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MSc Crisis & Security Management

Master Thesis

**The Power of Populist Rhetoric:
The Case of President Duterte's Support Mobilization in the
Philippine Context**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to investigate how President Duterte has demonstrated the capacity to mobilize a large-scale support group through populist rhetoric in the Philippine context. Here, three facets of the Philippine context are considered for study, namely: (1) paternalism referring to Filipino culture; (2) *ambag* (contribution) and *bayanihan* (community) referring to Filipino communal values; and (3) frustrations towards the liberal-democratic regime (referring to the Filipino circumstance). Using discourse analysis, I argue that the characteristics reflected through Duterte's populist rhetoric – such as ordinariness, being pro-people, and hypermasculinity – appeal to the people in the aforementioned contexts. Hence, Duterte's brand of populism is fueled by the unique national context which further characterizes him as a unique populist.

Keywords: populist rhetoric, Duterte, Filipino paternalism, *ambag* and *bayanihan*, Philippine liberal-democratic regime

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“Iaalay ko ang aking buhay, pangarap, at pagsisikap sa bansang Pilipinas.”

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Introduction

I. Background of the Study

President Duterte is globally known to be a populist “strongman” leader who is known for his unorthodox behavior. This features his hard-lined rhetoric against drug criminals in which he likened himself to Hitler as he planned to purge the nation of drug criminals. When referring to his bloody drug war, he announced that “the fish will grow fat” in Manila Bay from the bodies that will be dumped there (Rosca, 2018; McCargo, 2016; Johnson & Fernquest, 2018). In addition, his rhetoric involves the sprinkling of swear words in his speeches (Rosca, 2018), blaming past politicians for societal woes (McCargo, 2016), and boasting about his handful of mistresses and libido (Rosca, 2018). Despite local and international criticism and condemnation towards Duterte’s populist rhetoric, it is this very rhetoric that appeals to the Filipino people and – in the process – mobilizes their support towards the president. This is evidenced by Duterte’s landslide victory in the elections in which 16 million Filipinos voted for him out of the 50 million registered voters – this accounts for approximately 38 percent of total votes (Rosca, 2018; Iyengar et. al., 2016). Further, it is observed that the same large-scale support for Duterte persists in status quo given his dissatisfaction rating under 3% (Duterte, 2019), testimonies from Filipinos highlighting their trust, hope, and fascination with the president, and active participation in drug war vigilantism with extra-judicial killings (EJKs) constituting a 96% kill rate (Rosca, 2018). These EJKs are performed both by the civilian population and Philippine National Police (PNP) alike (Amnesty International UK, 2020; Rappler, 2020; Mogato & Baldwin, 2017).

Given this phenomenon of support mobilization, this thesis will investigate how the populist characteristics reflected through Duterte’s rhetoric – namely: ordinariness, being pro-people, and hypermasculinity – has had the capacity to appeal to the Filipino people in the following operational contexts: (1) paternalism (referring to Filipino culture), (2) *ambag* (contribution) and *bayanihan* (community) (referring to Filipino communal values, and (3) frustrations towards the liberal-democratic regime (referring to the Filipino circumstance). In doing so, this thesis will establish how Duterte’s brand of populism is fueled in the Philippine context which further establishes his uniqueness as a populist leader.

II. Research Question & Hypothesis

The research question is: **“How has Duterte mobilized a large-scale support group through populist rhetoric in the Philippine context?”** In this light, my sub-research questions are as follows:

- On Filipino culture: “How has Duterte mobilized a large-scale support group through populist rhetoric in the context of Filipino paternalism?”
- On Filipino values: “How has Duterte mobilized a large-scale support group through populist rhetoric in the context of Filipino communal values (*ambag at bayanihan*)?”
- On the Filipino circumstance: “How has Duterte mobilized a large-scale support group through populist rhetoric in the context of Filipinos’ frustrations towards the liberal-democratic regime?”

My hypothesis is: “Duterte has mobilized a large-scale support group through his populist rhetoric reflecting ordinariness, being pro-people, and hypermasculinity in the Philippine context, as: (1) he is perceived to embody the Filipino father figure; (2) he is legitimized to unite Filipinos towards working for a communal duty; and (3) he is believed to be the righteous leader given the alleged elitism and incompetence of actors of the liberal-democratic regime.”

III. Objectives

The objectives of my study are:

- Provide understanding on how populist rhetoric mobilizes large-scale support.
- Investigate how Duterte’s populism is fueled in the Philippine context.
- Establish Duterte as a unique populist.

IV. Relevance

Given the rise of populism in the global political landscape, my thesis is academically relevant as it offers a deeper understanding on the Philippine populist phenomenon and – more importantly – how Duterte is able to mobilize support through populist rhetoric alone. In this light, my thesis will offer insight on the power of populist rhetoric alone in mobilizing large-scale

support among the people in different operational contexts and how populist leaders have unique populist attributes. In the process of offering insight on these aspects, my thesis will also contribute to discussions of the global rise of populist leadership. These objectives will be accomplished through the employment of a discourse analysis research method in which I will be studying Duterte's rhetoric (i.e. in political campaign speeches, State of the Nation Addresses (SONAs), in his inaugural address, etc.) in the pursuit of analyzing the wider populist phenomenon that mobilizes large-scale support. As theories relating to populism as a style and more academic literature on Duterte's support mobilization and on the Philippine contexts of interest will be utilized to aid in my analysis, my thesis is also academically relevant as it will complement current academic discourse on the aforementioned subject matters.

It is through studying the status quo that we can understand the future. In this light, my thesis is societally relevant because it is purposed to investigate how Duterte is able to mobilize a large-scale support group through populist rhetoric alone. In the process, we see elements of Duterte's populism that are fueled in the three Philippine contexts of interest as backed by theory and academic literature. That being said, we are able to deduce how the future of the Philippine political landscape will look like – whether or not populism will continue to be prevalent in the wake of the 2022 Philippine presidential elections, or whether or not cycles of violence brought upon by Duterte's drug war will be perpetuated. With this, we are able to pave the way for more awareness in society and potentially more effective policy-making and governance. In this light, global citizens, scholars, and policymakers alike should look into the Philippine populist phenomenon with great interest and concern. Richard Heydarian – a political analyst – echoes this as he warned that the “distraction from the urgent national concerns is the greatest price of machismo populism” (Santos, 2018).

V. Review of Related Literature

Before discussing populist rhetoric through theories relating to populism as a style, it is imperative to understand what populism generally is. Given that scholars still have not settled a concrete definition of populism, the concept has been labelled to be ambiguous as it is “loosely organized and without strict ideology” (Serhan, 2020a). In addition, Margaret Canovan commented that populism is “an elusive concept” (Rooduijn, 2019). However, many scholars agree that populism is ultimately characterized by a set of ideas that involves the antagonistic

relationship between the corrupt elite and the virtuous people (Rooduijn, 2019). Echoing this, Dutch political scientist Cas Mudde in his work, the *Populist Zeitgeist*, has defined populism to be an ideology that considers society to be separated into two groups that are in direct opposition to one another: the *pure people* VS. the *corrupt elite*. The pure people – also known as the majority of the population – are against being represented by the elite whose proposals and policies do not reflect their personal concerns. Ultimately, the pure people victimize themselves as they are convinced that their ethnic identity and economic status are threatened because of the perceived corruption of the elite (Mudde, 2004; Baker, 2019).

In status quo, the global populism landscape has seen the rise of populist leaders with authoritarian or right-wing tendencies – populists like Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, and Recep Tayyip Erdogan (Rice-Oxley & Kalia, 2018). Their populism hinges on the perceived failure of progressive politics as well as on nationalist ideas such as nativism, anti-immigration, and Euroscepticism (Sandel, 2018; Kattago, 2019). In this light, their respective “us vs. them” worldviews are brought into reality as concerns about immigrants taking jobs and housing from citizens, dissolving national culture, and increasing the possibility of terrorist attacks are voiced by the people (Goodwin, 2011). According to Mudde, right-wing populist leaders “flirt” with extremists as illustrated by Bolsonaro praising the military government, Trump retweeting trolls, and Modi befriending violent paramilitary forces (Kuper, 2019). In addition, they capitalize on scandals, plain language, and taboos which appeal to the “silent majority” and pave the way for sensationalist media attention due to their unorthodox political behavior (Greven, 2016). Ultimately, they have the tendency to practice authoritarianism as permitted – or even encouraged – in their respective democracies (Merelli, 2019; Sandel, 2018).

Among the plethora of lenses one can study populism in such as the lenses of ideology, discourse, political strategy, and style, this thesis will provide discourse on populism as a style as it focuses on populist rhetoric: the main concept of this thesis (Gidron & Bonikowski, n.d.; Rooduijn, 2019). In this light, the Review of Related Literature will begin by discussing populism as a style which highlights “performances” employed by personalistic populist leaders for the purpose of connecting with the people; and will end by illustrating the characteristics reflected by populist rhetoric that are able to mobilize support across national contexts. These characteristics – namely ordinariness, being pro-people, and hypermasculinity – will be discussed separately and in detail to exhibit how these are able to appeal to the people.

A. Populism as a Style

Ultimately, populism as a style refers to the method of engaging and mobilizing supporters (Barr, 2018). A political style is comprised of the following: (1) social style involving the co-construction of identities in interaction with others; and (2) rhetorical style involving the language utilized to persuade the audience. This is demonstrated through repertoires of performance by the populist leader which are purposed to interact and create relations with his/her audience (Schoor, 2017; Moffitt & Tormey, 2014). In this light, a key feature of these performances is the “frontstage” in which the populist leader displays his appearance (e.g. social status) and manner in which he conducts himself for the audience to relate to him (Schoor, 2017). Rhetoric is centered around the tendency to communicate in a “simple and direct manner” (Moffitt & Tormey, 2016; Kazin, 1995 in Gidron & Bonikowski, n.d.). This later forms a connection or relationship between the two parties relationship as the populist leader demonstrates the capability to speak in the style of the social groups he/she is appealing to (Schoor, 2017). In this light, it is imperative to personalize rhetoric depending on the audience in order for it to be effective in establishing a connection (Schoor, 2017). Another way in which a populist leader utilizes his rhetoric to mobilize support is expressing a societal threat which his audience agree is legitimate. Given this, the causes of populism in the global populist landscape are national issues that both the populist leader and people believe that governments must handle urgently – issues such as immigration (as is the case of the United States and Donald Trump), the refugee crisis (as is the case of Hungary and Viktor Orban), or secularism (as is the case of India and Narendra Modi) (Hall, 2019; Pierce et. al., 2018; Barry, 2019; Miglani, 2020). Rhetoric surrounding the perception of such threat ultimately creates an “us vs. them” worldview which the populist leader actively promotes and concretizes into reality. Indeed, it is important to consider the gaze of the audience – whose judgment is crucial for the acceptance of a an issue as a political problem or not (Schoor, 2017).

The nature of these performances illustrate that populism is particularly liable to the “politics of personality” as – instead of capitalizing on party platforms, values, and ideologies – the leader’s personality and characteristics are put on premium (Gidron & Bonikowski, n.d.; de la Torre, 2018). In this light, populist leaders are known to demonstrate charismatic leadership in which they utilize their power to defy the status quo and current worldviews, promote themselves in an established order, act upon radicalism in problem-solving, and capitalize on their personal

authority over government actors and citizens alike – all while employing a “fiery” and “outlandish” rhetorical style (Pappas, 2016; Hawkins, 2018). The two indicators of charismatic leadership are *personalism* and *radicalism*. First, personalism refers to the relationship between the populist leader and his/her followers which is characterized by intimacy and emotional passion, directness, uncompromised loyalty; and hinges on the identification with the people in which they claim the moral high-ground, and the people’s belief that the leader and his policies herald “a bright, new world” (Pappas, 2016). Finally, building on the “us vs. them” worldview that the populist leader expresses, radicalism involves attacks on the established authority structure in order to delegitimize it. Such attacks involve getting angry and signaling hope towards “a bright, new world” as the people have previously felt marginalized and subordinate. Given this, radicalism also involves the introduction of some novel worldview which signals a “fresh cycle of politics” (Pappas, 2016). Indeed, the main rhetorical feature employed by populist leaders are emotions. This is utilized to go against the “other”, enhance the effectiveness of such messages, and ultimately mobilize large-scale support (de la Torre, 2018).

B. Mobilizing Large-Scale Support Through Rhetoric

The nature of support mobilization is contextually different as can be observed in populist movements across the world. Here, threats presented by populist leaders in the United States and Europe are more economically-motivated as immigrants and minority groups are accused of “leeching off” the working class nationals’ opportunities (Abromeit, 2017); while in the Philippines, it is more socially-motivated with drug criminals being labelled as the main aggressors of the “innocent people”. In addition, support mobilization is contextually different in a way that – for instance – Trump is supported in the United States because of his strongman appeal towards curbing immigration the same way that Orban is supported in Hungary because of his hard-lined approach towards refugees (Pierce et. al., 2018; Barry, 2019). Both of these populist leaders work to connect with the people in different operational contexts in a way that Trump’s strongman appeal on immigration would not necessarily connect to the Hungarian people and vice versa; however, these circumstances present similar characteristics.

Ultimately, support mobilization is similar across all contexts in a way that populist leaders have long been utilizing rhetoric to mobilize large-scale support as illustrated in Horkheimer’s (1937) literature on the historical progression of populism. Here, Horkheimer provides discourse

on the fact that in the turn of the 19th century, traditional conservatives began engaging with the masses to increase manpower against feudal lords and ensure that outcomes were favorable to them (Horkheimer, 1937 in Abromeit, 2017). This phenomenon is also apparent in Latin American populist politics in the 1940s as the goal of leaders Juan Perón and Getúlio Vargas was to extend democratic participation to previously-marginalized groups of the *el pueblo* versus the oligarchy; hence, they were generally loved by the people (Gidron & Bonikowski, n.d.). Finally, the same is observed in Donald Trump's America as he identifies as an "outsider" who is financing his own campaign rather than accepting corruption money from established special interest groups. In addition, he expressed that he ran for president because he is "fed up" with the crooked system that is destroying American democracy and thwarting the expression of the general will of the people; hence, he won the presidential elections with the promise to "Make America Great Again" (Abromeit, 2017). In this light, theory dictates that what is common in support mobilization in populist phenomena are the populist characteristics that are reflected in their rhetoric. Such characteristics are (1) ordinariness, (2) pro-people mindset, and (3) hypermasculinity; and part of the success of support mobilization is attributed to the appeal of these characteristics to the people.

1. *Ordinariness*

Ordinariness is defined to be something that "everybody is familiar with" and is associated with a certain constancy in life; hence, it gives the people a sense of comfort and reliability (McKean, 2019). Echoing what has been discussed previously, populists are known to be personalistic leaders that exercise government power by establishing that they are ordinary (Schoor, 2017). They are able to demonstrate their ordinariness as they not only speak in behalf of the people, but also speak in the ordinary language of the people (Schoor, 2017). From this, populist leaders generate multi-class following as they create strong identities, establish a sense of community with the people, and ultimately delineate clear boundaries between "us" and "them" through rhetoric alone (Barr, 2019; de la Torre, 2018). With regards to the latter, populist leaders appeal to the people (which – according to literature – is referred to as "imagined communities") whom they claim to represent and exclude those that are categorized as outsiders (Abromeit, 2017). Examples of such exclusionary identities that involve "like-minded individuals" are those classified as: (1) populist-xenophobic association in which the people and enemies are defined by racial categories; and (2) nationalist-territorial association that involve a sharing of culture among

the people (de la Torre, 2018). It can be observed that the relationship between leader and follower possesses two characteristics: First, that it is vertical; and second, that it is horizontal. On the one hand, the relationship is vertical with the leader at the top mobilizing his or her fanbase (Barr, 2019). This is referred to as “top-down mobilization” by Levitsky & Roberts (2011) in which populist leaders challenge established political elites on behalf of the “ill-defined pueblo” or people (see also Gidron & Bonikowski, n.d.). This vertical mobilization encourages the people – or ordinary and marginalized sectors – into public and contentious action (Jansen, 2011 in Gidron & Bonikowski, n.d.). On the other hand, the relationship is horizontal as the populist rhetoric employed refers to popular power in which the leader and people alike are on the same footing as the true wielders of sovereignty (Diehl, 2018).

To echo previous discussions, the populist leader’s performances demonstrate their ability to speak like the ordinary folk which legitimizes their claims that they stand for and ultimately represent the homogenous and unified people as well as their general will (Waisbord, 2018; Abromeit, 2017). The representation and protection of the general will is what Mudde & Kaltwasser (2012) define as one of the core concepts of populism (see also Rooduijn, 2019). This performative embodiment is also illustrated through the use of vernacular speech and bad manners which is particularly observed as the populist leader openly discuss unmentionable or “taboo” topics in the national context (Waisbord, 2018; Arato & Cohen, 2018). Examples of such topics are those concerning wealth disparities, media concentration, and poverty; and these topics are discussed to frame themselves as government outsiders (Arato & Cohen, 2018). Aside from this display of openness, populist leaders are also known to “speak the unspeakable” which is demonstrated in the way that they utilize unfiltered speech in expressing what everyone is supposedly thinking. An circumstance illustrating this is Marine Le Pen calling a green party MEP a “pedo” (Enria, 2019). Uncivil, undignified, and frank language that typically “fall outside the conventions of legitimate mainstream discourse” (e.g. swear words and curses in speeches) is also utilized by populist leaders. This is placed in contrast with the artificiality of conventional language utilized by elitists; hence, the people are led to perceive the populist leader as seemingly more authentic (Moffit & Tormey, 2014; Waisbord, 2018). With regards to being put in contrast with traditional political leaders, crises are presented by populist leaders in simplified terms and grounded in common sense understandings of the world which makes it easy for the audience to grasp and access (Schoor, 2017; de la Torre, 2018; Waisbord, 2018; Enria, 2019). Indeed, this is effective in mobilizing the

support from “similarly” ordinary people in the backdrop of lengthy deliberations by experts that focus on the complexities of crises, and expressed in highly-complex terminology (Moffitt 2016, p. 45). This signals – as scholars call it – the “slow death of expertise” (Fieschi, 2016).

2. Being Pro-people

Populist mobilization involves “articulating an anti-elite, nationalist rhetoric that valorizes the people” (Jansen, 2011 in Gidron & Bonikowski, n.d.). Given this and to echo previous discussions, the people have been at the forefront of global populist movements in the populist leader’s pursuit of protecting the general will (Abromeit, 2018). In this light, populists have worshiped the people while employing “exclusion strategies” in which they utilize rhetoric in delineating a moral “us” against an immoral “them” (Ionescu & Gellner, 1969 in Rooduijn, 2019; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). One of the defining traits of populism in this lens is “pro-people appeals” in which the people are regarded as the central audience and subject, the true wielders of sovereignty, and as distinct and opposed to the elite or some “other” (Barr, 2019; Moffitt & Tormey, 2014). Here, rhetoric reveals a closeness to the people by talking about them (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). Populist leaders further romanticize the people by employing language that champions the people as they are referred to as “virtuous and righteous”, the “patriots of the nation” the “noble assemblage”, and other similar descriptions (Bateman & Levine, 2016; Waisbord, 2018). Such phenomenon is illustrated in American populism in which the American people are referred to as the productive and well-intentioned community versus the elite and underserving poor (Kazin, 1995, in Rooduijn, 2019).

Appealing to the people also involves invoking the people against some other as it aids in support mobilization (Barr, 2019). In this light, populist rhetoric involves both “people-centrism” and “anti-elitism” (Rooduijn, 2019). The latter reflects a paranoid style of rhetoric characterized by heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and an apocalyptic conspiratorial worldview (Hofstadter, 1964 in Gidron & Bonikowski, n.d.). A perception of societal threat is formed as the elite, establishment, state, system, or some kind of “other” are evoked in populist rhetoric as the source of crisis which have let the people down. In this light, populist leaders create claims against political correctness of the elite and deny expert knowledge (Rooduijn, 2019; Moffitt & Tormey, 2014); and spread messages of fear to inform citizens of their plight, to expose the elite’s incompetent control over the government, and to mobilize citizens into action by appealing to a

collective sense of outrage (Batesman & Levine, 2016). Given this, rhetoric can increase the people's stated concern about the issue (Batesman & Levine, 2016). Indeed, antagonistic and paranoid rhetoric enabled brexiteers like Nigel Farage to be successful in making Brexit happen, and for Trump's campaign to win (Rooduijn, 2019).

Interestingly, populist leaders cast themselves as outsiders who gain political prominence as a political independent or in association with new political parties, and not through the traditional means of an established and competitive political party (Barr, 2009; Pappas, 2012). In addition, populist leaders' display of ordinariness also reflects a modern form of political theology in which the leader expresses: "I am not me – I am you"; and further claims: "I am the people's voice". In this light, the populist leader hints at serving as a vessel of the people's sovereignty which embodies a "prophetic imaginary" (Arato & Cohen, 2018). Indeed, a populist leader maintains a balance between being the ordinary politician who the people relate to, and the extraordinary figure who is capable of solving all the people's problems – this is regarded as a form of "salvation" for the people who are currently disappointed with the political circumstance (Enria, 2019).

3. Hypermasculinity

Hypermasculinity – in its simplest sense – is defined to be the exaggeration of stereotypical male behavior like aggression and sexuality. This in turn enables competitive behavior and dominance of men over women (Ritchie, 2020). Hypermasculinity can be observed with the angry and masculinist performances of Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan. On the one hand, Vladimir Putin created a "tough guy" image of himself as a presidential candidate as he expressed: "We showed weakness and the weak get beaten" (Eksi & Wood, 2019). On the other hand, Recep Tayyip Erdogan questions his critics by asking: "Who are you?" which ultimately positions Erdogan as dominant over them and closes the opportunity for them to respond (Eksi & Wood, 2019). Populism in this latter context displays hypermasculinity as populist leaders must seek enemies – both internal and external – who can be dominated (Eksi & Wood, 2019). In this context, populist leaders utilize repertoires of political performances to display their hypermasculinity involving bullying and establishing a "paternalistic dominance" that claims to protect the people (Eksi & Wood, 2019). This display of hypermasculinity leads to the establishment of their legitimacy through their dominant status (Eksi & Wood, 2019). Once populist leaders are put in

power, they are no longer the “outsider bad boys” during their political campaigns; rather, they become fathers purposed to “save the nation” (Eksi & Wood, 2019). Echoing the discussion of balance between being an ordinary and extraordinary leader, the leader is similar to the people and also different from them given that they are regarded as ordinary but as “saviors” at the same time (Eksi & Wood, 2019).

Hypermasculinity involves displays of political masculinities which are defined to be the conscious or unconscious performance of masculine stereotypes by individuals operating in the political sphere (Eksi & Wood, 2019). Political masculinities involve the following: (1) angry populist leaders who would put matters into their own hands in their respective countries; (2) leaders that employ a nativist discourse that labels the “other” as deficient in terms of their masculinity or as hypermasculinized; and (3) leaders espousing a male-dominated and conservative set of ideas that appear to restore an imagined and idealized gender order. In the presence of political masculinities, public and democratic institutions are undermined and replaced by a more direct line between the populist leader – regarded as the father of the nation – to his people (Eksi & Wood, 2019). Support mobilization occurs in a way that a direct relationship between leader and population relies on that very masculinity as both a form of communication and also a kind of social glue (Eksi & Wood, 2019; Löffler et al., 2020). In addition, this reveals the charisma of populist leaders that is attributed by his emphasis on action and the courage to take difficult decisions through aggression (Löffler et al., 2020).

Populism is also regarded to be gendered political performance involving sexism. In the conservative gender order, men are dominant over women and LGBTQ+ individuals are marginalized (Eksi & Wood, 2019). These gendered performances are observed among hypermasculine populist leaders as they create a hierarchical relation between himself and the nation in which he emasculates or hypermasculinizes the other. This is seen in how populist leaders feminize the elites (e.g. identifying them by derogatory female terms); and in how other groups outside the “real people” – such as ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities – are painted to possess “dangerous masculinity” (e.g. painted as rapists of women) (Sofos, 2020; Eksi & Wood, 2019). In this light, the concepts of “the nation” are constructed by populist leaders that mark these concepts by masculine qualities such as strength, might, and prowess in which the “other” are threats (Sofos, 2020). Given this, populist leaders position themselves as the masculine saviors of the (by implication, feminized) nation under threat (Eksi & Wood, 2019). We see this with Vladimir Putin

who referred to the defense of the motherland as a “man’s affair”; and argued: “We won’t allow anybody to interfere in our internal affairs because we have our own will, which has helped us to be victorious at all times”. Indeed, Putin painted a feminized image of the nation by referring to her as the “motherland” and masculinized himself to legitimize his claim to defense (Eksi & Wood, 2019). Indeed, hypermasculinity in this context is able to mobilize large-scale support from the people as the populist leader’s reliance on gendered signals leads to the obsession of the people with the demonstration of power in a masculine leader (Eksi & Wood, 2019; Löffler et al., 2020). The sexism-based mobilization of support is seen with Donald Trump win of the presidency as his treatment of women displayed male power (Sofos, 2020).

VI. Methodology

This section will provide discussion on my research design, analytical methods, and suggestions for further research on the thesis topic. To begin the Research Design part, I supply a rationale behind choosing a single case study design. In addition, I provide scoping conditions which are essential in keeping the research focused; as well as the case selection strategy accompanied by it. As it is imperative to operationalize variables to test the hypothesis effectively, the Research Design part will conclude with a table of listed indicators to show that Duterte’s populist characteristics reflected through rhetoric indeed mobilize support in the three Philippine contexts of interest. Next, the Analytical Methods part touches on my data collection in which I discuss the kind of data I utilized as well the procurement methods I engaged in. In addition, I explain exactly how I used discourse analysis to investigate the phenomenon of interest. This is followed by my assessment of limitations in the context of validity and reliability which researchers must be aware of in the circumstance they decide to expand discourse on the topic. Given this, my Methodology concludes with suggestions for further research in which I discuss other lenses researchers can employ in understanding the populist phenomenon of support mobilization; as well as other operational contexts that can be considered for study.

A. Research Design: Single Case Study

This research will employ the single case study design: the intensive study of a single case in which multiple pieces of evidence are examined from observations within that single unit (Toshkov, 2016). This research design is most applicable to my thesis as it my thesis studies the

phenomenon of Duterte’s support mobilization in the Philippines alone. The “observations” in my chosen case are the Filipino contexts, such as: paternalism (referencing to Filipino culture), *ambag* and *bayanihan* (referring to Filipino communal values), and frustrations towards the liberal-democratic regime (referring to the Filipino circumstance). These elements of the Philippine context are what fuel Duterte’s populist characteristics reflected through rhetoric – characteristics namely ordinariness, being pro-people, and hypermasculinity. I argue in my thesis that these characteristics are what allow him to amass a large-scale support group that he can continually mobilizes. The employment of the single case study design is rooted in “theory application” as theories on populism as a style will be utilized in analysis to further justify that Duterte’s populist rhetoric alone can mobilize support in the aforementioned contexts. Outlined below is the illustration of my research design.

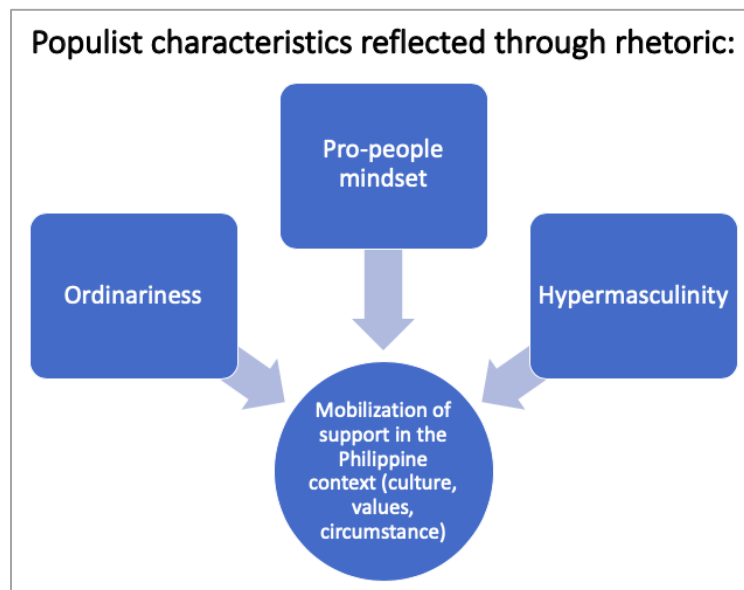


Figure 1. Research Design

1. *Defining Scoping Conditions and Evidence Selection*

My research will focus on Duterte’s populist rhetoric reflected in his speeches (e.g. State of the Nation Addresses or SONAs, his inaugural address, and other speeches) from his presidential campaign in 2016 to present. The latest speech I included in this thesis is his 5th SONA dated July 27, 2020. Finally, the support group I discuss refers to his supporters in the Philippines; and the aforementioned operational contexts that I discuss are Philippine contexts only.

As opposed to cross-case research, researchers employing a within-case analysis analyze a large number of evidences or variables from the present observations; hence I deduced evidences in line with my scoping conditions and with present literature on populist rhetoric (Toshkov, 2016). The evidence in this context are Duterte's populist characteristics reflected through his rhetoric; namely: (1) ordinariness, (2) being pro-people, and (3) hypermasculinity. I analyze these in line with the aforementioned speeches in the given time period; and will see how these characteristics work towards support mobilization.

2. Operationalization of Concepts

This research does not present the causality of evidences; rather, it merely utilizes theory and literature to *explain* the phenomenon of Duterte's support mobilization. Given this, it is imperative to operationalize these evidences by providing indicators that Duterte's populist characteristics reflected through rhetoric are indeed able to mobilize support in the contexts of interest. The indicators are outlined as follows.

Indicators			
Characteristics from rhetoric	Philippine contexts		
	Paternalism	Communal values	Prior frustrations
Ordinariness	Expression of the people's woes	Encouraging unity towards a communal duty as one people	Speaking the unspeakable; explicit outbursts involving swear words
	Testimonies on Duterte's perceived empathy	Facts on prevalence of vigilantism; testimonies expressing Duterte's infallibility	Testimonies on appreciation for Duterte's openness and authenticity compared to past politicians
Being pro-people	Vowing to pursue the general will	Antagonizing the "other" to mobilize the people	Justifying the drug war policy to address the people's woes
	Testimonies on trust and Duterte's perceived sincerity	Testimonies projecting anger towards the "other"	Testimonies on hope and positivity for change;

			“Duterte’s doing this for us”
Hypermasculinity	“Fight until the end” for the people; battling interests; drug war as a form of “tough love”	Spillover from antagonism – justifying radical elements of drug war as a communal duty	Radical elements of drug war needed for change
	Testimonies expressing resonance with the drug war as “tough love” and annoyance with critics; feeling safer	Testimonies vowing to report loved ones; spectacles featuring ridicule of the “other”	Testimonies on the drug war as a “necessary evil”; “extraordinary circumstances require extraordinary measures”

Table 1. Operationalization of evidences

B. Analytical Methods

1. Data Collection

I gathered my secondary data from external sources featuring theories on populism as a style and other academic literature. To analyze Duterte’s rhetoric, I collected transcripts of Duterte’s speeches which is provided by the Philippine government online archives such as the Official Gazette. With regards to his speeches made during his political campaign, I looked into credible local news articles such as CNN Philippines, Rappler, Philippine Star, Manila Bulletin; and international news articles by BBC, The Atlantic, The New York Times, The Irish Times, Al Jazeera, etc. Finally, I complemented this research by taking quotes of from Duterte featured in scholarly articles as provided by the Leiden University library portal, JStor, and Google Scholar. I have also taken those from scholarly blogs of various universities and YouTube videos featuring Duterte’s speeches. My data collection also involves gathering testimonies from Duterte supporters featured in dissertations, YouTube videos in which are supporters interviewed, and scholarly articles in which the researcher did on-the-field research for the purpose of investigating Duterte’s popularity in the Philippines. Finally, I collected theories touching on populism as a political style to understand populist rhetoric and the characteristics reflected in it. These have been discussed in various literature reviews, scholarly articles, news articles, and academic blogs which I procured from online repositories. If I need a book that I cannot access, I refer to reviews created by scholars that provide discourse on the book matter.

2. Data Analysis: Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis involves the analysis of language and the purpose behind it, all while considering the social context it operates in (Brown & Yule, 1983; Adolphus, n.d.). In this light, I utilized discourse analysis to properly and effectively analyze Duterte's populist rhetoric in the Philippine contexts of interest. As a native Filipino speaker, I translated Duterte's Filipino speeches to English. I ensured to not employ direct translations of his speeches as they have different connotations depending on the context. For instance, "*putangina*" which – when directly translated – means "prostitute mother"; however, this can also mean "son of a bitch", "daughter of a whore", or "fuck" depending on the context. Hence – for instance – when Duterte cursed Barrack Obama by expressing "*putangina*", I translated it to "son of a bitch" and not "prostitute mother", "daughter of a whore", or "fuck" because it was used to *label* Obama: a man.

In analyzing Duterte's rhetoric in speeches, I considered if these speeches were responses to events or people, such as responses to criticism, the failure of previous politicians, et cetera; and also how these speeches were received by the audience. In addition, I identified the linguistic and rhetorical mechanisms utilized in these speeches, such as: (1) grammar features (e.g. using "we" and "they" in referring to Duterte's "us vs. them" worldview); (2) word groups (e.g. Duterte's use of colloquial language through vernacular speech and cursing); (3) modalities (e.g. Duterte's use of "should" or "could" in condemning the past administration and calling upon Filipinos to work towards a communal duty); and (4) evidentialities (e.g. Duterte's use of "*eh, ganoon talaga eh*" ("Well, that's how it is") in discussing simple, common-sense solutions and phenomena to further demonstrate his government outsidership and ordinariness). Next, I considered the Philippine contexts that these speeches operate in, such as the aforementioned contexts of interest. Finally, I investigate in my analysis how these speeches play a role in mobilizing support given these cultural contexts to answer my research question/s (Schneider, 2013).

C. Assessment of Limitations: Reliability & Validity

A single case study design has inherent limitations as it utilizes a within-case analysis that observes patterns within the phenomenon itself and with no comparison with external cases. In this light, the most important limitation is that of generalization or external validity (Toshkov, 2016). This case is bound to a low external validity as there is only one case under investigation; hence, generalization is not ensured unless one assumes absolute homogeneity of the population

of cases and deterministic causal links (Toshkov, 2016). In the context of my thesis, we cannot assume that the three populist characteristics of Duterte are the ultimate reasons why Duterte has a large-scale support group. This can be attributed to other things like his ideology, his aesthetic appeal, his political strategy, etc. In addition, we cannot establish causal links between variables because it does not follow that Duterte's populist rhetoric is the cause of large-scale mobilization.

Finally, reliability implies that if different researchers were to apply the same measurement approach to the same data, they would get the same or at least similar results (Toshkov, 2016). In this light, my research features high reliability as researchers can merely use the indicators I have supplied and will arrive to similar results – those that point to the success of populist rhetoric in support mobilization. In addition, the concepts and phenomenon utilized are not considered “elusive” as they are concretely set. This is the case as the theories specifically surrounding populist rhetoric are utilized in the analysis, and the phenomenon strictly involves his speeches from the his political campaign to July 24, 2020 which was the last speech I considered in this thesis.

D. Suggestions for Further Research

For further research on the matter, it is worth noting that large-scale support towards Duterte in the Philippines may not only be attributed to his populist rhetoric – this is only the case when analyzing the Philippine populist phenomenon in parallel with theories on populism as a style. To expand the discourse on support mobilization, it may be useful to analyze the phenomenon in the following lenses: (1) populism as an ideology that focuses on Duterte's ideas about the nature of politics and society, or (3) populism as a media and communication phenomenon that focuses on Duterte's use of social media and the news sensationalism to widen his reach (Gidron & Bonikowski, n.d.; Waisbord, 2018; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). In addition, it is worth investigating other operational contexts in which populism can appeal to the people, such as the context of the Philippines as a transitioning democracy in which the consolidation of power has been apparent throughout the years.

Analysis

I. “*Dutertismo*”: Duterte’s Populism Reflected Through Rhetoric

Dutertismo – which has resonated among the Filipino people – is used to describe Duterte’s unorthodox leadership style which capitalizes on populist rhetoric and radical policies purposed to solve the Philippine’s most pressing issues. For instance, this is exemplified in Duterte’s infamous drug war policy that has been acted upon by government officials and civilians alike to eradicate drug-related crime (Juego, 2017; Wong, 2019). It can be observed that Duterte has been able to mobilize large-scale domestic support cutting across all classes in the Philippines as he expressed, “... the landslide victory of the administration candidates as well as the latest survey results shows that my disapproval rating is 3%.”; to which mentioned that he is hopeful in continuing his term as this commendable result “inspires [him] with determination to pursue relentlessly what [they] have started at the start of [his] administration” (Duterte, 2019).

This section will provide analysis on how Duterte is able to garner this kind of support in the Philippines through rhetoric alone. Indeed, Duterte’s populist characteristics embodied in *Dutertismo* is heavily reflected through his rhetoric as it exhibits: (1) his ordinariness, (2) his being pro-people, and (3) his hypermasculinity; all of which are universal populist elements reflected through rhetoric according to theories touching on populism as a political *style*. This section will start with this discussion. Finally, the analysis will be followed by how his reflected ordinariness, being pro-people, and hypermasculinity come to life and – in the process – garner Duterte supporters in the Philippine context. Here, an analysis will be provided specifically involving: (1) how Duterte embodies the typical Filipino father figure, (2) how Duterte mobilizes Filipinos towards a communal duty in the backdrop of Filipino culture anchoring on communal values such as *ambag* and *bayanihan*, and (3) how Duterte taps into the Filipinos’ frustrations towards their experience during the liberal-democratic regime – in which they point at the failures of previous politicians to eradicate crime, and at their elitism which makes them unrelatable to the Filipino people.

A. Ordinarity

One of Duterte's attributes that makes him a globally popular strongman is that he is unorthodox in the sense that he does not emulate the refined behavior of traditional politicians. In his childhood, Duterte enjoyed a privileged lifestyle given by his family of politicians. He was constantly protected by bodyguards and flew private jets; therefore, it came as a surprise to some Filipinos that Duterte has been acting as what some label an "unsophisticated *provinciano*" (or "man from the province") from his mayorship in Davao in which he was known to speak with a thick regional accent and was given to "bad manners" through his rhetoric (Haynes, 2018; Coronel, 2019; Gutierrez, 2017). In this light, Duterte's rhetoric reflects his populist characteristic of being "ordinary" as he: (1) exudes bad manners, (2) acts "candid", and (3) speaks as an outsider of the government.

1. Exuding Bad Manners

According to Moffitt (2016), a feature of populist rhetoric is "bad manners" includes the employment of crude language through swear words. This is a feature present in Duterte's rhetoric – particularly when he talks about his local and international critics who have expressed their dissent towards the drug war. To the EU's criticism of the EJKs, Duterte said, "Why would you insult me? It is as if I am your subordinate. Fuck you". At the end of this rant, he raised his middle finger (Coonan, 2016). He had also called Obama a "son of a whore" and ordered him to stop doing "anything like that to me" (Coonan, 2016). When a UN Human Rights expert criticized his encouragement of vigilantism to catalyze the drug war policy, he responded by calling her "stupid" and had labelled another UN representative as a "daughter of a whore" (CNN, 2016; Haynes, 2018). Duterte is extremely opposed to these critics as he believes that the drug war is justified given the "carnage" drug criminals pose in Philippine society. For instance, in his 2nd State of the Nation Address (SONA), he argued that "you can talk about human rights and due process, but do not talk about it in the same time when there is a carnage". Finally, he ends his speech on an angry note stating, "*Lalong nagagalit ang tao. Eh, putangina mo. May namatay diyan, akala mo kung sino ka*" ("The people are getting angrier. Well, fuck you. People are dying – you think you're all that") (Duterte, 2017). In the same SONA, Duterte finally addresses the Filipinos who believe in these critics by posturing his excellence against theirs by saying, "*Pagdating nitong mga Western expert kuno, you give them so much premium and importance. Saan ba utak ninyo? Bakit kayo*

bilib diyan sa puti? (...) Akala mo mas bright pa sila sa akin” (“When these Western experts came to visit, you give them so much premium and importance. Where’s your brain? Why are you amazed by the whites? You think they’re brighter than me”) (Duterte, 2017).

Finally, Duterte exhibits bad manners by “speaking the unspeakable” which is another feature of populist rhetoric in which unfiltered language is used to demonstrate that the populist leader is an outsider of the government (Enria, 2019). In this light, Duterte openly discusses classified information in his speeches – something that is not typical of an authority within government institutions to do. With regards to the drug war, he exposed the secret and large-scale services of Chinese drug lords in the Philippines who “direct the traffic of drugs” and ultimately get away with criminalization (Duterte, 2016a). Duterte began this speech with: “the military and police will not react on this... It’s part of the deep intelligence that we gathered” (Duterte, 2016a), outlines how the Chinese drug lords specifically operate (“*Isosoli nila sa Tondo, o itapon mo diyan, tapos umalis ka – kunun sa tindahan yung bag o package*”) (“They will deliver it in Tondo and you pick the bag or package of drugs up in a small, inconspicuous store”), and exposes that not only powerful drug lords are involved in this business, but delivery boys (“Those are not the drug lords, *mga lieutenant; delivery boy yan. Kung baga LBC lang yan, pati DHL, Federal*”) (“Those are not the drug lords, lieutenants; those are the delivery boys. Just delivery boys from LBC, DHL, Federal” [pertaining to Philippine delivery companies]) (Duterte, 2016a). Finally, he implores the audience to kill these actors as he will “give [them] the names” and “show [them] the intelligence paper” (Duterte, 2016a).

2. Acting “Candid”

In the pursuit of establishing an ordinary image with the people, the primary purposes of populist rhetoric is to generate a multi-class following and creating strong identities and a sense of community of the people (Barr, 2019; de la Torre, 2018). Given that the Filipino people have demonstrated genuine interest in Duterte’s story-telling and demonstration of his candid personality as evidenced by the fact that Duterte’s “comic relief” is usually met with laughter and prodding for more, Duterte often constantly diverts into story-telling (Duterte, 2017; Duterte, 2019; Duterte, 2020). For instance, he hesitated to end his 2nd SONA upon prodding of the public to keep telling stories: “*Let me end... Gusto ninyo uwi na tayo? O gusto ninyo ng kwento? Marami pa akong ikwento sa inyo*” (“Let me end... Do you want that we all go home? Or do you want me

to tell stories? I have a lot of stories to tell you) (Duterte, 2017). His story-telling involves sprinkling expletives and sharing personal and humorous instances from his past. For one, he talked about his experience as the mayor of Davao in dealing with foreigners who refused to follow the “no smoking” ordinance as they argued, “my money, not your money”. To this, Duterte replied, “eat your money or I will shoot your balls” (Duterte, 2017). This was met with laughter from the audience of politicians. During his 4th SONA, he was discussing passing a bill to create the Department of Water Resources and the Water Regulatory Commission in the wake of the El Niño that destroyed local water supply. Soon after, he diverted into telling stories of his ex-girlfriend who had not taken a shower for three days as a result of this. Once again, this was met with cheers and laughter from the audience and more prodding to tell stories (Duterte, 2019).

Duterte also exhibits his candidness by choosing to express his own thoughts without the script prepared for him as he remarked, “May I cut my prepared speech? (...) I will just put on record my thoughts” (Duterte, 2020). Finally, he also pokes fun at himself when he fumbles through his speeches – particularly at the 5th State of the Nation Address: “*Hindi ito ang panahon para maglamanan – maglamam – lamang-lamangan – lamang. Mamanag... puta. Dila ko. Hindi maglamang – at pagkakaisa*” (“This is not the time to just [gibberish]... Fuck. My tongue. Not the time to sit around – and unite with one another”) (Duterte, 2020).

3. *Speaking as a Government Outsider*

Aside from demonstrating “bad manners” and “speaking the unspeakable” in speeches, a populist rhetoric further appeals to the people as an ordinary, government outsider by speaking in behalf of the people (Schoor, 2017). Given this, Duterte hinges on his appeal as “an outsider of the government” by constantly expresses the woes of the Filipinos towards the failures of the government in implementing meaningful policy; and implying that he shares their deep sentiments as he is “one of the people” or at least understands the plight of the people. In his 1st SONA, he began his speech by completely separating himself from the government he had been working prior to the presidency as he mentioned that it is unproductive to keep blaming past politicians who are “perceived to be responsible for the mess that [the Filipino people] are in and suffering from”; and instead, he suggests that it is imperative to learn from *their* mistakes because “it is the present that we (referring to Duterte and the Filipino people) are concerned with and the future that we should be prepared for” (Duterte, 2016a). In his inaugural address, he further expresses the

woes of the people characterized by their “erosion of faith and trust in government” which is argued to be the real problem of the Philippines; as he said, “I see the erosion of the people’s trust in our country’s leaders, the erosion of faith in our judicial system, the erosion of confidence in the capacity of our public servants to make the people’s lives better, safer, and healthier” (Duterte, 2016b). Further, he justified his bloody drug war and radical corruption policies by emotionally outlining the experience of Filipinos residing in crime-ridden communities: “I have seen how illegal drugs destroyed individuals and ruined family relationships. I have seen how criminality, by all means all foul, snatched from the innocent and the unsuspecting, the years and years of accumulated savings”; and the grim reality of Philippine politics: “I have seen how corruption bled the government of funds, which were allocated for the use in uplifting the poor from the mire that they are in” (Duterte, 2016b). In addition, he has also expressed disappointment towards government authorities in another instance as he perceived them to be “the perpetrators of the very crimes they were tasked to prevent or suppress” (Duterte, 2017).

A populist further demonstrates that he is part of the people – and, thus – an outsider of the government by highlighting his/her perception of the people being the central beneficiaries of government action (Diehl, 2018). In the case of Duterte, he addressed the government by suggesting corrections to their shortcomings for the sake of respecting the popular power of the people. In a speech, he told government authorities that they “talk too much, act too slow, and do too little”; and further explains that what the country needs are more “good men in public service” (Rappler, 2020). In addition, Duterte argues that government officials are “long on rhetorics but short on accomplishments” and ultimately suggests that they “lead by example as words ring hollow when not followed by positive and prioritized action” (Duterte, 2019). In other instances, he goes to the extent of condemning incompetent authorities – for instance – as they increased the price of water and electricity during the COVID-19 Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) which ultimately led to “blackouts” in homes. As it is not typical of presidents to publicly condemn government authorities in SONAs, Duterte ends by saying, “I’m sorry but I have to say this to you. I do not like it. But since it is the time for the SONA, for people to know and people to really get the facts” (Duterte, 2020).

Finally, a rhetorical feature that populists employ are the simplification of terms and concepts that are grounded in common-sense understandings of the world. According to the populist, this is imperative for the people to easily grasp and access – this is a way for them to

establish that they are truly ordinary by understanding the circumstance of the people (Schoor, 2017; de la Torre, 2018; Waisbord, 2018; Enria, 2019) In this light, Duterte also exhibits this as he oversimplifies terms, government processes, and policies touching on otherwise complex issues. This paves the way for the people to grasp these concepts easier and make the world of politics – which has traditionally appeared to be incomprehensible to others apart from other politicians and experts/scholars – more accessible to them. When discussing the complicated and persistent traffic issue, he proposed to merely accord emergency powers to agencies concerned. In justifying this “band-aid solution”, he argued that urgent matters require urgent solutions: “*Eh, ganoon talaga eh...*” (“Well, that’s how it is...”.) It’s an urgent and immediate situation – solution”. As politicians criticized this proposal and hinted at the potential failure of this solution, Duterte backhandedly commented, “If you give it, fine. If you don’t give, we’ll take the longer route, slowly”; (Duterte, 2016a). Finally, he criticizes the complexity of political processes which makes them relatively inaccessible for Filipinos, as he expressed: “I heard people on the streets complain that justice had become illusory; that equity and fairness and speedy disposition of cases had deteriorated into hollow concepts fit only for masteral dissertations. It was, and is still, very sad indeed” (Duterte, 2016a).

B. Being Pro-people

As Duterte exhibits his ordinariness by expressing rhetoric in being “one of the people”, it follows that he has a pro-people mindset in which he glorifies the people by painting them as virtuous and moral. On the other hand, he antagonizes drug criminals – those he expresses constitute the “other” – by calling them “rapists”, “murderers”, and aggressors of the innocent. Indeed, Duterte populist rhetoric is also divisive as he expresses his worldview in which the moral “us” is opposed to the immoral “them”. In this light, Duterte uses populist rhetoric to reflect his pro-people mindset by (1) glorifying the people whom he works for, (2) demonizing the “other”, and (3) emphasizing a communal duty.

1. Working for the Glorified People

As outlined by the concept of pro-people appeals, populist leaders express that the people are at the forefront of their policies as they aim to protect the general will (Abromeit, 2018). Given this, populist leaders employ rhetoric to reveal a closeness with the people by romanticizing them

as the “virtuous and righteous” people and “patriots of the nation” (Bateman & Levine, 2016; Waisbord, 2018). Duterte displays this in the pursuit of exhibiting a pro-people mindset as he glorifies the Filipino by speaking about them highly – first by referring to them as his master and boss. On the one hand, Duterte expressed in a speech, “I do not have any master except the Filipino people” (CNN, 2016). On the other hand, he referred to them as his boss in his 4th SONA by expressing, “*trabahante lang ako ng Pilipino*” (“I’m merely a worker of the Filipinos”) (CNN, 2016; Duterte, 2019); and by telling government officials, “Your client is the Filipino, our employer – from where the money in our pockets come from: our salaries” (Duterte, 2019). In this light, he appealed to government officials to make their services more simplified and “client-friendly” (Duterte, 2019). Duterte ended this speech by telling government officials that do not satisfy the will of the Filipinos that he will kill them (“*Pag hindi pa ninyo nagawa ‘yan ngayon, papatayin ko talaga kayo*”) (“If you still don’t do [their will], I will really kill you”) (Duterte, 2019). Aside from referring to the Filipino people as his boss, he had also praised them for their resiliency which “has been tested and proven [in] more difficult times in the past”, as well as their characteristic of being “disciplined, informed, and involved” as these characteristics have the ultimate power of bringing the Philippines “out of its current misery” (Duterte, 2016a). Finally, he puts Filipinos on a pedestal for the strength they possess as they are “no stranger (...) to situations like [the crime-ridden environment they] face today” (Duterte, 2017).

To cement his vow to protect the general will of the people that serve as his boss and master, Duterte further projects his pro-people mindset by expressing that he dedicates his presidency to implementing policies of peace and order “even if it means fighting interests” (Manila Bulletin, 2018). These are the means to achieve his purpose of giving the Filipino people the “good life” in accordance with the “State’s obligations to promote and protect, and fulfill the rights of citizens, especially the poor, the marginalized, and the vulnerable” (Duterte, 2016a). With the drug war at the forefront of his peace and order policies, critics have spoken up on Duterte’s violation of human rights as mentioned previously. He responded to this by expressing, “your concern is human rights, mine is human lives” which refers to the lives of his people being threatened by the evils of drug criminals; and vaguely defined human rights as “giving Filipinos a decent and dignified future (Manila Bulletin, 2018). Another way in which he justified his drug war policy is by referring to the youth whose future may be destroyed by the threat of drug criminals as he mentioned, “I know what crimes can do to the youth of this country if it is not

stopped”; and, “if it is not stopped, crimes can make human cesspools of succeeding generations” which he will “not allow it to happen” (Duterte, 2018).

2. Demonizing the “Other”

Given that many scholars agree that populism involves an “us vs. them” worldview, two elements of populism as people-centrism and anti-elitism (Rooduijn, 2019). While Duterte exhibited people-centrism by glorifying them and ultimately vowing to protect their general interests, Duterte exhibited anti-elitism in the form of painting the contextually-relevant “other” – drug criminals – as the primary societal threat. As populists express antagonism towards the “other” through a paranoid style of rhetoric involving suspiciousness and an apocalyptic worldview, Duterte paints drug criminals as one the people must be suspicious about and ultimately promotes the EJKs of these drug criminals to save the Philippines from the perceived apocalypse (Hofstadter, 1964 in Gidron & Bonikowski, n.d.).

First, Duterte paints drugs as “the root cause of so much evil and so much suffering that weakens the social fabric and deters foreign investments from pouring in” (Duterte, 2017). This enables drug users to be actors the people must watch out for as they are “rapists”, “murderers”, and aggressors of the innocent (Johnson & Giles, 2019). Given Duterte’s apocalyptic worldview in which “progress and development will sputter if criminals, illegal drugs, illegal users of drugs are allowed to roam the streets freely, victimizing seeming with impunity, the innocent and the helpless” (Duterte, 2017), he dedicates his drug war policy to “slaughter [these] idiots”. Further, he justified this policy by expressing that “they are not doing any mercy to [the Filipino people] anyway” (Duterte, 2016a). In this light, Duterte justified EJKs over imprisonment as the true deterrent to drug-related crime. He argued that as soon as drug users are released from prison, “he rapes again, kidnaps another girl, and makes her a hostage for so many years (Duterte, 2017). Finally, he ended his speech by demeaning drug users by heatedly expressing, “You are so lenient about this son of a bitch: a human being that has a virulent brain and his enemy is society” (Duterte, 2017); and questioning their human rights as he mentioned in a public address, “Are [these drug criminals] humans?”, and later paints them as monsters deserving of punishment or death (Canceran, 2018; Iyengar et. al., 2016).

3. *Emphasizing a Communal Duty*

The purpose behind employing paranoid narratives when painting a societal threat is exhorting citizens into action as their sense of outrage towards the exposed evils has been appealed to (Bateman & Levine, 2016). Given this, part of exhibiting a pro-people mindset through rhetoric is the populist leader calling upon the people to perform a communal duty alongside him as one people. This communal duty in the Philippine context – in its simplest sense – is fighting petty-crime and drug criminals together. To this end, Duterte expressed in his inaugural address: “I now ask everyone, and I mean everyone, to join me as we embark on this crusade for a better and brighter tomorrow” (Duterte, 2016b); as through unity can they “truly prevail” (Duterte, 2016a). In addition, Duterte commented that this can be achieved and overcome as the Filipino people have overcome tough situations “countless times in the past” (Duterte, 2017). This communal duty even includes putting up a fight when confronted with government officials who refuse to listen to the general will, as he expressed, “... *at sasampalin talaga ninyo. Hindi na bale magkaaway*. I will defend you (...) This is what I’ve been doing all along” (“... And really hit them. Doesn’t matter if it turns into a fight, I will defend you. This is what I’ve been doing all along”) (Duterte, 2019).

As the drug war policy is at the forefront of his “peace and order” policies, vigilantism through performing the EJKs is another duty that Duterte encourages the Filipino people to act upon as he expressed, “If I can do it, why can’t you?” (Sullivan, 2020); and said, “Do your duty. And if in the process, you kill 1,000 persons because you were doing your duty, I will protect you” (Iyengar et. al., 2016; Woody, 2016). Indeed, Duterte highlights the urgent need of vigilantism as he stated, “Double your efforts, triple them if need be. We will not stop until the last drug lord, the last financier, and the last pusher have surrendered or put behind bars or below the ground – if they so wish” (Sawey, 2018).

C. *Hypermasculinity*

Similar to populist leaders such as Vladimir Putin, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Donald Trump, Duterte is known to demonstrate his hypermasculinity as an “outsider bad boy” and a father to the nation (Eksi & Wood, 2019). In addition, he exhibits his hypermasculine appeal to the people through “angry masculinist performances” (Eksi & Wood, 2019). This is

embodied in: (1) the way he discusses his radical policies; (2) “bullies” state actors and critics; and (3) expresses sexist remarks.

1. *Discussing Radical Policies*

Political masculinities are exhibited by angry populist leaders who put matters into their own hands in their respective countries (Eksi & Wood, 2019). In this light, Duterte projects this proactivity in the way he calls upon all relevant government authorities to crack down on drug criminals. First, he called upon the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other officials to “abuse [their] authority”; otherwise, there “will be hell to pay, for [they] will have become worse than criminality itself” (Duterte, 2016a). If these authorities do not perform their duty up to standard, he threatened to sanction them, as he expressed: “those not performing will be sanctioned including the loss of police deputation from the NAPOLCOM (National Police Commission” (Duterte, 2016a). In addition, he called upon all state actors to crack down on drug users, as he threatened, “I am directing all intelligence agencies to unmask perpetrators of this economic sabotage and our law enforcement agencies to bring them to justice” (Duterte, 2018). Finally, he demonstrates his hypermasculine proactivity by endorsing other radical policies to supplement the bloody drug war in cracking down on drug criminals. In the pursuit of peace and order policies for the purpose of giving the Filipino people the good life, he requested Congress to “reinstate death penalty for heinous crimes related to drugs, as well as plunder” (Duterte, 2019). Finally, he endorsed pending legislation to lower the minimum age of criminal liability from 15 to 6 years old as drug traffickers use children as couriers and are deserving of jail – at the same breath of vowing to kill his own children if they use drugs (Gutierrez, 2017).

As discussed previously, his stance on human rights reflects his “tough guy” personality as he argued that it “cannot be used as a shield or an excuse to destroy the country” (Duterte, 2016a); and in the backdrop of Pope Francis, the Catholic community, and critics calling to cease Duterte’s bloody drug war, he argued that it will not stop regardless. To this end, he called on suspected drug criminals to stop what they are doing to avoid death, as he threatened, “*kung ayaw ninyong mamatay, ayaw ninyong masaktan, wag kayong umasa diyan sa mga pari, pati human rights – hindi nakakapigil ‘yan ang kamatayan*” (“If you don’t want to die, if you don’t want to get hurt, don’t place your hopes on the priests and human rights – they won’t stop you from getting killed”) (Duterte, 2016a). Further, he justified killing as a better alternative to imprisonment and

rehabilitation as he expressed, “How can I solve the problem now by arresting? *Gusto kong papatayin* (“I want to kill”) (Duterte, 2016a). In this light, he argued that the drug war – which he references to as a “fight” – “will be relentless and it will be sustained” (Duterte, 2016b). In these circumstances, Duterte ultimately demonstrates his “angry populist leader” personality by employing radicalism such as killings and threats involving powerful government authorities. In addition, these circumstance reference to the fact that Duterte implies that drug criminals and other “them” groups as hypermasculine figures that are bound to purge the nation – this is a rhetorical feature present demonstrating hypermasculinity (Sofos, 2020; Eksi & Wood, 2019).

2. “Bullying” State Actors and Critics

In the pursuit of establishing their hypermasculine appeal, populist leaders seek enemies who can be dominated (Eksi & Wood, 2019). This is reflected in the way that populist leaders establish their legitimacy through their dominant status (Eksi & Wood, 2019). In this light, Duterte establishes enemies by bullying state actors and critics as he has been open about him being a “bully” as he addressed the public, “*Sabi nila doon – bully daw ako. Tangina pala kayo, talagang bully ako (...)* especially to the enemies of the state” (“They say I’m a bully. Well fuck you, of course I’m a bully (...) especially to the enemies of the state”) (Duterte, 2017). His “bullying” is evident in the way he spoke about the now-imprisoned drug war critic and senator Leila De Lima whose alleged sex video had been aired in Congress. To this, he commented, “You know, you were all here. You conducted the investigation. You heard the witnesses. You saw the videos. Is she a credible woman? Can she be a moral person?” (Duterte, 2017). He ends his comment by appealing to his fellow politicians, telling them to “destroy her, make her cry, and let her rot in jail” (Santos, 2018). The same situation occurred with Lourdes Sereno – the first women Chief Justice in the Philippines – as he commented that he will “not choose a woman after Sereno” after criticizing his drug (Santos, 2018).

Finally, Duterte bullies state actors and critics in the form of threats involving punishment. In this light, he has been projecting his masculinity towards state actors – particularly towards the corrupt – as he expressed, “[they] must be laughing while they stash their dirty monies. But not for long. They cannot outrun the long arm of the law” (Duterte, 2020). Duterte further projects his masculinity towards critics as he threatened to suspend the writ of habeas corpus and unveiled an opposition matrix containing supposed links between political opponents, journalists, activists, and

communist leaders. To this, Human Rights Watch expressed that security forces are “no longer making any distinction as to who to target as long as the directive is clear. So they can use the methods of the drug war [to] go after these people” (Aspinwall, 2019). Finally, Duterte has bullied journalists like Maria Ressa and those from ABS-CBN – the country’s media giant – as he threatened in a speech that they are “sons of bitches who are not exempt from assassination” (Gutierrez & Stevenson, 2020). Indeed, this shows that populist leaders undermine policies employed by public institutions – such as democratic procedures of checks and balances that allow the people to experience due process before conviction (Eksi & Wood, 2019).

3. Expressing Sexist Remarks

Indeed, populist leaders are able to fully display their hypermasculinity when operating in a current sexist climate (Löffler et. al., 2020). This is observed in the way Duterte expresses sexist remarks without holding back – this has been met with tolerance by both the Filipino people who support Duterte and by relevant government authorities. As a self-confessed womanizer and lover of women, Duterte is known to express a plethora of sexist remarks which has constantly been met with humor by Duterte supporters and selected government officials such as his spokesperson – Harry Roque – who responded to criticism that one must not take the president’s jokes “literally” (Gutierrez, 2017; Santos, 2018). Beginning his election campaign, he was often photographed with young women sitting on his lap whom he sometimes kissed (Gutierrez, 2017); he told soldiers to shoot female rebels in the vagina as, without it, “they are nothing” (Haynes, 2018; Santos, 2018); he made inappropriate comments about his Vice President Leni Robredo’s legs (Haynes, 2018); he detailed drug war critic and senator Leila De Lima’s past romances in detail and called her an “immoral woman” while implicating her in a sex scandal (Santos, 2020; Regencia, 2019); he joked about raping Miss Universe and an Australian nun (Haynes, 2018; Santos, 2018); and he equated having a second wife to keeping a spare tire in the trunk of a car (Santos, 2018).

II. Investigating Duterte’s Large-Scale Support in the Philippine Context

Duterte has been able to garner large-scale support in which his “us versus them” worldview has become a reality. This worldview divides Philippine society into two main groups: the moral “us” group being non-drug users, and the immoral “them” group being drug users. Both groups are placed directly in opposition to each other in which the former claims the moral high-

ground as they further antagonize the latter for the perceived threat they pose in society (Kusaka, 2017; Kreuzer, 2016b). In this light, a large-scale “us” group exists as Duterte’s fanbase – self-proclaimed non-drug users who villainize drug criminals – encompasses all pockets of Philippine society from the rich to the poor, all of whom demand societal change through Duterte’s promised deterrence of crime. Majority of the fanbase comprises of the lower middle class who resent and bear the brunt of the existence of drug criminals (Coronel, 2019); and a significant percentage comprises of the rich and professional classes who have professed their beliefs in effectiveness of EJK (McCargo, 2016). Duterte’s popularity rating among these classes has been at 78% (Cabato, 2019). The success of Duterte’s rhetoric in mobilizing all-encompassing support is further concretized in an interesting paradox: the poor – most notably the urban poor – are staunch supporters of Duterte despite being the most victimized in his drug war. Indeed, 80% of the D class (poor) and 77% of the E class (poorest) comprise the fanbase but a lot are drug criminals as they rely on drugs to alleviate hunger, emotionally escape from the grinding conditions of daily life, and fund their livelihoods (Kusaka, 2017; Johnson & Fernquest, 2018).

We can look into the Philippine context – particularly Philippine culture, values, and circumstance – and see how these bring Duterte’s populism reflected through his rhetoric to life; and – in the process – explain how Duterte is able to amass large-scale support in the nation cutting across all classes. This section will provide discussion on these phenomena, particularly that: (1) Duterte embodies the typical Filipino father figure, (2) he is able to mobilize the people towards a communal duty given the Filipino values of *ambag* and *bayanihan*, and (3) his radical and ordinary appeal resonate with the Filipino people who have been frustrated by the perceived ineffectiveness of policies and elitism of politicians from the Philippine liberal-democratic regime.

A. “*Tatay Digong*” (“Father Duterte”)

Everyday Filipino culture involves paternalism in the families as there is usually a single father who the dynamic revolves around. The father bestows gifts, solves family issues, and guides the family during his lifetime; this brand of paternalism is extended into the political sphere (*Barangay, Paternalism, and the Roots of Political Leadership*, 2020; Tanyag, 2018). Paternalism in the political context is defined to be “the subsuming of individual responsibility within a political (or even familial) structure to the will of one person” (*Barangay, Paternalism, and the Roots of Political Leadership*, 2020). The Philippine political system was once a *barangay* – the

smallest form of government in the country – which is a highly-localized structure with a single leader ruling over family units. This created a spillover to contemporary Philippine politics as we know it in which client-patron ties are utilized to advance policy and popularity. In this light, Nick Joaquin expressed that “nationalism begins as a local piety” as loyalties in the status quo are not to the system or the nation, but to the leader. This is the main catalyst of paternalism whose model of leadership involves the needs for order, as well as harmony and compliance of the followers towards their leader. As embodied in the Filipino principle “*pakikipagkapwa-tao*”, the paternal leader is given the ultimate responsibility to protect his followers and be at the forefront of decision-making and problem-solving in return for the followers’ loyalty. In addition, paternal figures are perceived to be incapable of error (*Barangay, Paternalism, and the Roots of Political Leadership*, 2020).

Duterte is reverently called “Tatay Digong” by the Filipino people as he embodies the tough and benevolent father figure present in their lives who can do what is needed to restore security and order to the nation (Wong, 2019; REGNET, 2017). This – in turn – gives the people a sense of familiarity and trust towards Duterte, his promises, and radical policies such as the drug war. In this context, Duterte is able to mobilize this large-scale support by using populist rhetoric reflecting: (1) ordinariness as he expresses that since he is “one of the people”, he wholeheartedly knows their woes; (2) being pro-people as he vows to protect the general will; and (3) hypermasculinity as he defends radical policies – such as the drug war – for his people despite external challenges.

1. Ordinariness

As he has established that he is one of the people, Duterte’s populist characteristic of being ordinary catalyzes the mobilization of large-scale support as he expresses the woes of the people – the plights which he himself resonates with. This is ultimately the characteristic of a benevolent Filipino father figure – one who not only pursues the best interests of his children, but knows them (Tanyag, 2018). In this light, Duterte expresses the sentiments of the people as their father and not as a government actor. He addresses the government in his speeches and expresses that the Filipino people have lost trust in them and in the country’s judicial system to provide them the “good life”; and goes to the extent of condemning government actors for their shortcomings. This rhetoric is

what gives the Filipino people the impression that Duterte embodies “the father of the nation” who loves his people and is sincere in his pursuit to protect them (Tanyag, 2018).

Indeed, populist leaders are able to generate multi-class following as he/she establishes a sense of community with the people – this is in the way that he speaks in behalf of the people by communicating their woes. Support mobilization in this context is shown as a former Filipino ambassador argued that “we cannot doubt the sincerity of this man to help the poorest of the poor (CNN, 2016). This is echoed by Helena who said, “when he says something, you can see that he really means that – he uses even foul words, he swears, because he really wants to do it” (Malmgren, 2019). Finally, Cliopatra expressed that he is very “honest, fearless, has a good heart, and wants the best for the Philippines” because he “loves his country and wants to improve it” (Malmgren, 2019).

2. *Being Pro-people*

Given his reflection of ordinariness by expressing that he knows the plight and best interest of the people, Duterte reflects his pro-people mindset by vowing to pursue these interests as a benevolent Filipino father would do (Tanyag, 2018). This is echoed by the responsibility given to the paternal figure in Philippine politics to be at the forefront of decision-making and problem-solving in behalf of his people (*Barangay, Paternalism, and the Roots of Political Leadership*, 2020). In this light, Duterte implements peace and order policies for the sole purpose of giving Filipinos – especially the “poor, the marginalized, and the vulnerable” – the good life (Duterte, 2016a). Given this display of proactive and benevolent paternalism, the Filipino people are led to trust and unconditionally respect him as reflected by traditional family values surrounding filial piety and reverence. This presents the danger of restricting deliberation around public interests and goals; and ultimately explains the strong and sustained support Duterte receives (Tanyag, 2018). Indeed, Duterte’s expression to protect the general will is able to mobilize support as the people feel that they are able to relate to the president.

This is echoed by Pedro who expressed that a “large portion of the population trusts him” because “only Duterte can implement changes. There is nothing impossible for him” (Malmgren, 2019). In addition, Helena further painted Duterte’s willingness to pursue the general will as he mentioned, “this is not a promise, he is a doer”; and Chesa testified to Duterte’s benevolent paternalism as she expressed that he “may look tough and strong, but he is an honest and soft-

hearted person, a president who has love and compassion for his country people” (Malmgren, 2019). Finally, Adrian argues that it is easy to trust Duterte considering that “he has been doing [his duties] successfully” to which Adrian echoes: “he had already shown that he stood for the people when he was mayor in Davao” (Malmgren, 2019).

3. Hypermasculinity

Aside from exhibiting benevolent paternalism through his rhetoric reflecting ordinariness and a pro-people mindset, Duterte illustrates tough paternalism through his display of hypermasculinity and mobilizes support in the process as: (1) he “fights until the end” for his people, and (2) justifies the drug war as a form of “tough love”. First, Duterte is known to fight until the end for his people which is a typical Filipino father characteristic (Santos, 2018). In this context, this is done by expressing his pursuit to pursue the best interests of the people through his radical drug war policy despite being condemned by local and international critics – he vows to implement the drug war “even if it means fighting interests” (Manila Bulletin, 2018). This is encapsulated in the way that he bullies dissenters of his policy as he expressed that he is only a bully to “the enemies of the state” (Duterte, 2016a). Another way in which he demonstrates fighting interests is by arguing with opposing views, as he justified the EJKs by heatedly expressing that human rights “cannot be used as a shield or an excuse to destroy the country” (Duterte, 2016a). Indeed, he promises to fight until the end as he expressed that the drug war will be “relentless” and “sustained” (Duterte, 2016b). Indeed, this has been able to mobilize large-scale support in this context as the people agree with Duterte’s radical drug war policy as means to protect them as Daniel – who referenced to Duterte’s responsibility as a paternal figure – expressed, “If you do not kill the root of this problem, it can spread (...) somebody needs to prevent this” (Malmgren, 2019). Finally, Kati echoes this as she said “with Duterte’s strategy, who says that it is better to kill a person who can ruin later 500 people, including children with drugs. He has the rights for this” (Malmgren, 2019).

Aside from expressing his relentless fight, another way in which Duterte mobilizes large-scale support is justifying the drug war as a form of “tough love” (Kusaka, 2017). This works in the context of Philippine politics as notions of masculinity are tied with power and leadership because positions of authority remain to be male-dominated. This phenomenon has indeed been paved by the dominance of paternalism in the Filipino psyche. Case in point: two Philippine

presidents – Cory Aquino and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo – had their leadership abetted not only by their political pedigree (as a widow and a daughter of a male political leader respectively), but also by the performance of feminine, maternal, and Catholic identities (Tanyag, 2018). Given this, Duterte’s drug war is seen as a form of “tough love” which is ultimately aimed at protecting the people as Sharmila Parmanand argued: “There is a macho mindset of the war on drugs being justified because it protects women and children” (Haynes, 2018). This mindset is illustrated in Boboy’s – an interviewee – case in which he witnessed someone getting killed and automatically changed his drug habits. To this end, his wife thanked Duterte for the drug war despite being harassed by the EJK actors (Kusaka, 2017). In addition, Daniela taps into Duterte’s form of tough love as she referred to his responsibility to “provide discipline that the Filipino people truly needs” (Dollanganger, 2020). Others have testified to Duterte’s success in protecting his people, as Helena testified that it has been safer for her and her kids to walk around at night: “I did feel safer too when I was [in the Philippines] in 2017, going around the streets with my kids at night. I did not feel that I needed to go home because it was too dark” (Malmgren, 2019). Chesa echoes this sentiment as she said she feels “annoyed with the intervention of the foreign countries when they are not actually [in the Philippines] and seeing the real situation” (Malmgren, 2019).

B. “*Ambag at Bayanihan*” (“Contribution and Community”)

In addressing those who criticized Duterte’s failure in rapidly handling the COVID-19 pandemic, Duterte famously asked in a SONA: “*ano ba ang ambag mo?*” (“What even is your contribution?”) and follows this up by asking, “What have you done for the country except to criticize and talk?” (Borja et. al., 2020). To this, Senator Antonio Trillanes responded, “Four trillion *ang budget mo, tapos hahanapan mo ako ng ambag?*” (“Your budget is four trillion, now you’re looking to me for contribution?”) (Borja et. al., 2020). Duterte’s remark in his SONA embodies the Filipino communal value of “*ambag*” which is generally defined to be the contribution of a member to a group’s initiative. In this context, free-riders – or those who participate in the group’s initiative without contribution – are portrayed as a nuisance (Borja et. al., 2020).

Ambag invokes *bayanihan* (the root word *bayan* means a community, like a town or a nation) which is defined to be a community helping out a member. While traditional images of *bayanihan* shows people literally carrying a house on their shoulders, now, it means mutual

assistance or any collective effort (Borja et. al., 2020). The embedment of *bayanihan* in Filipino culture can be observed through the fact that when disaster strikes, the global Filipino community is always quick to organize relief good activities for the benefit of other Filipinos. Sheryl Palacios-Manolo – one of the initiators of an Abu Dhabi-based COVID-19 relief good activity – explained that: “*hindi pwedeng ipikit mo lang ang iyong mata at wala kang gagawin man lang para sa mga apektadong kababayan*” (“We cannot close our eyes and not do anything for our affected countrymen”) (*Bayanihan Kahit Saan Man*, 2020). Finally, Jennifer Paredes from Sheryl’s team echoed this empathy by expressing that, “*batid namin na marami ang mga nangangailangan kaya kami po at nagkaisa na man ambag-ambag para matulungan – kahit food assistance – ang mga nawalan ng trabaho*” (“We know a lot of Filipinos need aid, that’s why we unite and contribute to help – even if it’s just food assistance – those who’ve lost their jobs”) (*Bayanihan Kahit Saan Man*, 2020). Indeed, *ambag* and *bayanihan* signifies a communal relationship between individual citizens and the country as a community in which everyone is subject to “do his part for the nation” (Borja et. al., 2020).

In the political sphere, these communal values refer to active membership and direct participation in a nation to which each citizen must contribute apart from giving taxes. These communal values can indeed pave the way for the assertion of state power by the leader in which “*Sumunod nalang kayo*” (“Just follow”) and “*Tumulong na lang kayo*” (“Just help out”) are common comments used by both the leader and the people. In this light, quiet assistance and obedience are common features in this dynamic which pose the threat of silencing critics. Finally, these communal values also lead to the division between Duterte’s supporters between those who uphold the communal duty and those who do not (Borja et. al., 2020).

1. *Ordinariness*

The same way Filipinos in the *bayan* congregate to organize relief operations for others in the community in the wake of a disaster, Duterte is able to call upon his fellow people into acting upon a communal duty. According to Moffitt (2016), a populist’s first order of business is to perceive a societal threat – one which is an overlooked political problem in the nation. In this context, Duterte discussed a societal threat – or disaster – in which the Philippines is a “narco-state” where drugs-usage is rampant (Coronel, 2019); and further justified the existence of this disaster as he discussed the threat posed by drug criminals who ultimately “[destroy] individuals

and [ruin] family relationships” (Duterte, 2016a). Given this, he highlights the urgent need for Filipinos to perform their communal duty of fighting against this circumstance – specifically, of becoming vigilantes in the drug war tasked to kill drug criminals (suspected or otherwise). In this light, Duterte encouraged Filipinos – whom he places at the same caliber as himself – to participate in the EJKs by saying, “If I can do it, why can’t you?” (Sullivan, 2017). Following this, vigilantism materialized as both the PNP and civilian vigilante groups gave their *ambag* by killing about 10 people a day and more than 20,000 Filipinos were killed by “unknown perpetrators” (Cabato, 2019). Such killings occur in a tactic called “riding in tandem” in which men on motorcycles kill without any due process (Sullivan, 2020; Amnesty International, 2017). To highlight the prevalence of EJKs by these actors, a study has shown that both the PNP and vigilantes racked up a 96% kill rate (Rosca, 2018). Finally, human rights organizations report that two-thirds of EJKs are attributed to civilian vigilantes alone (Mogato & Baldwin, 2017).

To illustrate Filipinos’ *bayanihan*, civilians have testified that vigilantism is a “necessary evil” to take Filipinos out of their misery – particularly, the misery of being confronted with the threat drug criminals pose (Johnson & Fernquest, 2018). Finally, both communal values come into play as Duterte supporters demonstrate quiet assistance and obedience in fulfilling their communal duty. This is exhibited in a police chaplain named Metho Andres’ testimony; he claimed that Duterte is a “god-appointed agent of wrath” who should be obeyed without question and blamed drug users for their own deaths (Baldwin & Marshall, 2017).

2. *Being Pro-people*

To further mobilize action towards a communal duty of vigilantism, Duterte utilizes divisive rhetoric to delineate the moral people against the immoral “other” as he praises the capabilities of the Filipino people to effectively carry out their duty in killing the demonized drug criminals. On the one hand, he glorifies the resiliency and strength of the Filipino people which have stood the test of time; as well as the Filipinos’ being “disciplined, informed and involved” which allow them to fulfill their communal duty’s purpose in making the Philippines free from the threat posed by drug criminals (Duterte, 2016a). In addition, Duterte further cements this glorification by promising successful vigilantes government protection as he expressed: “Do your duty. And if in the process, you kill 1,000 persons because you were doing your duty, I will protect you” (Woody, 2016). On the other hand, Duterte utilizes demonizing rhetoric when discussing

drug criminals in the backdrop of putting the Filipino people on a pedestal. Duterte paints drug users as the “downfall of society” as they are rapists, murderers, and aggressors of the innocent (Johnson & Giles, 2019; Cabato, 2019; Johnson & Fernquest, 2018; Coronel, 2019). To this end, Duterte expressed that drugs and drug users are the “root cause of so much evil and so much suffering that weakens the social fabric” (Johnson & Fernquest, 2018). Duterte also highlights that drug criminals destroy the economy as drugs deter foreign investments from pouring in (Johnson & Fernquest, 2018).

Indeed, this display of a pro-people mindset by utilizing glorifying and demonizing rhetoric when discussing the Filipino people and drug criminals respectively works to mobilize support in this particular context as: (1) the societal threat is more emotionally defined, and (2) vigilantes are enabled to feel more strongly towards acting upon this communal duty. This is encapsulated in testimonies as Chief Lito Patay once said, “We are very angry about people involved in drugs. We want to crush them. That’s our indoctrination” (Baldwin & Marshall, 2017).

3. *Hypermasculinity*

Duterte reflects his hypermasculinity when discussing the communal duty (vigilantism) of the Filipinos. In light of painting drug criminals, Duterte further cements his demonization towards them as he argues that they “must be slaughtered” as they are not humans – rather, they are monsters deserving of punishment or death as they never did the Filipino people “any mercy” (Duterte, 2016a; Canceran, 2018; Iyengar et. al., 2016). Given this, he not only appeals to the Filipino people to perform their communal duty, but also calls upon government authorities to crack down on the threat. This is illustrated in the circumstances in which he ordered the PNP to “abuse [their] authority”; otherwise, they will be punished (Duterte, 2016a). In addition, Duterte also called upon intelligence and law enforcement agencies to bring the drug criminals “to justice” (Duterte, 2017).

Indeed, Duterte is able to mobilize large-scale support in this context as he emboldens the Filipino people – civilians, authorities, and local leaders alike – to perform as radically in the drug war as Duterte expresses they should. To this, Human Rights Watch argues that this paves the way for “Duterte clones” (Aspinwall, 2019). Given this, the drug war has gone to the extremes of displaying spectacles as corpses are seen with “I am a drug pusher” and “Drug pusher, do not emulate (*drug pusher, ‘wag tularan’*)” signs on them (Johnson & Fernquest, 2018; Coronel, 2019).

In addition, cartoon expressions are drawn on the faces of corpses, Filipinos make bets on whether they knew the victim and crack jokes about them, and they pose beside these corpses for the camera (Johnson & Fernquest, 2018). Finally, the people's staunch support is rooted in this emboldenment as an interviewee from the urban poor community – the heavily-victimized community in the drug war – as he said: “Drug addicts must be eliminated for the progress of the nation. I will report to the police even my family members if they use drugs” (Kusaka, 2017).

C. *“Paparating ang Pagbabago” (“Change is Coming”)*

Filipinos have aired out their frustrations towards the politicians and institutions of the previous liberal-democratic regime who have allegedly failed in solving issues involving governance and the continuing conflict in the South, delivering their services efficiently, and eradicating widespread inequality (School of Regulation and Global Governance, 2017); however, at the forefront of these frustrations is the prevalence of drug-related crime as Filipinos are confronted with violence on the streets by drug users, sellers, street criminals (Johnson & Fernquest, 2018). The Philippines has had one of the highest rates of drug abuse in East and Southeast Asia with more than 1 million drug users in the country. Given this, Filipinos complain about the justice system as it is believed to fail to hold drug criminals accountable; and complain about past politicians who failed to eradicate drug-related crime (Johnson & Fernquest, 2018). In addition, Filipinos have expressed their woes that they are unable to relate to past politicians given their elitism; thus, there is a level of distrust towards their leaders (Johnson & Fernquest, 2018). Indeed, there is a perceived failure of the liberal-democratic regime in the Philippines to effectively address the social ills that – for decades – have disenfranchised the Filipino majority. In this light, democratic disillusionment and sense of illiberalism have already existed (Pernia, 2019).

When Duterte ran for president in 2016, he upheld his campaign slogan: “Change is Coming (*“Paparating ang Pagbabago”*)” as represented by a clenched fist. On the one hand, he presented his radicalism the drug war was his main political platform in the pursuit of eradicating drug-related crime (McCargo, 2016; Kusaka, 2017; Fernquest, 2018). His rhetoric painted the drug war as “violent, bloody, and genocidal”. Through this, he demonstrated that he is opposed to the norms and practices espoused by the liberal-democratic institutions of the country such as human rights (Pernia, 2019). In addition, Duterte promised “national political salvation” by claiming that, given weak democratic institutions, only violent strongman rule can bring political order to the

country (Pernia, 2019). On the other hand, he presented his ordinariness himself as the first tough-talking, small-town leader who – despite coming from a political dynasty – does not consider himself part of the Philippine ruling class (Pernia, 2019; McBeth, 2016). Given these characteristics, Filipinos support Duterte as he gives hope in the wake of the liberal-democratic regime that drug-related crime will indeed be eradicated; as well as relatability with the people as his radicalness makes him seem authentic compared to past presidents (Johnson & Fernquest, 2018).

1. Ordinariness

As mentioned previously, Duterte’s populist rhetoric reflects his ordinariness as he demonstrates “bad manners” particularly through (1) explicit outburst employing crass language as he would call his local and international critics “stupid”, “son of a bitch/whore”, and heatedly tell them “fuck you” and raise their middle finger while speaking about them (Coonan, 2016; Rappler, 2020; Haynes, 2018); (2) being an entertaining president through his story-telling and candid moments (Duterte, 2017; Duterte, 2018; Duterte, 2020); and (3) “speaking the unspeakable” as he openly discussed classified information like the secret and large-scale services of Chinese drug lords in his 1st SONA (Duterte, 2016).

Duterte’s populist rhetoric effectively exposes the hypocrisies of liberal-democratic institutions – aside from demonstrating himself as a government outsider by condemning their shortcomings – as he establishes a sense of relatability with the people against the elitism espoused by its past politicians (Pernia, 2019). This is echoed as Vincent expressed: “Duterte is not cliché for me. Most of Filipinos like his style: his grassroots kind of style”; and proceeds to be hopeful about the president: “I believe our country will have a better future with him” (Malmgren, 2019). To build on this, a casino worker referenced to these outbursts by saying: “I like it when he says, ‘My god! I hate drugs!’... it’s so beautiful, like Duterte’s heart is really in his outbursts”; and – given this – establishes Duterte’s authenticity compared to past politicians as he said: “Duterte is at least open, unlike other politicians who might be quieter, or present themselves better, but deep inside, they do horrible things” (Quiano & Perry, 2016). Cliopatra echoed this sentiment as she commented on his authenticity reflected through rhetoric as she said: “[he is] very authentic; he is what he is, not playing someone else” (Malmgren, 2019). Finally, an OFW testified: “Traditional

politicians mostly catered for rich people... Duterte, he can talk to the people the way poor people talk” (Quiano & Perry, 2016).

Through his unfiltered and small-town rhetoric, Duterte further establishes his humble background which resonates with the people, as Adrian encapsulates in his testimony: “[Duterte is] nontraditional in many senses, especially the fact that he is not from Manila/Luzon area where previous Filipino presidents come from” (Quiano & Perry, 2016). Given this, a testifier mentioned that due to Duterte’s background, she feels comfortable by the prospect of meeting him: “If you saw Aquino (the Philippine president prior to Duterte) on the street, you’d look the other way. You’d be shy. But if you saw Duterte, you could go – ‘Hi, president! How are you?’ He’s like us” (Quiano & Perry, 2016). In addition, Kati expressed that “he is more down-to-earth (...) he drove a taxi once in a while when he was mayor of Davao” (Malmgren, 2019). Cliopatra built on this by sharing that “he still uses his old car, does not want to buy a new one” (Malmgren, 2019). A testifier referenced to his authenticity as she said, “he never begged for money from any interest that may be drug-tainted. He doesn’t have a strong-party influence. He did not beg us to vote and campaign for him” (Dollanganger, 2020).

2. Being Pro-people

Aside from appealing to the Filipino people through his ordinariness, Duterte is able to mobilize large-scale support through his pro-people mindset as he established the drug war. This taps into the frustrations that the Filipino people have had towards the failures of the previous liberal-democratic regime to eradicate crime. In this light, Cliopatra compares Duterte’s genuine intentions for the people to past politicians’, as she said: “He loves the country and wants to improve it, which is different from other presidents who were corrupt, wanted to make money. But he makes good things from the money” (Malmgren, 2019). In addition, a testifier commented, “His concept of perpetuity is not prolonging his power or that of his party or interest, but by leaving a legacy because that was what he promised to us – to end his term with the Philippines way better than he started” (Dollanganger, 2020). Finally, it is apparent that Duterte is able to give the Filipino people a feeling of hope for a better future from his intentions to protect the general will as Rodrigo expressed, “he has given us hope that the Philippines still has a future. He influenced not just me but also my family to be positive in life, and all will be well at the right time” (Malmgren, 2019). Finally, Duterte’s expression of his intention to protect the Filipino people through his drug war

which involves antagonism of the “other”. This has tapped into frustrations that the people have felt towards drug criminals that allegedly rampage the nation as Charles Owen Molinos – PNP member – expressed that “they destroyed a lot of people, so this is the time that they suffer the consequences” (Baldwin & Marshall, 2017); and Manuel Co – a neighborhood captain – expressed, “Those son of a bitch drug pushers shouldn’t have human rights. They deserve to die” (Baldwin & Marshall, 2017).

3. Hypermasculinity

Duterte’s populist rhetoric around discussing radical measures of the drug war policy has tapped into the Filipinos’ frustrations towards the current justice system that is seen to fail in holding drug criminals accountable; and towards previous administrations that are believed to fail in solving crime. In this light, “penal populism” – defined to be the pursuit and encouragement of punishment tactics based primarily on their popularity as opposed to their effectiveness – has been prevalent in the Philippines (Johnson & Fernquest, 2018; Fernquest, 2018). Given this, support for Duterte’s radical drug war policy has been effectively mobilized as EJKs are currently perceived by the people as a “necessary evil” that is not only justified, but needed (Johnson & Fernquest, 2018; Kusaka, 2017; Amnesty International, 2017). When compared to rehabilitation centers, EJKs are believed to be the only viable option as “extraordinary circumstances require extraordinary measures” – that radicalism is needed to finally eradicate the lingering drug problem (Rosca, 2018; Bello, 2017). Daniel echoed these sentiments as he said, “If you do not kill the root of this problem, it can spread (...) Somebody needs to prevent this.” (Malmgren, 2019). Kati commented on the effectiveness of radicalism as she expressed: “He reduced crime significantly. Also, before Duterte, it was very dangerous to travel to the Philippines, but not anymore. Now it is so much better because criminals are afraid of Duterte” (Malmgren, 2019). Roxanne – a tattoo artist from the Philippines – testified by expressing her anger towards unsolved issues, as she said, “I was corruption, job contractualization, illegal drugs, and lawless crimes to end. He is the only person I see that can make changes on these. He’s aggressive and fearless. Filipinos need a firm disciplinarian like him” (Dollanganger, 2020).

Duterte has also exhibited his hypermasculinity by expressing misogynist remarks as mentioned previously; this has ultimately been met with cheers and laughter from the audience. When met with local and international criticism, Harry Roque – Duterte’s spokesperson –

expressed that one should not take the words of the president literally (Tanyag, 2018; Haynes, 2018). Indeed, this behavior is tolerated and even has the capacity to mobilize support as his rhetoric embodies the sexual domination of women which is integral for legitimating his political authority and gives the idea that he is able to face threats – such as the threat posed by drug criminals (Tanyag, 2018). Indeed, this leads to Duterte’s support mobilization as the populist leader’s reliance on gendered signals leads to the obsession of the people with demonstration of power in a masculine leader (Eksi & Wood, 2019; Löffler et. al., 2020). Ultimately, this is seen in the way that Duterte’s sexist remarks have constantly been met by laughter, cheers, and even prodding by the people.

Findings and Conclusion

Duterte has amassed large-scale support from the Filipino people from his political campaign in the 2016 presidential elections in which he won by a landslide, up to present in which the president's disapproval rates are at an all-time low and the people actively participate in drug war vigilantism. Despite local and international criticism and condemnation towards Duterte's unorthodox rhetoric, this thesis argues that it is this very rhetoric that appeals to the people; thus, making support mobilization possible. As supported by literature on populism as a style, this thesis provided discourse on the populist characteristics reflected in Duterte's rhetoric; namely ordinariness, being pro-people, and hypermasculinity. Further, this thesis investigated how these separate characteristics appeal to the Filipino people in different Philippine contexts; namely: (1) paternalism (referring to Filipino culture), (2) *ambag* ("contribution") and *bayanihan* ("community") (referring to Filipino cultural values), and (3) frustrations towards the liberal-democratic regime (referring to the Filipino circumstance).

With regards to paternalism, it has been found that Duterte ultimately embodies the tough and benevolent Filipino father figure as he demonstrates his ordinariness by expressing the woes of the people, his being pro-people by vowing to pursue the people's interests, and his hypermasculinity by saying that he will "fight until the end" for his family even if it means battling interests. With regards to *ambag* and *bayanihan*, it has been observed that Duterte takes opportunity from the Filipino people's communal values as he shows his ordinariness by calling the people towards a communal duty, his being pro-people by expressing antagonism towards the "other", and his hypermasculinity by using this antagonism to mobilize collective anger towards the "other" in the pursuit of the fulfilling their communal duty. Finally, in the backdrop of the Filipino people's frustrations towards the Philippine liberal-democratic regime, Duterte displays his ordinariness by employing unfiltered rhetoric that is in contrast with the rhetoric of more elitist and traditional politicians, his being pro-people by establishing radical drug war features to compensate for the failures of previous politicians and institutions in solving relevant issues, and his hypermasculinity by justifying the need of radical policies such as the drug war as a "necessary evil" in light of more allegedly lenient policies in the past.

Indeed, populist rhetoric alone has the capacity to mobilize large-scale support for the populist leader as it reflects characteristics that appeal to the people. While academic literature

touching on populism as a style highlight general attributes given to leaders that utilize populist rhetoric, the ability of such attributes to mobilize support differ in separate national contexts. In this light, I argue that all populist leaders – particularly those that have demonstrated the ability to mobilize large-scale support groups in their respective countries – are unique as their brands of populism differ as they are largely influenced by the context they operate in. In this case, Duterte is a unique populist ultimately because he has demonstrated his ability to tap into specifically-Filipino culture, values, and circumstance. For instance, his brand of populism stems from his embodiment of the Filipino father figure that is especially unique to and familiar with the Filipino people. The Filipino father figure is regarded as the combination of benevolent and tough which has been present in the Philippine political sphere since the inception of *barangays*. In addition, his brand of populism is rooted in specific communal values involving the unconditional giving of contribution and uniting of community that is unique to Filipino culture. This is characterized by the quick congregation of Filipinos to respond to a “disaster” by vowing to fulfill a communal duty – here, Filipinos are known to contribute as much resources as they have despite being affected by the same disaster for the sake of the betterment of the fellow Filipino; and Filipinos choose not to complain or criticize the administration as it strays them away from their required *ambag*. Finally, Duterte’s brand of populism is fueled by the perceived failures and elitism of politicians and institutions from the liberal-democratic regime. In this light, Duterte’s radical, simple, and “grassroots” approach in rhetoric has found support in the Filipino people. Indeed, Duterte’s uniqueness as a populist leader is attributed to his ability to use rhetoric that appeals to the people in different facets of the national context.

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