and Aquino had fallen out over the fraud scandal, and Arroyo compounded the rift by purportedly

²⁶ Sidel (p. 146) claims that by Migdal’s definition, local bosses in the Philippines have the capability of strong states to penetrate society although as a pronounced ‘predatory’ rather than ‘developmental’ strong state. Although Sidel evokes Evans’s idea of predation, he confuses bosses’ predation *on* the state apparatus with predation *by* bosses, as state agents, *of* society. In either case, Evans was ambivalent on whether predatory states could be qualified as either “strong” or “weak”: they may be strong with despotic or infrastructural power but weak, if strength is defined by the state’s capability of transforming the economy and social structure. All told, I argue that Sidel inadvertently lends support to the insight that strongmen *qua* society have captured parts of the *weak* state apparatus. See Migdal, 4. See also Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 45-50.

²⁷ Patricio Abinales, *Making Mindanao: Cotabato and Davao in the Formation of the Philippine Nation-State* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000), 181-83.

²⁸ This became known as the “Hello, Garci” recording, for what Arroyo says to Garcillano in greeting. Arroyo, in an apology, verified its authenticity but denied any wrongdoing. Bobby Tuazon, ed. *Fraud: Gloria M. Arroyo and the May 2004 Elections* (Diliman, Quezon City: Center for People Empowerment in Governance, 2006).

causing Aquino's maternal family, the Cojuangcos, to lose their sugar plantation *Hacienda Luisita* to agrarian reform. Under Aquino's government, Arroyo was arrested for electoral fraud and charged further with corruption. Rodrigo Duterte assumed office in June last year; a month later, the Supreme Court ordered Arroyo's release. She is currently represents Pampanga's second district in Congress.

Plagued by challenges to her electoral legitimacy, Arroyo's time in office was distinguished by "political violence, coercion and repression."²⁹ For instance, the Arroyo government enforced a "calibrated preemptive response" policy, which revived a 1985 law under Marcos to strictly impose a "no permit, no rally" rule in 2005.³⁰ The Human Security Act of 2007, more popularly known as the "Anti-Terrorism" law, rolled back protections from indefinite detention, allowed warrantless arrests with limited judicial control as well as discouraged legitimate acts of protest.³¹

Until Duterte became president, state violence was higher during Arroyo's long incumbency than any other post-Marcos leader.³² The sharp rise in extrajudicial killings under Arroyo's government, particularly in the years 2005 and 2006, is attributed to the military operation *Bantay Laya* (Freedom Watch) against the communist insurgency.³³ The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), were founded in the early years of the Marcos government in 1968 and 1969 respectively. The rebellion persists today as one of the longest running Communist insurgencies in the world.³⁴ The government's preoccupation with counterinsurgency in the Muslim south throughout most of the 1990s created room for the NPA to grow, reinvigorating conflict in 2001.³⁵

Rather than armed insurgents however, the military targeted civilians in a bid to undermine the NPA nationally and locally.³⁶ An estimated 3 out of 10 victims of alleged summary executions were officers or members of radical, leftist party-lists like *Bayan Muna* and activist groups.³⁷ Party-lists are political parties formed from marginalized sectors (e.g. women, workers, peasants) voted upon nationally for a limited number of seats. The party-list system was designed as a post-authoritarian

²⁹ Nathan Quimpo, "The Philippines: Predatory Regime, Growing Authoritarian Features," *The Pacific Review* 22, no. 3 (2009): 347-8.

³⁰ Alexander Remollino, "GMA Creating 'De Facto' Dictatorship--Ex-Pcgg Commissioner," *Bulatlat.com* V, no. 34 (2005), <http://www.bulatlat.com/news/5-34/5-34-defacto.htm>.

³¹ "Philippines: Summary Prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in Accordance with Paragraph 15(C) of the Annex to Human Rights Council Resolution 5/1," (Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, 2008), 10.

³² Sol Iglesias, "The Duterte Playbook," *New Naratif* (2017), <http://newnaratif.com/research/the-duterte-playbook/>.

³³ There were an estimated 194 and 235 extrajudicial killings in 2005 and 2006, respectively. Karapatan (Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights), "2010 Year-End Report on the Human Rights Situation in the Philippines," (Diliman, Quezon City: Karapatan, 2011), 16.

³⁴ ICG, "The Communist Insurgency in the Philippines: Tactics and Talks," in *Asia Report No. 202* (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2011), 3-4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁶ Jose Melo, "Independent Commission to Address Media and Activist Killings Created under Administrative Order No.157 (S. 2006) Report," in *Stop the Killings, Abductions, and Involuntary or Enforced Disappearances in the Philippines* (Quezon City: IBON Foundation, Inc., 2007), 202-03.

A subsequent investigation conducted by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, lent credence to these findings.

³⁷ Al Parreño, "Report on the Philippine Extra-Judicial Killings, 2001 to 2010," (Manila: Supreme Court of the Philippines, Asia Foundation, 2011), 5.

electoral reform toward proportional representation of under-represented groups. In 2001, *Bayan Muna* unexpectedly topped the vote with 26% of the 5.06 million votes cast for the party-list system.³⁸ The military had thus cast groups like *Bayan Muna* as a communist threat. The government secretly surmised that the leftist groups were a front for propaganda, recruitment and fund-raising for the armed insurgency.³⁹ The NPA in turn, they reasoned, helped candidates on the radical left get elected.

Others argue that the leftist groups were not targeted because they were a security threat, but because they were a political one. Once represented in Congress, the radical left was part of the bothersome opposition.⁴⁰ Moreover, *Bayan Muna*, the moderate left party-list *Akabayan* and other associated groups also ran for local office under traditional parties while simultaneously campaigning for their leftist party in the party-list vote.⁴¹ Left-wing politicians were vertically involved in national politics and horizontally situated throughout the country, a formidable political force for mobilizing votes. Arroyo reversed the trend towards drawing the communists into mainstream politics. The policy was ultimately incompatible with growing conservative fears sparked by left's electoral success.⁴²

Not all the violence was a consequence of the overlap between the military's anti-communist, "dirty war" and electoral politics. A number of agrarian reform-related killings of farmers and peasant organizers were observed to be unconnected to counterinsurgency.⁴³ Local units of the national police and the military and local government authorities were involved in protecting landowners and their interests.⁴⁴ Motives behind the assassinations of elected officials, judges, lawyers and journalists were likewise a blend of the political and the personal. Nonetheless, for as long as the violence was mainly trained at the radical left and Manila, could be considered as aberrations to democratic political values that otherwise were ostensibly still in effect.⁴⁵

Strategic and Particularistic Interests, Central and Local Capacities

Why does political violence occur in a weak state with an unconsolidated democracy? The real puzzle is when it does not occur. I argue that interests and capacity can result in political violence, but why violence is used, when it starts, and why it ends is contingent upon central-local dynamics. *Central-local dynamics* are the

³⁸ Felix Muga, "How Seat Allocation Formulas Disenfranchise Millions of Voters," ed. Bobby Tuazon, *12 years of the Party List System: Marginalizing People's Representation* (Quezon City: Center for People Empowerment in Governance, 2011). 89.

³⁹ "The Strategic and Tactical Activities of CPP-NPA-NDF in the White Areas," (Knowledge Management Division, Office of the Presidential Adviser for Special Concerns, 2003), 74-80.

⁴⁰ See Julius Mariveles, "The Pawn in the Queen's Gambit? Palparan and the Counter-Insurgency Game Plan," (2014), <http://pcij.org/blog/2014/08/12/the-pawn-in-the-queens-gambit>.

⁴¹ Nathan Quimpo, *Contested Democracy and the Left in the Philippines after Marcos* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2012), 150.

⁴² Amado Doronila, "GMA's Hardline Policy Vs Reds Will Crush Her," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, June 19 2006.

⁴³ Melo, 202.

⁴⁴ Jennifer Franco and Patricio Abinales, "Again, They're Killing Peasants in the Philippines - Lawlessness, Murder and Impunity," *Critical Asian Studies* 39, no. 2 (2007): 322. See also Parreño, 17.

⁴⁵ Vincent Boudreau, "Elections, Repression and Authoritarian Survival in Post-Transition Indonesia and the Philippines," *The Pacific Review* 22, no. 2 (2009).

resolution of strategic and particularistic interests coupled with the capacity afforded by powerful national and local political actors to use violence in response to threats.

Instead of Migdal's conceptualization of a state that is "weak" if it is unable to dominate society, I argue along the same lines as Abinales: accommodation allows an infrastructurally weak state to govern. However, I argue that a state's *strategic interest* is to exercise hegemony over competing coercive forces in society; hegemony does not preclude accommodation. The conceptual opposite is *particularistic interest* of political actors in society, which aims to maximize coercive resources—the state and their own—for individual maximization. However, unlike Abinales, I argue that accommodation need not at all be mutual and will more than likely be asymmetrically tilted to one side or another in reality.

However, competing interests are resolved and decisions to use violence, where, when, how and against whom, by political actors who are centrally and locally situated. Kalyvas argues that central and local actors "jointly produce" political violence. Central elites seeking local advantage mobilize local actors seeking to settle private scores.⁴⁶ Explaining the microfoundations of political violence in national conflicts is an insight indispensable to this study. However, I argue that other relations between central and local actors are possible. "Local" should not be equated to personal while "central" is political. *Centrality* and *locality* is both hierarchy as well as the uneven dispersion of power and resources, *capacity*, from the center to the periphery. Competing characterizations of the relations between central and local actors include Sidel's "directorship" of bosses, reciprocal patrons and clients or Kit Machado's party machineries.⁴⁷ What they have in common, however, is that they are motivated by elections and predation. On the other hand, the use of force may also activate relationships between different central and local actors or structure electoral relationships differently.

To put Kalyvas's idea of "joint production" of violence another way, *motives* may unite or disunite political actors. Yet Kalyvas rightly cautions against the impossibility of ferreting out individual motives from observable political support.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, I argue that motive can be inferred from an analysis of *threats* that the targets of violence posed to the aggressor. Motives for strategic violence can be drawn from a contingent reading of the contests between state and social power.⁴⁹ On the other hand, motives for particularistic violence can be gleaned from personal threats to specific political actors, whose motives to use violence against their targets can be reasoned out.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Stathis Kalyvas, "The Ontology of Political Violence," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (2003).

⁴⁷ Kit Machado, "From Traditional Faction to Machine: Changing Patterns of Political Leadership and Organization in the Rural Philippines," *Journal of Asian Studies* 33, no. 4 (1974).

⁴⁸ Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 98-103.

⁴⁹ Vincent Boudreau, "Precarious Regimes and Matchup Problems in the Explanation of Repressive Policy," in *Repression and Mobilization*, ed. Hank Johnston and Caroline Mueller Christian Davenport (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2004), 49.

⁵⁰ The most straightforward method would be to infer the rationale for a choice to deploy or not deploy violence, and consider that the benefits of the action outweigh the costs. Davenport, "The Promise of Democratic Pacification: An Empirical Assessment," 541-43.

However, Valentino observes, not all violence is purely strategic or instrumental: regional, local or even personal motives can sometimes result in violence that is “orthogonal to the central political rift between belligerent groups in the larger conflict,” with motives that include score-settling, personal revenge and private greed if not pure sadism.⁵¹ Kalyvas concurs, labeling violence “devoid of instrumental significance, without explicit purpose” as “expressive”.⁵² Insofar as seemingly random or casual acts of violence may be completely isolated from larger political canvasses, I would agree. Nonetheless, I contend that if these acts of violence are integral to a distinct mode of political behavior, then it is possible to discern a latent logic in response to a perceived threat. My argument is analogous to appreciating a riot less as an “eruption” of conflict but rather as a mode of political violence “as a force and agency that has attained its own autonomy.”⁵³

In sum, central-local dynamics explain *patterns of strategic and particularistic violence*. Threats to the state or to political actors’ personal interests may motivate aggressors to aim violence against specific targets. Interests marry with the capacity of central and local actors to carry out violence as well as sustain it up to a certain intensity or severity and for a length of time. The onset and termination of political violence is a crucial empirical observation from which capacity for violence can be inferred.⁵⁴

From the periphery, to the center

To address the problem of why political violence persists in the Philippines, the empirical puzzle I sought to explain was why violence against activists and other unarmed civilians was intense in 2005 and 2006. The explanations that abounded among scholars, the media and activists indicated that the interaction between counter-insurgency and elections were key. Leftists posed a security threat to the state and a political threat to the conservative elite. However, that explanation did not account for violence against other groups at the same time: judges, lawyers, local politicians, and other civilians that were not affiliated to any political organization. It was also unclear how this violence against civilians affected military operations against armed insurgents, and vice versa.

How did insurgency and elections affect patterns of political violence? I collated national-level data from available sources on the presence non-state armed groups: private armed groups and insurgent guerrilla fronts. I concentrated on four regional areas: (1) Northern Luzon, consisting of the Ilocos, Cordillera and Cagayan Valley regions; (2) Central Luzon; (3) Eastern Visayas; and, (4) Southern Mindanao.

The number of private armed groups maintained by local politicians in these regions had an inverse relationship to the presence of communist fronts therein (see

⁵¹ Benjamin Valentino, “Why We Kill: The Political Science of Political Violence against Civilians,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 17 (2014).

⁵² Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*.

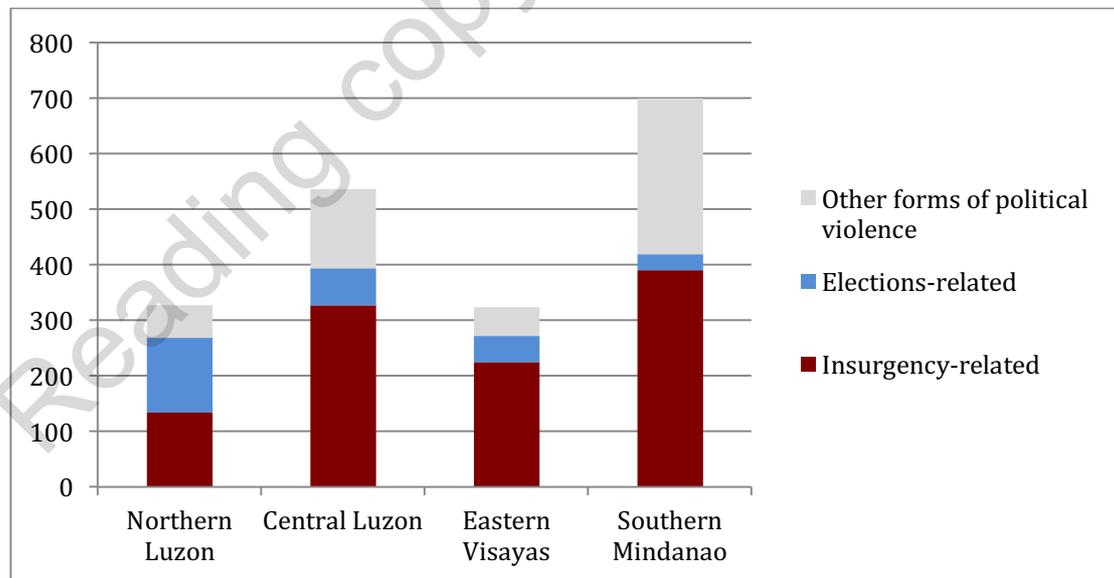
⁵³ Stanley Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 223.

⁵⁴ This proposition is informed by Conley’s insight that the ending of violence does not imply the successful attainment of its object; rather, onsets and terminations may be contingent on political actors’ capacities for violence. Bridget Conley-Zilkic, ed. *How Mass Atrocities End* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 11; 17-25.

Annex). The regions in Northern Luzon regions had a high number of private armed groups but few communist insurgent fronts. Eastern Visayas had few private armies under local politicians but a considerable number of insurgent groups. Central Luzon was low on private armies but high on insurgent groups. Southern Mindanao had no recorded private armies but had as many as 11 guerrilla fronts. Moreover, Northern Luzon regions and Central Luzon have comparable voting populations (5.78 and 6.05 million, respectively), while Eastern Visayas and Southern Mindanao are of similar size (2.70 and 2.66 million, respectively).⁵⁵ Furthermore, the regions represent a fair geographic spread across the country. Finally, the communist insurgency is the only rebellion with a significant, active presence in these areas.

However, to understand the impact of elections and insurgency on violence required the construction of an original database. My preliminary research on available datasets revealed that organizations tended to specialize in tracking narrow categories of violence. For example, the Commission on Human Rights had rich documentation of rights violations like extrajudicial killings, forced disappearance and torture, particularly complaints against the military and police. However, they have little to no records on killings or abductions committed during election cycles or against local politicians. Newspapers, on the other hand, cover killings, attempted killings and violence around local politics but typically only the more sensational cases.⁵⁶ In addition, non-government sources tend to have a precise focus, like the NGO *Karapatan* on leftist activists and community organizers, or the Center for Media Rights and Freedom on journalists killed for reasons related to their profession. Even in combination, there is a paucity of some kinds of information e.g. rape and torture, which may be under-reported.

Figure 1. Elections and Insurgency-related Political Violence from 2001 to 2016, Number of Affected Individuals per region



Source: Author's data, n=1,885

⁵⁵ "Philippine 2016 Voters Profile by Province and City/Municipality," ed. Commission on Elections (Philippines2016).

⁵⁶ For newspaper sources, I conducted a daily search of the Philippine Daily Inquirer print and online archives, supplemented by online archives of the Philippine Star, *Bulatlat*, Rappler, GMA news and regional online news outlets Sun Star.

Empirically, the data reflects political violence if: either the targets or the perpetrators of violence are known or suspected to be political actors. These include activists, insurgents, journalists, holders of public office or politicians, soldiers and paramilitary members, police officers, and members of private armed groups. From 1,093 incidents of violence, 1,885 individuals were affected: most were killed (87%) or survived an attempt (4%); some were forcibly disappeared (6%); the rest were subjected to rape or torture (3%). Looking at Figure 1, Southern Mindanao experienced the highest magnitude of violence, followed by Central Luzon. The same number of people suffered from political violence in Eastern Visayas and Northern Luzon (134). If we express this count per 100,000 voting population, Eastern Visayas (12) was twice as violent as Northern Luzon (6). In Central Luzon, 536 killed, disappeared or hurt translates to nine per 100,000 voters, and in Southern Mindanao, 699 victims meant 26 in 100,000.

Insurgency and elections account for most of the violence in the four regions, overall. I evaluated each incident to determine whether the violence was related to insurgency, elections or some other political process. Insurgency-related incidents were typically part of a broad military campaign or operation, a specific attack or defense from an attack. Election-related incidents included violence during election cycles (filing of candidacy, campaign, polls, and post-poll counting) or outside these periods, if the context of the violence remains to be the elimination of rivals or undermining support for them.

Bloody elections in Northern Luzon

Elections drove violence most in Northern Luzon (see Figure 2), compared to other regions. Nationally, 55 political families have had uninterrupted control of an elective post for 20 to 40 years, with seven of the most durable 10 dynasties located in Northern Luzon.⁵⁷ Incumbency and dynastic dominance result in choking off competition, with candidates running unopposed and requiring only a minimum of one vote to be declared a victor.⁵⁸ In one province, the central government stepped in to end electoral violence and dismantle a politician's private army. In another province, a local boss known for violence used non-violent means to rig the competition.

Crackdown in Abra. Political violence in Abra trained a light on the prevalence of private armies in the province. At the time, several local officials in the province claimed that Governor Vicente Valera was the biggest employer of private armed groups in Abra.⁵⁹ By 2004, politicians maintained an estimated 100 men in private armies in a classic security dilemma: private armed groups were seen as indispensable protection from the intense rivalries that characterized Abra politics.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Karen Tiongson-Mayrina, "55 Political Families Have Unbreakable Hold on Power, One Clan for 43 Years," *GMA News Online* (2014), <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/316096/news/specialreports/55-political-families-have-unbreakable-hold-on-power-one-clan-for-43-years>.

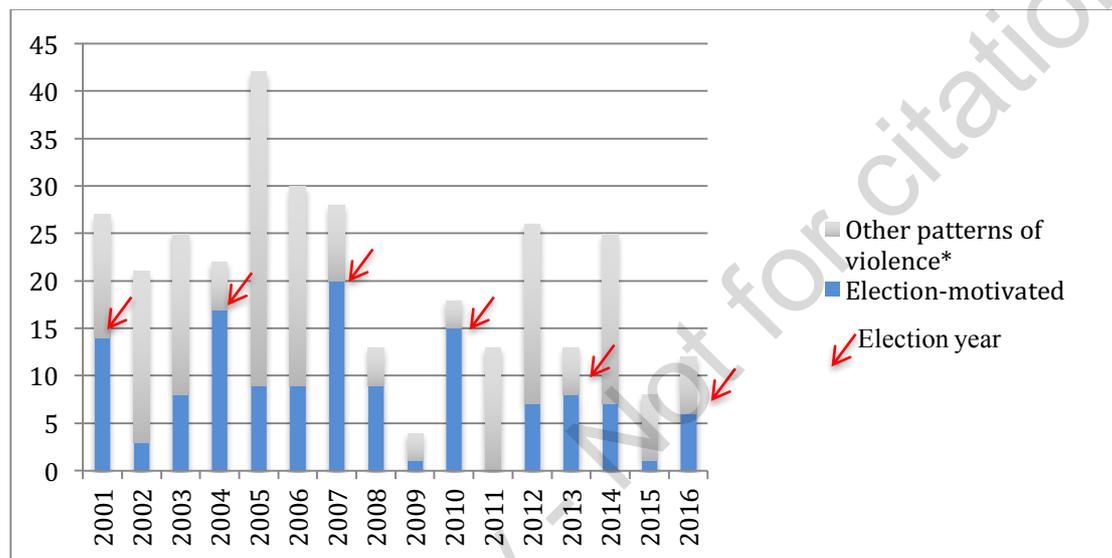
⁵⁸ Jocelyn Uy, "18 Lawmakers Don't Have Challengers," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, November 5 2013.

⁵⁹ Artha Kira Paredes, "Cops Says Private Armies Make Peace in Abra 'Elusive'," *ibid.*, September 16 2004.

⁶⁰ "The Assassins of Abra: 'Just Like Killing Chicken'," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, September 8 2004.

A top official in Abra likened the goons of private armies to pieces on a chess board: in exchanges, the pawns go first; the more pawns a player has on the board, the better shielded the king is from attack.⁶¹ After the assassination of his rival Luis Bersamin, the national government dismantled private armies in the province; Valera was arrested and convicted for the crime.⁶² Voters also punished Valera at the polls in 2007. The Valeras lost their 20-year grip on the governor spot as Luis Bersamin's brother Estaquio triumphed over Valera's wife.⁶³

Figure 2. Election-motivated Violence in Northern Luzon from 2001 to 2016, Number of Affected Individuals



Source: Author's data, n=327

* 69% insurgency-motivated

Tactical change in Ilocos Sur. Strongman Chavit Singson had a long history of deploying coercive violence to eliminate rivals and threats to his incumbency. In 2003, provincial auditor Augustin Chan was assassinated in the midst of investigating Singson over his alleged use of public funds from a tobacco excise tax.⁶⁴ Yet months prior to the filing of candidacy in the 2013 elections, Singson and his son Eric met with mayors and their rivals to push consensus so that there would be fewer competitions. Consequently, an unprecedented 18 uncontested candidates ran in Ilocos, among whom were several Singson clan members.⁶⁵

Security threat in Eastern Visayas

Eastern Visayas been a NPA stronghold since the 1970s. The insurgency in the Samar and Leyte islands did not suffer from the fracture of the Philippine Left in

⁶¹ "Pawns in Abra Politics," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, September 9 2004.

⁶² Marlon Ramos, "PNP Admits Failure to Dismantle Private Armies," *ibid.* 2010.

⁶³ *Inquirer Northern Luzon, Inquirer Central Luzon, and Inquirer Southern Luzon*, "Old Fiefdoms Going as Valeras, Josons Tumble," *ibid.*, May 20 2007.

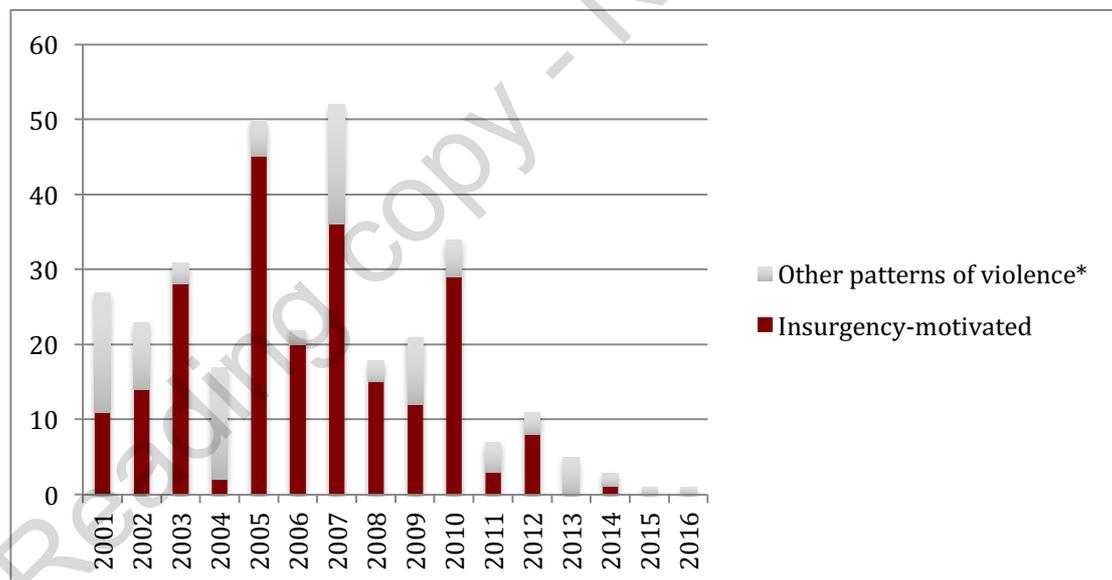
⁶⁴ Frank Cimatu and Leoncio Balbin, "Chavit Tagged Brains in Killing: Ex-Gov Says Accusation Part of Erap Plot to Extract Revege," *ibid.*, October 10 2003.

⁶⁵ Frank Cimatu, "Ilocos Sur Politics Still under Spell of Chavit," *ibid.*, April 24 2013.

the 1990s between moderates and radicals. The movement here remained committed to guerrilla warfare.⁶⁶ The NPA was deeply entrenched, either by acting as a parallel government, providing some forms of social services and enforcing its dominance through coercive means via “revolutionary” justice.⁶⁷ The military had a very difficult task in rooting out insurgents from among the population.⁶⁸ As a result, the military targeted known family members and suspected sympathizers in the communities.

Insurgents attack, civilians punished. The NPA insurgency posed the biggest threat to the state in Eastern Visayas compared to the other regions in this study. NPA attacks against the military, police and local government drove the state’s response. There was a steady increase of violence between NPA and the military in Samar provinces and Leyte until 2003 (see Figure 3 below). While the NPA carried out a brutal campaign, the military inflicted violence upon suspected insurgents and civilians as a deterrent. For instance, in Kanaga town in 2003, suspected government soldiers killed Eugenio Tazan and eight others, including four teenagers; the army claims the nine were NPA members but the CHR investigation found evidence of torture and contradicted the military’s assertion that these were combat deaths.⁶⁹ Moreover, local NGOs in Tacloban maintained that the fatalities were not insurgents but were farmers.⁷⁰

Figure 3. Insurgency-motivated Violence in Eastern Visayas from 2001 to 2016, Number of Affected Individuals



Source: Author’s data, n=323

⁶⁶ William Holden, "The Never Ending War in the Wounded Land: The New People's Army on Samar," *Journal of Geography and Geology* 5, no. 4 (2013): 37-42.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶⁸ Marc Villavicencio, "Army Seeks Mayors’ Help against Rebs," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, July 20 2003.

⁶⁹ Regional Director Paquito Nacino, "CHR Resolution Case No.: 08-03-30," (Commission on Human Rights, December 11, 2003). Aubrey Makilan, "GMA Accused as 'Coddler of Killers in Uniform'," *Bulatlat.com* 3, no. 19 (2003), <http://www.bulatlat.com/news/3-19/3-19-killersinuniform.html>.

⁷⁰ Joey Gabieta, "5 Soldiers, 10 Suspeted Rebels Killed in Holy Week Clashes," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 12 2003.

* 48% election-motivated

The Butcher. Major General Jovito Palparan was assigned to Eastern Visayas in February 2005 to command the 8th Infantry Division. Palparan had served in Oriental Mindoro province from 2001 to 2003, where he gained the monicker *berdugo*, or butcher, linked to an estimated 32 alleged summary executions. He was suspected of earlier violations in the 1980s in Central Luzon, the Cordilleras and other parts of Southern Luzon.⁷¹ Although activists had been harassed and intimidated before, it was only after Palparan's arrival that they began to be killed systematically. During his six-month tour in Eastern Visayas, Palparan accused local politicians of being supporters of the NPA.⁷² In turn, Samar province's congressional representatives pressured President Arroyo to transfer Palparan out of Eastern Visayas in August.⁷³

Nature's coup de grace. After a brief lull in the violence, insurgency and counter-attacks resumed. The cumulative effect of the government's counter-insurgency campaign bore fruit. The military estimated what NPA membership to have dropped from 1,000 in 2006 to about 300 active fighters by 2010.⁷⁴ A series of typhoons and other environmental disasters had prompted insurgents to surface for humanitarian assistance.⁷⁵ Natural catastrophe and the militarization of disaster relief further fragmented an already diminished insurgent force.

Broken alliance in Central Luzon

Central Luzon has a long history of peasant organization and unrest. Close to Manila, the region has the third highest voting population nationwide. Central Luzon was the site of very high levels of state violence—particularly when General Palparan was moved from Eastern Visayas to command the 7th Infantry Division from September 2005 to September 2006 (see Figure 4). While this was overwhelmingly directed against the NPA and a variety of activists on the legal left, a quarter of the cases were particularistic, over local disputes. In Tarlac province, the seat of power of the Cojuangco-Aquinos, local elite interests over the issue of agrarian reform and the dynasty's efforts to evade the parceling off of the sugar plantation *Hacienda Luisita* coincided with national elite interest to maintain an alliance with the influential political dynasty.

⁷¹ "Terror in Mindoro: The Murders of Eden Marcellana and Eddie Gumanoy," (Quezon City: Ecumenical Consotium for a Just Peace, 2003), 43-51. Also Alexander Remollino, "Palparan: From Mindoro to Iraq," *Bulatlat.com* IV, no. 1 (2004), <http://www.bulatlat.com/news/4-1/4-1-palparan.html>.

⁷² Philip Tubeza and Bernice Mendoza, "Palparan: Deaths Small Sacrifices," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, June 2 2005. Joey Gabieta, "Bayan Muna Decries Tag of CPP 'Front'," *ibid.*, May 6.

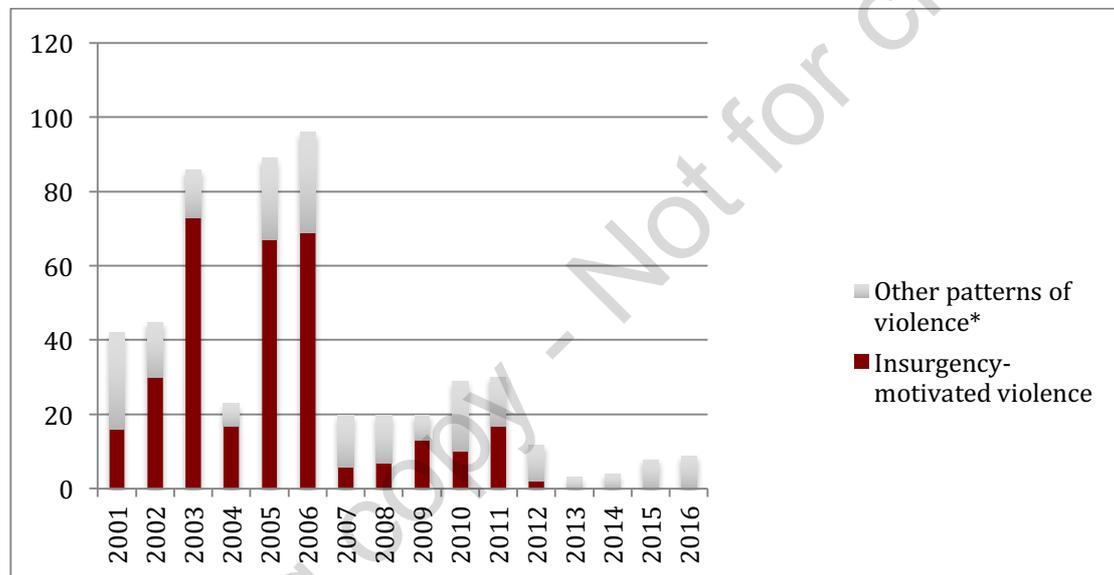
⁷³ "Palparan Leaving Samar, Says Solon," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, August 19 2005.

⁷⁴ "Army Exec Vows to End Anti-Insurgency Campaign in Eastern Visayas This Year," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, June 14 2010.

⁷⁵ James Mananghaya, "Flood Flushes out Communist Rebels," *The Philippine Star* (2009), <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/358226/esperon-tells-melo-commission-mpa-behind-political-killings>. Bulatlat Contributors, "Stranded Pablo Mission Rescued, Military Blamed," *ibid.* (2013), <http://bulatlat.com/main/2013/04/22/stranded-pablo-mission-rescued-military-blamed/>; Marya Salamat, "Urgent Relief and Rehab Needed in Yolanda-Stricken Areas, Not Militarization," *ibid.*, <http://bulatlat.com/main/2013/11/12/urgent-relief-and-rehab-needed-in-yolanda-stricken-areas-not-militarization/>.

Central state force, parochialized. In 2004, labor union negotiations broke down in the Cojuangco-Aquino owned *Hacienda Luisita* sugar plantation and refinery. The Department of Labor and Employment, declared that the sugar industry was “imbued with public interest”, issued orders for compulsory arbitration and an Assumption of Jurisdiction, paving the way for military involvement at the picket lines.⁷⁶ On November 16, 2004, riot police fired into the crowds, killing seven demonstrators and injuring 121 others.⁷⁷ The military argued that the *Hacienda Luisita* situation presented a threat to national security due to NPA infiltration and instigation of workers to take up arms.⁷⁸ Shortly after, in early March 2005, Tarlac City councilor Abelardo Ladera was shot dead. As city councilor, he had successfully filed several resolutions in support of the hacienda workers.⁷⁹ Over the months that followed, leaders and prominent supporters of the strike were assassinated one by one.

Figure 4. Insurgency-motivated Violence in Central Luzon from 2001 to 2016, Number of Affected Individuals



Source: Author's data, n=536
 * 32% election-motivated

Elite split, violence shifts in character. As scandal engulfed President Arroyo in June 2005 following accusations of massive voter fraud in the 2004 elections, former president Corazon Aquino called for Arroyo's resignation in early July.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ "Fact Sheet in Re: Alleged Violent Dispersal of Strikers in Hacienda Luisita, Tarlac City," (Commission on Human Rights, Republic of the Philippines, no date).

⁷⁷ Stephanie Dychiu, "How a Worker's Strike Became the Luisita Massacre," *GMA News Online* (2010), <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/182515/news/specialreports/how-a-workers-strike-became-the-luisita-massacre>.

⁷⁸ Jo Martinez-Clemente, "Luisita Workers Defy Dole," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, January 16 2005.

⁷⁹ "Abelardo Ladera: The Hero of Luisita," *Bulatlat.com* (2005), <http://bulatlat.com/main/2005/03/12/abel-ladera-the-hero-of-luisita/>.

⁸⁰ Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, "Make Way for Your Successor, Cory Aquino Asks Arroyo," *The PCIJ Blog* (2005), <http://pcij.org/blog/2005/07/08/make-way-for-your-successor-cory-aquino-asks-arroyo>. Stephanie Dychiu, "Win or Lose, Noynoy Has to Face Luisita Deadlock," *GMA News Online* (2010), <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/190035/news/specialreports/win-or-lose-noynoy-has-to-face-luisita-deadlock>.

Shortly after that, an investigation into the 2004 massacre concluded and set the process in motion to wrest *Hacienda Luisita* away from the *Cojuangco-Aquino* family. During this period, a shift also occurred in the violence related to the *Hacienda Luisita* disputes.

The Butcher's final stand. First of all, there was a lull in the violence for a number of months until General Jovito Palparan was assigned to Central Luzon in September 2005. After his arrival, a new round of activists' assassinations were attributed to the broader counterinsurgency campaign.⁸¹ Although community organizers were targeted as known unionists, it was understood in the locale that the show of state force was no longer for the *Cojuangco-Aquino* family's benefit. Although the military had established a presence inside the *hacienda* at the height of 2004 strikes, the military's presence assumed a new significance. The army signified the enforcement of the distribution of *Hacienda Luisita* land, dissuading any resistance that the landowners might contemplate.⁸² Domestic and international alarm over extrajudicial killings forced the Arroyo government to back down on its lethal counter-insurgency campaign in early 2007.⁸³ Without an active armed insurgency threat, violence dropped sharply in Central Luzon afterwards. Palparan himself is eventually charged and arrested for crimes allegedly committed in the region.

Safest City, Murder Capital in Southern Mindanao

The data on Southern Mindanao presents a puzzle: 41% of all violence was neither insurgency nor election-motivated (See Figure 5 below). Yet the region accounts for the highest magnitude of violence compared to all the other cases in this study. Davao City was touted as an oasis of safety in a region plagued by insurgency. Of the violence that was neither directly related to insurgencies or elections however, 60% of it was experienced in Davao City. The main contention here is that Rodrigo Duterte consolidated his power as Davao City mayor, initially in cooperation with national elites and the central government.

Monopoly of legitimate and illegitimate use of force. Duterte strategy for monopolizing violence in Davao City had five crucial methods.⁸⁴ First, during his first uninterrupted stint as mayor in the 1990s, he skillfully came to an arrangement with the NPA, anti-communist paramilitary forces and the military. They operated almost exclusively at the rural fringes of the city and in the rest of Southern Mindanao. Second, he mobilized village officials, anti-narcotics agencies and the police to provide information on criminals and drug users, especially in dense pockets of urban poverty. Duterte then allegedly put together a death squad of former insurgents and paramilitary members, under the illicit control of the city police. When the killing began, the violence was widespread but the targeting of victims was produced by intimate knowledge of neighbors, family members and community leaders. This created a system of control in what would have otherwise been ungovernable areas.

⁸¹ Tonette Orejas and Vincent Cabreza, "Political Killings, Meningo, a Rape Case," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, January 4 2006. Tonette Orejas, "Legacy Left by Palparan: 35 'Archived' Abuse Cases," *ibid.*, March 6 2016. Carmela Reyes, "Anti-Red Drive Pushed in Bulacan," *ibid.*, November 6 2006.

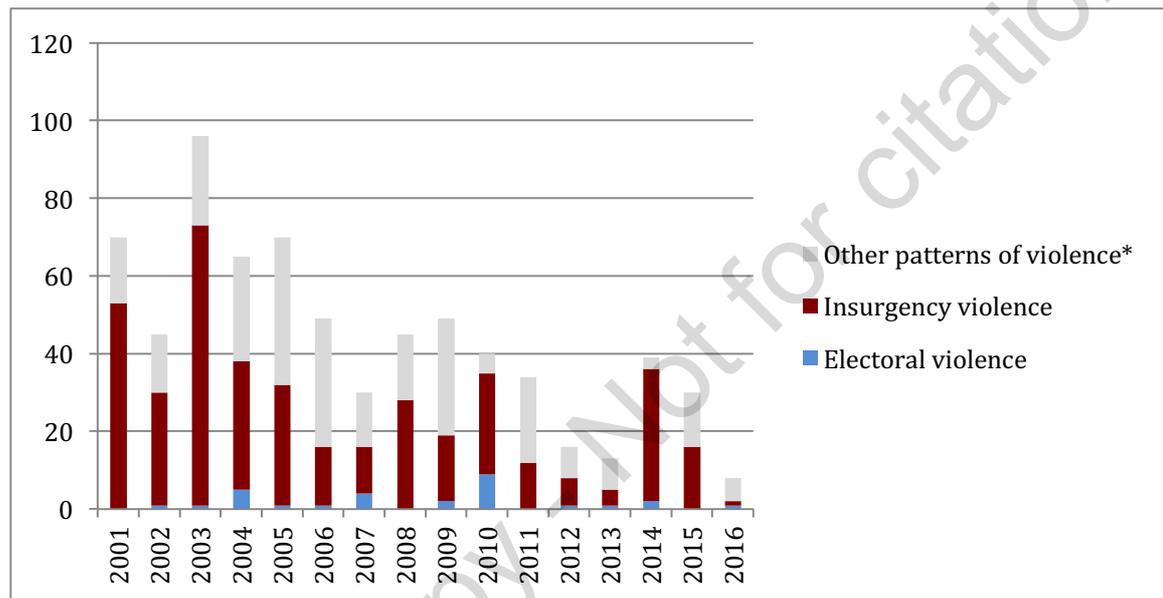
⁸² Tonette Orejas, "Army Won't Remove Troops in Luisita," *ibid.*, May 21.

⁸³ Peter Sales, "State Terror in the Philippines: The Alston Report, Human Rights and Counter-Insurgency under the Arroyo Administration," *Contemporary Politics* 15, no. 3 (2009).

⁸⁴ Iglesias.

Third, he trained this system of state terror against an atomized populace that was poor and unaffiliated with any organization or politician. This avoided the backlash from the assassination of activists experienced by the government elsewhere. Fourth, Duterte for years would alternately claim responsibility for the so-called Davao Death Squad and deny any link. But this was a long and exaggerated wink: it was clear that Duterte was the only game in town. Fifth, mass killing in great numbers—an estimated 100 dead a year—was key. It was a spectacle that served to forestall dissent or the emergence of a local rival.

Figure 5. Elections and Insurgency-motivated Political Violence in Southern Mindanao from 2001 to 2016, Number of Affected Individuals



Source: Author's data, n=699

* 41% neither elections nor insurgency related

A central-local alliance with a surprise twist. In 2002, President Arroyo threw her political weight behind Duterte. She appointed him to head a national taskforce on drugs and crime, thereby endorsing his violent methods in Davao City.⁸⁵ She enabled him to broaden his political influence throughout Southern Mindanao by appointing him to head the area's Regional Peace and Order Council for counter-insurgency. The number of killings shot up only after Arroyo's backing of Duterte as an anti-crime czar (see Table 1 below). The alliance began to unravel around the 2007 elections when Duterte lost favor with Arroyo to another Davao politician, Congressman Prospero Nograles.⁸⁶ Arroyo also backed a 2008 Commission on Human Rights investigation into the Davao Death Squad.⁸⁷ Unable to run for re-election in 2010 due to legal term limits, he ducked a confrontation with Nograles's son for a congressional seat and won the easier contest as his daughter Sara's vice

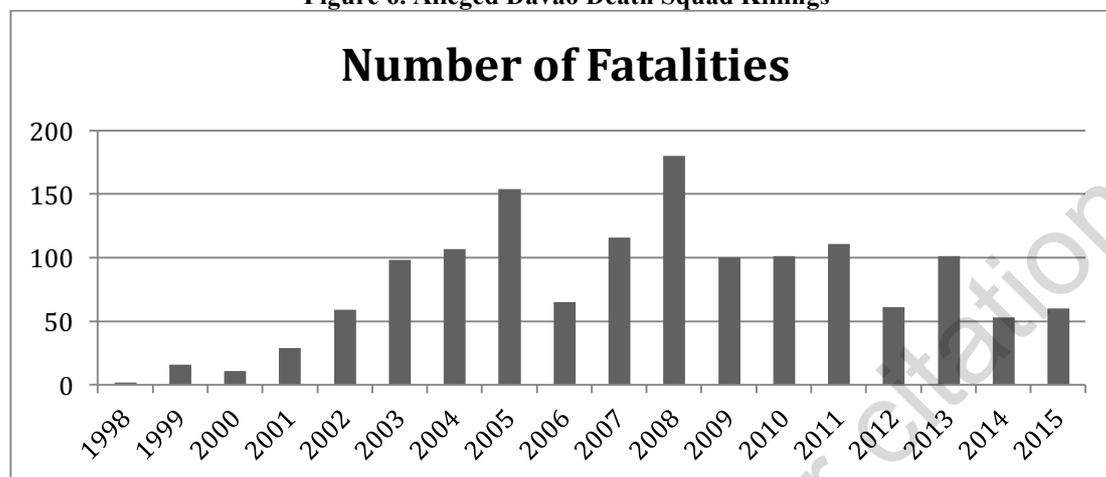
⁸⁵ TJ Burgonio and Dona Pazzibugan, "Move over Dirty Harry, Duterte's Here," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, July 10 2002.

⁸⁶ Eldie Aguirre, "Duterte out, New GMA Ally in in Davao," *ibid.*, June 25 2008.

⁸⁷ Christian Esguerra and Leila Salaverria, "Palace Backs CHR Probe," *ibid.*, March 31 2009.

mayor instead.⁸⁸ Duterte returned to the mayor's office in 2013; he ran and won the election for president in 2016.

Figure 6. Alleged Davao Death Squad Killings



Source: Coalition Against Summary Executions (unpublished); n=1,424

Central-local dynamics and political violence

The Northern Luzon case demonstrated a pattern of particularistic violence related to elections, showing a case in which the central state successfully dismantled a private army. Likewise, in Eastern Visayas the state acted with autonomy from local political actors with respect to counter-insurgency. The Central Luzon case illustrates how national elites may supply local political actors with the coercive force of state, for as long as the coalition holds. The central state had the interest and capacity to terminate these episodes of violence.

In Davao City however, national elites faced an intractable foe, one who could not be dislodged. Part of Duterte's success stems from his unique approach to political control: it was totalitarian and absolute. There may be up to 12,000 people dead in the so-called War on Drugs that the Philippine government has waged since President Rodrigo Duterte assumed office in June, 2016. It is unprecedented in terms of the sheer number of people killed. The bloodshed is greater than the country experienced even under dictatorship. But the pattern is unmistakably familiar.

Despite Duterte's unabashed references to former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, I have shown here that it is violence only made possible during the post-Marcos, democratic period.

⁸⁸ Cheryll Fiel, "2010 Elections: Dutertes Proclaimed as Winners in Davao Polls," *Bulatlat.com* (2010), <http://bulatlat.com/main/2010/05/13/2010-elections-dutertes-proclaimed-as-winners-in-davao-polls/2/>.

**Regional-level Data on Local Private Armies,
Counter-Insurgency Intensity and Extrajudicial Killings**

Region	Number of Local Private Armed Groups	Number of Insurgent Guerrilla Fronts
Calabarzon	7	8
Ilocos	4	No data; low insurgency intensity*
Cordillera	5	4
Cagayan Valley	4	2
Central Luzon	3	11
National Capital Region	0	No data
Southern Tagalog/Mimaropa	4	6
Bicol	8	11
Eastern Visayas	2	7
Central Visayas	2	6
Western Visayas	1	13
Northern Mindanao	0	3, no data on MNLF/MILF medium insurgency intensity*
Caraga	0	5
Socksargen	4	3, no data on MNLF/MILF high insurgency intensity*
Western Mindanao	0	2, no data on MNLF/MILF high insurgency intensity*
Southern Mindanao	0	11
Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao	41	No data; high insurgency intensity*

Sources: **Local private armies:** Mendoza, Gemma. "85 Armed Groups Maintained by Politicians-PNP." *Rappler* (2012). (accessed November 27, 2014). ; **Number of Insurgent Guerrilla Fronts:** "The Strategic and Tactical Activities of CPP-NPA-NDF in the White Areas." Knowledge Management Division, Office of the Presidential Adviser for Special Concerns, 2003.

*Alternate source based on number of armed encounters between government and insurgents: Bautista, Cynthia. *Ideologically-motivated Conflicts in the Philippines: A Background Paper* submitted to the Human Development Network Foundation for the Philippine Human Development Report 2005. Diliman, Quezon City: Human Development Network, 2005.

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