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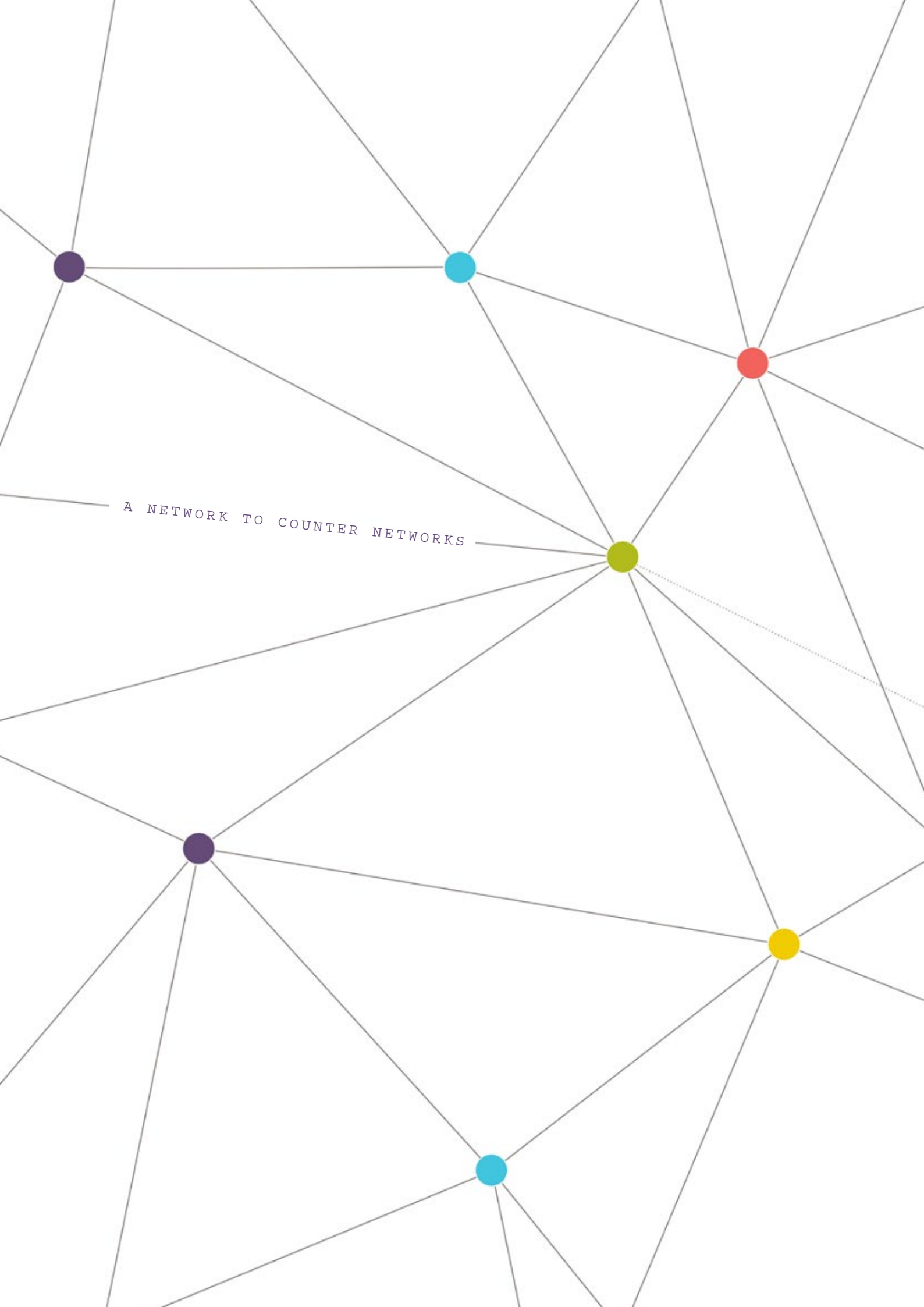
# A MILITARIZED POLITICAL WEAPON

**THE PHILIPPINES'  
WAR ON DRUGS**

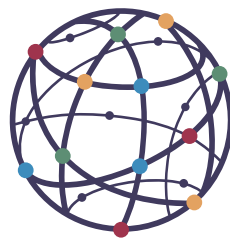
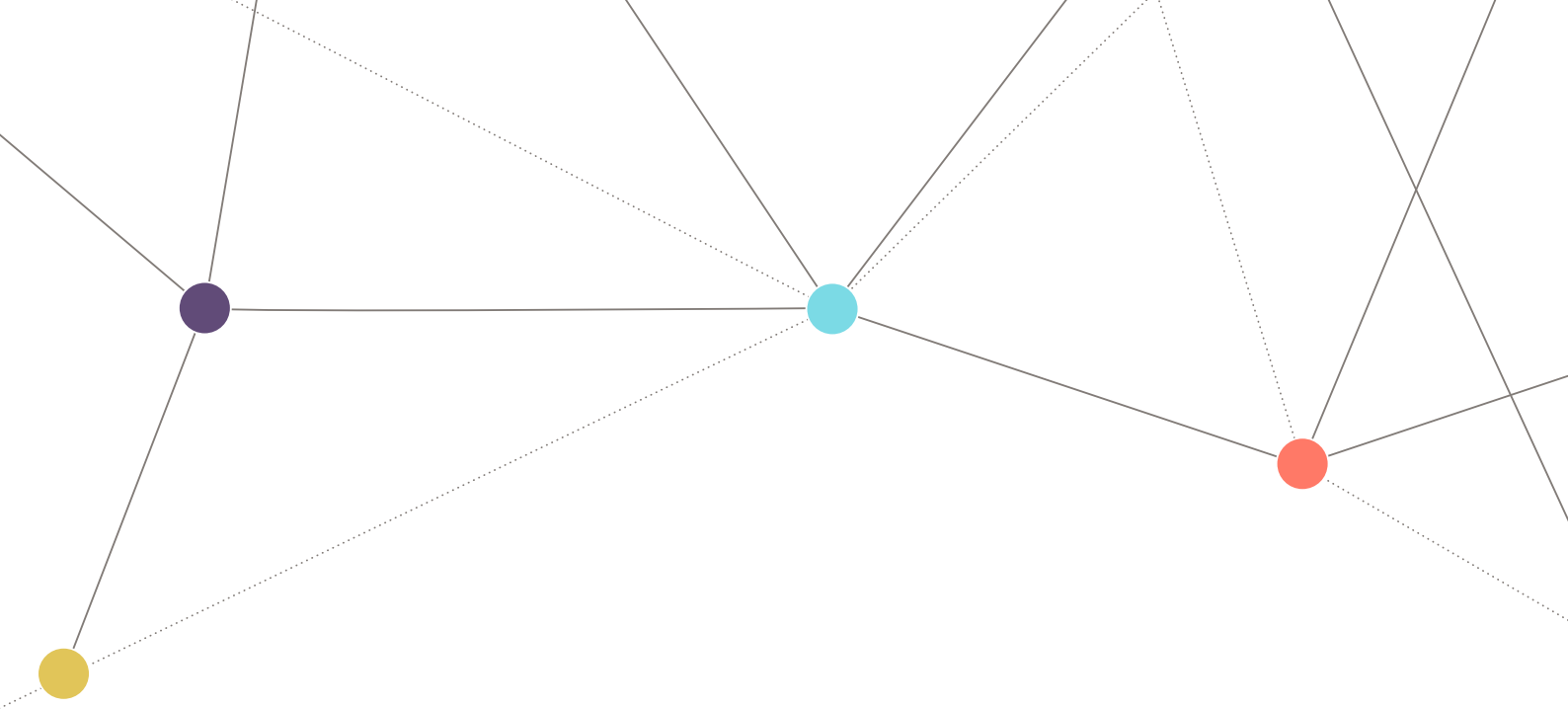


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**June 2019**



A NETWORK TO COUNTER NETWORKS



# **A militarized political weapon: The Philippines' war on drugs**

*Matthias Kennert and Jason Eligh*

June 2019



Cover photo: Families of victims of the Philippines' war on drugs and extrajudicial killings hold portraits of their dead loved ones. Bernice Beltran/NurPhoto via Getty Images

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Manila, Philippines: one of the main hubs of Duterte's anti-drug campaign Photograph: Matthias Kennert

## Executive summary

Since July 2016, communities in the Philippines have been subjected to a violent nationwide police crackdown on illegal drugs, which has courted international condemnation and prompted a possible investigation to be opened by the International Criminal Court. The Philippine leader, Rodrigo Duterte, who took office as president in June 2016, rose to political power on the back of promises to end the country's 'drug crisis'.

The illicit drug economy of the Philippines exists – and thrives – owing to the complicity of law-enforcement agents, politicians and the military with the drug-trade networks.<sup>1</sup> Ironically, the very people who are tasked with tackling the country's illicit drug trades are instead colluding and cooperating with drug traders for their own financial gain. Police officers, soldiers and politicians of all ranks have assembled a protective net around the country's drug markets for their own economic benefit, in what has become a highly enmeshed narco-political web. The chief of the Philippines National Police (PNP) has claimed that more than 300 of his officers are conspirators in the drug business, while the president of the Philippines, Duterte, in 2016 named five police generals as playing a central role in sustaining the drug trade.<sup>2</sup> The sheer scale of this collusion led some members of the security sector to comment: 'When the [drug war] campaign started, we realized that the problem was bigger than expected, with many branches of the political system deeply entrenched in the drug trade.'<sup>3</sup>

Given this apparent involvement of elements of the country's police force in the sustenance of the drug trade, alongside their role as protagonists in the 'war on drugs' launched by Duterte following his rise to power in June 2016, the PNP has found itself in a conflictual position. On one side, it is caught in a complex, dynamic 'war' on the structures and people that promote and perpetuate the nation's illicit drug markets. However, at the same time, many of its own members have a direct interest in defending those markets. This apparent conflict in mandate and values is a predicament that has vexed the country and its security forces for many years. Financial flows from domestic drug economies have been invested in various elements of the country's security apparatus, particularly



since methamphetamine (known locally as *shabu*) became popular in the 1980s. In fact, this alleged accord between the Philippines' drug trade and the country's security-service actors and organizations has become so entwined that it has been asserted that 'no one really knows quite how far the drug trade has penetrated state structures'<sup>4</sup> – to the point that some local jurisdictions have become miniature narco-state-like administrations and territories.<sup>5</sup>

The involvement of political leaders and the police in the *shabu* business is closely linked with other illicit economies, such as the trafficking in arms, people and counterfeit goods, each of which thrives in the fragile political environment of the Philippines, characterized by weak (or misguided) rule of law, relative impunity for organized-criminal actors, and the absence of an impartial and accountable judiciary. These environmental characteristics also benefit the *shabu* business, creating an appealing alternative market economy in which the trade in illicit commodities, such as methamphetamine (and other illicit drugs), thrives because it comes with a very low risk of detection and sanction, and high financial returns. In addition, this environment enables a correlated trade to prosper in which drug profits are invested in promoting political power, protection and clientelist networks.

The law-enforcement and security sector's involvement in, and protection of, the drug trade has evolved over time. In the southern provinces of the Philippines, for instance, its origins can be traced to the era of the kleptocratic reign of former president Ferdinand Marcos (1965–1986), when criminal and vigilante groups joined the establishment's fight against communist insurgents, a practice that earned them close ties to the state's law-enforcement institutions. When some of these armed groups later became active in the drug trade, their loyalty to the Marcos regime gained them protection for their continued operation of their illicit drug activities. Today, the local drug markets in Marawi City and Lanao del Sur province illustrate this 'safety net' well. As one example, the Kuratong Baleleng (KB) was an organized-crime syndicate with a background as an anti-communist armed group that was allied with the government. Through its relationship with the government, the KB built close connections with the armed forces and this resulted in assets of the military playing a leading role in protecting the transportation and storage of KB drug shipments. In acts of reciprocity, the KB supported local politicians in return for protection of their drug trading activities.<sup>6</sup> These are relationships that persist today, and continue to exert political and socio-economic impacts on the institutions and structures of the Philippines' national public security environment, and its personnel.

The current 'war on drugs' is grounded in the sociopolitical structures and history of Filipino society, but more relevantly, of the Duterte regime. The current administration's politicization of the drug problem took the manifestations of socio-economic ills endemic to contemporary Filipino periurban society, and transformed these from existential, politically rhetorical threats into a single, tangible, social target. And this was done with fatal consequences.

The purpose of this paper is to provide analytical background on the origin, implementation and impacts of the Philippines' 'war on drugs', with particular reference to the illicit economy for methamphetamine. It aims to outline, over the two-plus years of the drug-war campaign, how the nation at first embraced the outsider politics of Duterte as he pledged to rid the country of its *shabu* industry, and bring order to the poverty-engulfed spaces of the dense urban neighbourhoods where the drug problem tends to manifest. This support soon changed to fear, however, as it became obvious to many that the killings were not restricted to those 'who deserved it', but that the drug war also targeted people with no connection to drugs. In the face of diplomatic and widespread international criticism, Duterte nevertheless forged ahead with his campaign, mocking international critics, and using the drug war as a militarized political weapon to intimidate, imprison – and even kill – his domestic critics and rivals. All of this was done, ostensibly, as a means to achieve a drug-free state – though it would be more accurate to argue that it was used instead as a means by Duterte and his acolytes to attain and then retain national political power.

The methodology of this report is qualitative in nature, and presents a narrative based on both primary and secondary datasets. These are supplemented by publicly available resources from media, research-based and



non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The primary data is drawn from 40 interviews undertaken with law-enforcement officials, local community leaders, social workers, politicians, journalists, independent security experts, representatives of NGOs, the Philippine and foreign governments, academia, and people who use drugs. All interviews were conducted in person by the authors in the metro Manila area during the months of April and July 2017, and in the Metro Manila area and Mindanao during July and October 2018. Interviewees in this paper have been cited under the condition of anonymity owing to the sensitivity of the drug issue in the country.

## The role of law enforcement in the Philippines' drug trade

Police and politicians involve themselves in the Filipino drug trade either directly, by partnering with drug dealers, or indirectly, by providing protection for the trade in exchange for shares in its profits.<sup>7</sup> Comprehending the involvement of Filipino police officers in the *shabu* trade – as both watchdog and benefactor – requires an understanding of the street-based structure and operation of the PNP. In general, the police force consists of fragmented, almost autonomous community-based units, and as a consequence it fosters a cabal of institutionally isolated police officers who feel the need to fend for themselves. These vastly under-resourced officers<sup>8</sup> find themselves at arms-length from central command structures, and in daily contact with both the people whom they are entrusted to protect in the communities they serve and the perpetrators they are expected to control. That criminal elements in the community therefore attempt to bribe these officers to ensure the protection of their illicit activities should not come as a surprise.<sup>9</sup> The money that can be made through such collusion is tempting, particularly as a regular street-level police officer earns only between US\$200 and 500 a month.<sup>10</sup> Although a poorly paid profession, policing is seen by some as nevertheless a good job prospect, particularly because of the opportunity it provides for additional informal income generation, including through complicity with illicit organized-criminal groups.<sup>11</sup>

“ The PNP became more corroded, unstable and unpredictable as a result of its conflicted role in the anti-drug campaign. ”

The PNP became more corroded, unstable and unpredictable as a result of its conflicted role in the anti-drug campaign. On the one hand, officers enjoyed unconditional government sanction and apparent widespread public support for their anti-drug operations. Many felt that these developments provided a much-needed boost to the force's general morale.<sup>12</sup> The PNP took advantage of this apparent upswing in public approval to promote and improve its perceived role as a strong-armed provider of security. In particular, it saw its involvement in the drug-war campaign as a means through which police officers could boost their authority on the streets.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the pressure on individual police officers working in this campaign was immense. They were expected to deliver results in the war<sup>14</sup> and, because these results were measured in deaths reported, their personal and job security became vested completely in their ability to continue to achieve results by contributing to the number of arrests and deaths of alleged drug suspects.<sup>15</sup> Hence, officers became incentivized to kill, rather than arrest, suspects, with financial rewards paid to those who met their targets.<sup>16</sup> While higher-level drug suspects had the financial means with which to protect themselves, particularly through the hiring of lawyers, other, lower-level suspects were far easier, safer and available prey. As a consequence, officers often chose to execute low-level drug suspects rather than arrest them<sup>17</sup> – an approach that was endorsed by the president. In his words, police and security forces were to ‘kill them [drug suspects] all and end the problem.’<sup>18</sup>

Opportunism, combined with a mindset for stoic obedience, led many police officers to zealously support Duterte's drug war campaign. Many followed their superiors' orders unquestioningly throughout the campaign, regardless





of the nature of their task.<sup>19</sup> Of course, some officers were more successful in their roles than others, and were promoted through the ranks more quickly, which, in itself, created tension and infighting within the service.<sup>20</sup> The added fact that some officers, allegedly linked to corruption and/or drugs, had been purged from the service on the order of the president exacerbated these tensions.<sup>21</sup> And there were many officers who were critical of the anti-drug war, and this caused several within the force to resign or request transfer.<sup>22</sup> However, outright resistance within the force to Duterte's drug-war campaign was generally absent. Many officers were too afraid to speak out and thereby risk becoming targets themselves, as, in general, those who supported the drug-war campaign benefited more than those who did not.

In addition to opportunities for promotion, the campaign offered the chance for some officers to develop new illicit income streams, including extorting families of those arrested on drug charges, ransoms for releasing suspects<sup>23</sup> and contract killings disguised as drug-related eliminations.<sup>24</sup> Officers involved in the illicit drug trade hid behind the smokescreen conveniently provided by the campaign, a tactic that allowed them to rid themselves of informants who might provide evidence of their involvement in the illicit trade. The drug war enabled them therefore to whitewash their current and past affiliations, while simultaneously being seen to faithfully carry out the mandate of the drug-war campaign by eliminating 'offenders'.<sup>25</sup> In fact, officers involved in the drug trade were said even to have killed competitors in order to increase their own share of local drug-market profits.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, police collusion in the methamphetamine trade does not come to an end when an officer retires from duty. There is evidence that retired police generals justify their continued post-retirement involvement in the *shabu* business as a form of compensation, perhaps for being overlooked for senior positions in the civil service and as a way of securing an additional pension income.<sup>27</sup> Because of the very pronounced hierarchy within the PNP, former high-ranking officers continue to retain some influence over previous subordinates, even though they have been physically removed from the command architecture. This allows them to influence local officers and their actions, including preventing the interdiction of illicit shipments or the arrest of key perpetrators, and to gain access to security intelligence structures that otherwise would be unavailable to external actors, with the purpose of benefiting illicit economic actors. These retired generals tend to dominate the private-security industry in the same way, and to the same ends.<sup>28</sup>

The involvement of politicians, government officials and members of the security forces has become an innate characteristic of the organized-criminal environment in the Philippines. All types of criminal entities, from street gangs (so-called *barkadas*) to regional crime syndicates, seek arrangements of influence with authorities at all levels in order to protect the positioning and prosperity of their criminal activities. In fact, in the Philippines it can be said that illicit economies, such as the market networks that control the methamphetamine trade, function within, and because of, the protective realm of the state.

## Fighting the symptoms, not the disease

When he took power in June 2016, Duterte set about crafting a narrative that he had established in the months leading to the election, but which had guided him since his time as the Mayor of Davao. He used this to frame drug users and dealers as criminals, a cause of local crime and public insecurity, and therefore as a problem requiring direct intervention to restore public security. It is a narrative Duterte devised to appeal to popular emotion, rather than one that draws on facts. In fact, in a study undertaken on violent crime in the Philippines, researchers from De La Salle University in Manila determined that socio-economic structural inequalities within Filipino cities were significant drivers for the presence, incidence and severity of violent criminal activity. They found that the presence and severity of criminalized behaviours, such as drug use and trading, were public insecurity consequences of these spatial inequalities within Filipino society, rather than public insecurity drivers themselves.<sup>29</sup> In other words, these criminalized behaviours were the symptoms that sprang forth from a far greater social malaise, that of severe population density, extreme poverty and significant inequitable



distribution of, and access to, basic public services, such as healthcare and education. Yet, Duterte's war on drugs campaign inverted the cause and effect, as it was grounded in the theory that through the wholesale elimination of people who use drugs and their dealers from local communities, life would become better and safer for the public at large. In terms of thinking, the strategy is wrong-headed; as a political manoeuvre, it has met with some success.

One participant described the apparent success of this approach: 'A large majority of Filipinos feel it is less dangerous in their place because of the campaign against illegal drugs and criminality ... only a third of Filipinos say that it is dangerous to walk in their neighborhood streets at night ... the same percentage as in 2011.'<sup>30</sup>

This sentiment, that 'things are better now', appears to be somewhat pervasive. The perception of an increase in public security as a result of the militarized actions of the war on drugs approach by Duterte's administration and its sympathizers appears to resonate with a general national preference for heavy-handed counter-narcotic strategies and actions. In a 2015 survey published by the Dangerous Drugs Board of the Philippines, it was found that 47 per cent of respondents favoured police raids and imprisonment of offenders as a primary means to counter drug use and trading, whereas only 2 per cent said that providing education and raising awareness about drugs was the more appropriate approach. In the same survey, only 1 per cent supported the claim that facilities should be available for people who use drugs to provide healthcare interventions and treatment assistance to help manage and overcome their drug use and its related harm.<sup>31</sup> Instead, there appears to be greater public support for the imposition of measures such as capital punishment as a response to drug-related crimes – support that has increased significantly, from 55 per cent in 2012 to 81 per cent in 2016, when Duterte took power and when the drug war, with its imposition of extrajudicial killings, began.<sup>32</sup>

“ The militarized rhetoric surrounding the drug war campaign depicts counter-narcotic operations as acts within the dynamics of a broader metaphysical battle. ”

The militarized rhetoric surrounding the drug war campaign depicts counter-narcotic operations as acts within the dynamics of a broader metaphysical battle, where people who use drugs, and those who sell them, are transformed into 'enemies of the people', and their growing numbers of dead are seen as casualties of a just and necessary war against these threats to social order, rather than as the victims of state-sponsored violence that they are.<sup>33</sup> For Duterte, this 'war' continues to be sold as a life-and-death struggle, for the country and for himself: 'If you destroy my country, I will kill you,' he said. 'So be it. Human rights, fine, you can shout to the heavens. You can call God and intervene... [but] if you continue to sell shabu, cocaine and the drugs that are deleterious and toxic and can cause death to the Filipinos, I will kill you. Period.'<sup>34</sup>

Duterte's top-down, militarized approach to illicit drugs is hardly unique, however. Similar campaigns against drugs had been undertaken in recent years in several neighbouring countries. For example, Vietnam ran a vociferous campaign against what it framed as the 'social evil' (*te nan xa ho*) of illicit drugs and drug users throughout the 2000s, led by a specialist government department, Social Evils Prevention, which was housed in the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs. A national response system of compulsory drug treatment centres was created, with a national holding capacity approaching 200 000. These centres would be more accurately classified as administrative detention facilities, since treatment was restricted to involuntary detoxification and long periods of forced labour. The country forced vast numbers of people who used drugs into these facilities for terms of up to seven years, through an often arbitrary, extrajudicial regimen of local cadre decision-making. Yet, these 'drug war' detention centres eventually were proven to be counter-productive.<sup>35</sup> They failed to stem the growth of the



domestic drug economy; they facilitated increases in HIV and hepatitis C transmission because drug users avoided health services for fear of detention; they were also more expensive than health-based alternatives.<sup>36</sup>

In Thailand, the government of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra launched a national 'war on drugs' in 2003. A campaign that officially lasted for three months, and that has many similarities to that initiated by Duterte 13 years later, the Thai 'war on drugs' resulted in at least 2 800 deaths. A national investigative committee later concluded that many of those killed – perhaps 1 400 – were not even involved in the drug trade,<sup>37</sup> and many of them were the victims of extrajudicial killings at the hands of Shinawatra's security forces, who were implementing his shoot-to-kill policy.<sup>38</sup> During a visit to Manila in 2017, another former Thai prime minister, Abhisit Vejjajiva, even counselled Duterte against continuing to pursue his 'war', stating that, by continuing to engage in extrajudicial killings, 'it wasn't going to fix the problem in any sustained way ... you may, in the short run, seem to be making progress against drugs. But ... drugs become more expensive. A new mafia comes in. Corrupt officers, officials, become involved. And so long as there continues to be a demand for drugs, the problem doesn't go away.'<sup>39</sup>

To much continued popular support, however, Duterte's campaign against drugs and those who use them continues to be communicated in a way that ignores the lessons from regional neighbours, and convolutes the driving forces behind the phenomena of local criminality and drugs. Paradoxically, he asserts that drug use is preventing local economic growth. Tackling this 'drug problem' is seen as the means to decrease the stifling inequality, poverty and social exclusion that are prevalent in much of Filipino urban life.<sup>40</sup> Of course, whether or not drug use is stifling economic development and growth, particularly in the urban slums where it is prevalent, is an open question. For example, it can't be ignored that the local drug trade does at least provide subsistence employment opportunities, albeit illicit (through employment in the drug production and retail distribution cycle) in communities where alternative livelihood opportunities are rare. Regardless, Duterte's approach subverts the sociological reality that it is these social structural factors – inequality, poverty and social exclusion – that are causative of local drug use and trade environments, and in which they are nurtured and grow. Tackling local drug markets therefore necessitates addressing these socio-economic impediments in the first instance – a daunting task in an impoverished and increasingly inequitable, socially marginalized society.

Unfortunately, a response that tackles the underlying structural factors that beset much of Filipino society is a less attractive message for the masses. Instead, it is more politically expedient to assuage the voting masses with messages that those who use and trade in drugs are the ones to blame for the dire poverty and inequality in which the majority, particularly in the hyper-urban landscapes of Metro Manila, continue to exist. The elimination of these manifest impediments to community socio-economic improvement is the logical reaction to this manufactured social predicament. It is a populist message that goes down well, particularly among middle-class Filipinos who have increasingly distanced themselves from the underlying systemic and structural causes of the country's drug economies. As a result, this political message arguing for a dynamic militarized response to eliminate what is more appropriately described as a chronic manifestation of degenerating socio-economic circumstance has been endorsed by immense levels of public support. Of those surveyed, 88 per cent supported the continued implementation of the president's counter-narcotic campaign.<sup>41</sup> This overwhelming level of public support was despite the fact 73 per cent of those surveyed admitted that they believed extrajudicial killings were occurring as part of this campaign.<sup>42</sup>

## Duterte's war

Duterte's campaign has featured two elements, illustrated by its operational title – Operation Double Barrel. The first element (the 'lower barrel') in this two-pronged attack, Project Tokhang, targets the lower end of the drug economy: those who use drugs, and street-level dealers. These people are considered the proverbial 'small fish' in the market value chain. According to government numbers released by the Philippines Drug Enforcement Administration (PDEA), 'lower barrel' actions resulted in 3 967 deaths and 119 023 arrests during 80 683 anti-drug operations carried out between July 2016 and December 2017.<sup>43</sup> Several observers argue that the 'real' number of dead, however, is



much higher, with estimates ranging from 7 000<sup>44</sup> to more than 20 000.<sup>45</sup> In their submission to the International Criminal Court, accusing Duterte of murder and crimes against humanity, the National Union of Philippines Lawyers and RISE UP, two domestic NGOs, allege that the president was directly responsible for 4 854 extrajudicial 'drug war' killings as of August 2018.<sup>46</sup>

**Table 1:** Number of barangay officials linked to drugs, by province or city

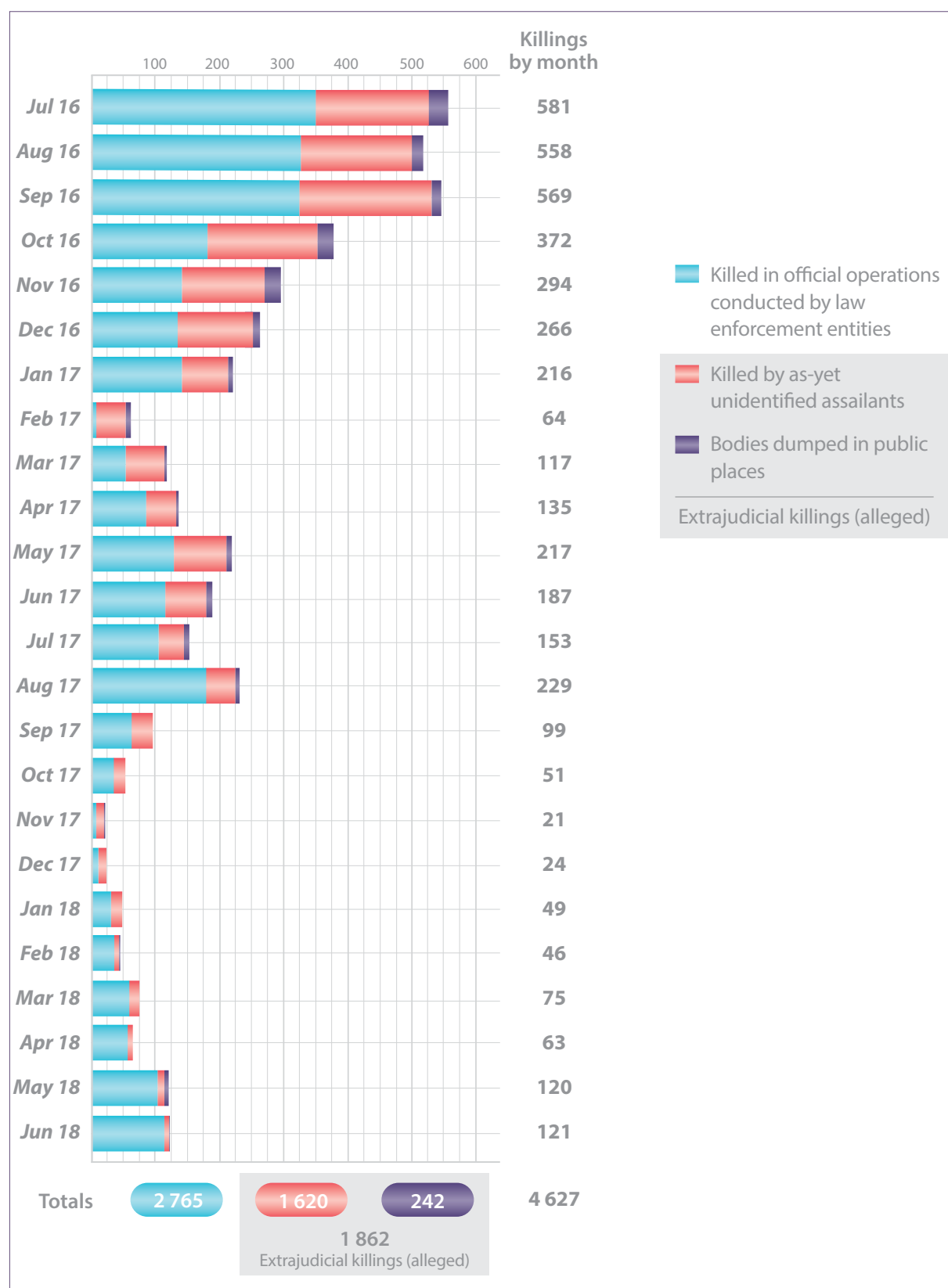
Region	Province/city	No. of barangays
Cordillera Administrative Region	Abra	23
	Apayao	6
	Benguet	2
	Ifugao	1
	Kalinga	1
	Lagayan	1
Ilocos Region (Region I)	Ilocos Norte	2
	Ilocos Sur	4
	Pangasinan	6
Central Luzon (Region III)	Pampanga	1
	Tarlac	1
	Zambales	1
National Capital Region	Caloocan	1
	Malabon	2
	Mandaluyong	1
	Manila	7
	Quezon City	1
Calabarzon (region IV-A)	Batangas	6
	Cavite	2
	Rizal	1
Mimaropa (region IV-B)	Occidental Mindoro	2
	Oriental Mindoro	3
	Palawan	2
	Romblon	3
Bicol Region (Region V)	Albay	52
	Camarines Sur	5
	Masbate	3
	Sorsogon	10
Western Visayas (Region VI)	Iloilo	1
Central Visayas (Region VII)	Cebu	3
Eastern Visayas (Region VIII)	Biliran	1
	Leyte	1
	Samar	4
Zamboanga Peninsula (Region IX)	Zamboanga del Norte	4
	Zamboanga del Sur	3
Northern Mindanao (Region X)	Lanao del Norte	3
	Misamis Occidental	8
Davao Region (Region XI)	Davao Oriental	1
	Davao Occidental	2
Soccsksargen (Region XII)	Cotabato City	5
	North Cotabato	3
	South Cotabato	2
	Sarangani	5
Caraga (Region XIII)	Agusan del Norte	1
Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	Basilan	1
	Maguindanao	6

Source: PDEA drug list: More than 200 barangay officials linked to illegal drugs, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/201401-list-names-barangay-officials-linked-illegal-drugs>





**Figure 1:** Philippines war on drugs: Timeline of killings



Source: Data compiled by ABS-CBN Investigative and Research Group (Philippines) from: ABS-CBN news reports; reports from other news outlets; and press releases from PNP and PDEA

As the Double Barrel campaign unfolded across the country, Metro Manila soon accounted for the majority of the drug-related killings nationwide. On the ground, the campaign would operate as follows: barangay<sup>47</sup> captains would be ordered by the local police to compile and submit ‘drug watch’ lists, which were to include all alleged drug users and dealers in their barangay, or constituency (see Figure 1).<sup>48</sup> When a list is submitted, police officers and barangay officials would seek out these alleged drug users and drug dealers in a joint operation, purportedly to try to persuade them to surrender voluntarily, undergo treatment and subscribe to a rehabilitation programme. In reality, however, these operations result often in the suspects being killed by security forces. On numerous occasions, the bodies have been left in the street – often by gunmen dressed in plain clothes, sometimes masked and speaking a ‘foreign’ language, and accompanied by police officers.<sup>49</sup> The campaign placed barangay captains and councillors – the leaders in their local authorities – in a compromised position. Submitting a drug-watch list that resulted in the murders of individuals named on the list exposes them to charges of complicity in the extrajudicial killings undertaken on the basis of their list. However, refusing to submit a completed list would raise suspicion at senior government level that a barangay official is involved in, or protecting those who are involved in, the local drug trade. This political presumption would expose barangay officials to becoming campaign targets themselves.<sup>50</sup>

**Figure 2:** Image of Barangay drug watch list

Republic of the Philippines  
Philippine National Police  
National Capital Regional Police Office  
MANILA POLICE DISTRICT

Dear sir,

May we request your usual cooperation regarding our campaign against illegal drugs within your area of responsibility.  
In connection with this we are requesting for your new watch list as patterned below;

Barangay logo

Manila logo

SUBJECT: NEW WATCH LIST ( DRUG PUSHERS AND USERS )  
BARANGAY \_\_\_\_\_ ZONE \_\_\_\_\_ DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_

Sample format

NAME	CLASSIFICATION	ADDRESS

**Note:** The names on the watch list have been obscured to protect their identity

The daily killings were exacerbated by the publication of unofficial death quotas issued by the campaign organizers. The government wanted to see results in this new war against drugs, and these were to be measured in deaths. This created pressure among local politicians and the police to deliver against these ‘performance indicators’. In local communities, the consequences of this expectation were barbarous. Local police units were ordered by their



superiors to provide a certain number of bodies to fulfil the units' performance requirement.<sup>51</sup> This pressure forced barangay officials to ensure that they included enough names on their submitted drug watch lists in order that the local police units could meet their quotas, irrespective of whether those named on the lists were involved in the local drug trade or not.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, inevitably, Operation Lower Barrel began to be deployed as a tool to achieve other unrelated objectives, such as settling non-drug-related, interpersonal disputes in the community.<sup>53</sup>

When compiling the drug watch lists, officials distributed questionnaires. These survey instruments asked residents whether they knew of people who used or who were involved in the local drug trade in any way. This approach therefore created an opportunity for unsubstantiated allegations to be made by respondents, leading to many accusations of illicit drug-related activity being made in the absence of any supporting evidence at all.<sup>54</sup> Naturally, of course, this process of soliciting community names was not designed to be evidentiary in its orientation; the very arbitrariness of its data-gathering design was intended to produce volume, rather than the foundation for some adjudicated substance. As a consequence, the overall feeling among residents of targeted communities was one of psychological distress: it was evident that anyone could become a target of the drug campaign at any time, regardless of whether or not they were involved in the local drug economy. These surveys therefore became a sociopolitical threat within these communities, a death knell further eroding what remained of the delicate social fabric of trust and solidarity in many of these already vulnerable, fragile and socially marginalized communities.<sup>55</sup>

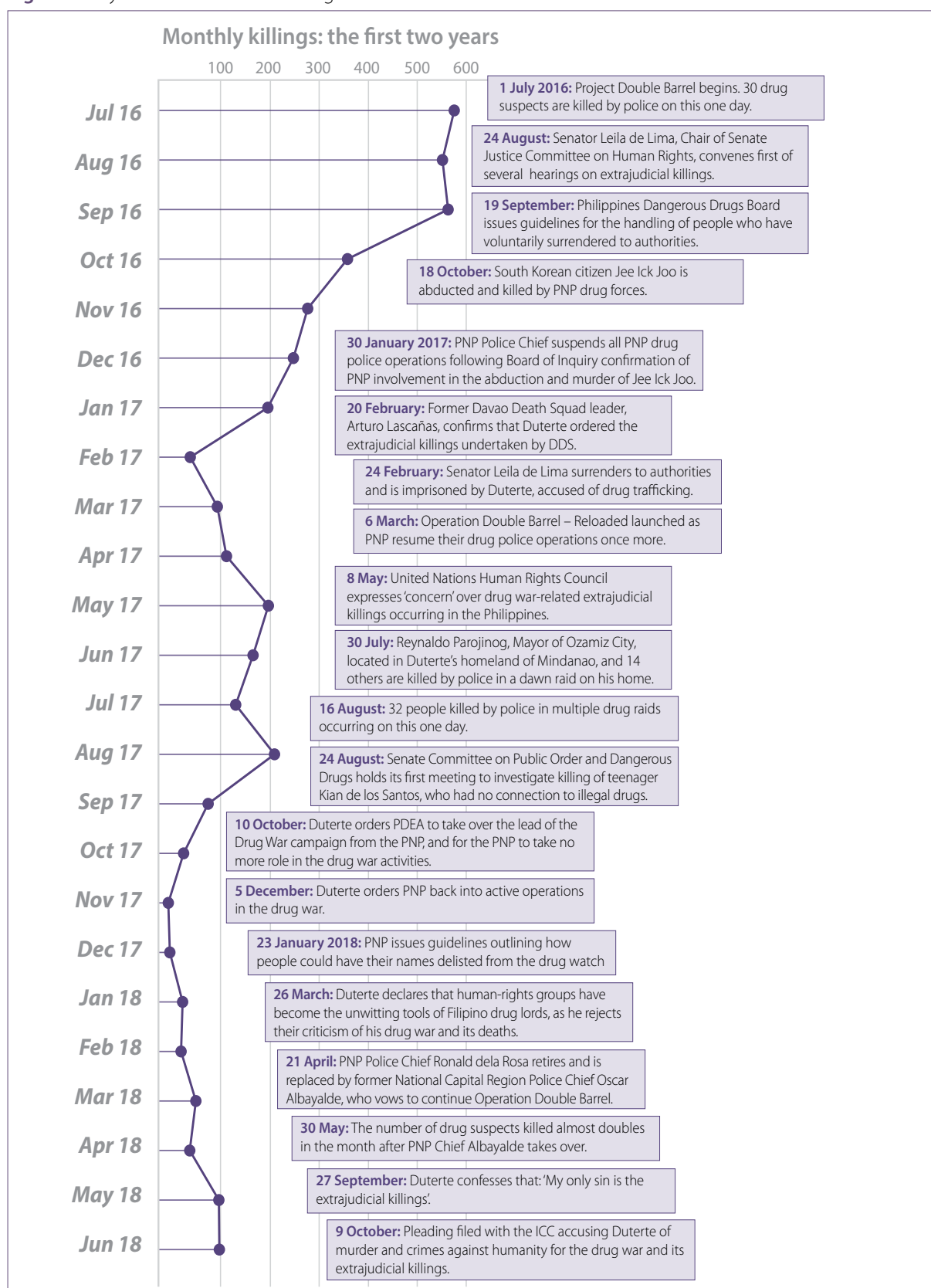
The second prong of the Double Barrel drug war campaign was called Project HVT ('high-value target'). As its name implies, this part of the strategy was designed to target drug-lord-type actors higher up the value chain – the proverbial 'big fish' who controlled large parts of the domestic *shabu* and other illicit drug economies. It is estimated that, between July 2016 and December 2017, Project HVT police operations led to the arrest of 444 government employees, members of law-enforcement agencies and the military, and politicians who were allegedly involved in the drug business.<sup>56</sup> Compared to the numbers of those arrested and killed in poor communities during the campaign, the figures are remarkably low – especially given the deep involvement of state officials in the country's drug business. These figures suggest that the campaign was more focused on the first 'barrel', namely to eradicate demand by principally targeting large numbers of consumers and street-level drug dealers, rather than to curb wholesale supply by pursuing the major drug-market kingpins, particularly those in the public sector.

“ The government wanted to see results in this new war against drugs, and these were to be measured in deaths. ”

And, as mentioned, the indicator of success in Duterte's war on drugs was intended to be the number of named drug suspects who were arrested and killed. As such, the crass body count measure became a statistic that appealed – at least to advocates of the campaign – because of its stark rationality. A dead suspect was a problem solved, a step closer to the elimination of the drug problem. By contrast, they would argue, alternative approaches to tackling the harms of drugs and drug markets (such as through healthcare and social rehabilitation programmes) failed to be quantifiable in terms of their effectiveness. After all, a person who used drugs, on leaving a healthcare or rehabilitation programme, might relapse into drug use and petty crime, but it was difficult to argue with a politicized security campaign whose outcome success metric was based on an ever-growing body count, and available for all to see.<sup>57</sup> For example, a tale telling of the installation of a screen next to Manila's main highway that displayed the growing death toll of the drug campaign, an act that illustrated in stark detail this relationship between deaths and success, whether or not true, is not difficult to believe. After all, for most middle-class Filipinos, the killing of a drug suspect was an immediate result, and one that was tangible in the form of the gradual, body-by-body reduction of the drug crime threat in their communities.<sup>58</sup>



**Figure 3:** Key events in the war on drugs



Source: Monthly killings data from ABS-CBN Investigative and Research Group, Philippines. Key event data from news reports and other publicly available sources.



Using a body count as a measure of the success of the campaign is problematic for several reasons. On the one hand, it creates a self-fulfilling prophecy, one likely to see an increase in the number of killings. For instance, the more alleged drug suspects who are killed, the greater the proof that the problem exists, which, for those behind the campaign, would continue to justify further killings<sup>59</sup> – and make the campaign potentially indefinite.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, as was the case in the 2003 Thailand ‘war on drugs’, while the fear of death may have deterred individuals from being seen or known to engage in risk behaviour (e.g. using illicit drugs), it did not lead to them necessarily to cease this behaviour. Instead, many switched to the companion use of licit substances, like alcohol, in high volumes to compensate for the more challenging drug-use environment.<sup>61</sup> Others turned to more discreet ways of engaging in their drug-use behaviours, or switched to another illicit drug altogether.<sup>62</sup> In the end, the killings in Thailand had only a modest impact on the initiation into drug use by those who had not previously used.<sup>63</sup> They had a more significant and longer-lasting impact, however, on which drugs were used, how they were used, and the risks that users were prepared to incur. In fact, the Thailand campaign showed that the long-term impacts of that country’s hyper-criminalization of drug use, as evidenced throughout the ‘war on drugs’, and mass detention and incarceration of drug users, were positively correlated with increased community methamphetamine use and increased participation in the drug economy.<sup>64</sup>

“ As one resident said, ‘It’s like a death penalty is handed out without due process – Duterte gave free rein to the police.’ ”

During the Philippines campaign, many people who use drugs have voluntarily self-identified with the authorities out of fear.<sup>65</sup> For many, incarceration or time spent in a rehabilitation facility are a safer option than the risk of being shot in the street without warning.<sup>66</sup> Many people, including children, desperate to avoid being killed, and not knowing whether someone else had put their name forward for whatever reason – even those who had no relationship with drugs or the drug economy – turned themselves in to the barangay authorities in a desperate bid to avoid execution and save their lives.<sup>67</sup> Many of them still ended up dead as a result – an indication that the body count used in Duterte’s campaign is indiscriminating, and blind to the real mechanisms of local drug markets and the people who inhabit them.

## Community response and resilience

Casualties of Duterte’s campaign, along with their families, were stigmatized and socially isolated. ‘If you helped the victims, you were seen as being pro-drugs,’ explained one social worker, describing how easy it was for someone to be branded as being involved with illegal drugs.<sup>68</sup> People no longer visited the houses of alleged drug users or their families. This was to avoid suspicion of being involved in the drug business. In some cases, neighbours even refrained from attending the funerals of victims of the drug campaign. ‘People don’t trust each other any more,’ said the same social worker.<sup>69</sup> With the campaign lists and related extrajudicial killings came a hollowing-out of the social fabric of trust, mutual care and support, which constituted a kind of informal community-based welfare network in some of the Philippines’ poorest areas.<sup>70</sup> Those affected by the violence related to the drug campaign chose to remain silent rather than speak up publicly, even if the perpetrators of the violence could be identified. They were afraid of incriminating themselves, and of becoming a new target of police operations.<sup>71</sup> Many vulnerable families reportedly slept in the street in order to protect themselves better, in the hope that being visible in a public space would at least afford them some security by avoiding a police raid on their home.<sup>72</sup>

It had become evident that many in these drug-affected communities had divided feelings about the effectiveness and morality of Duterte’s drug war. Naturally, some perceived the campaign as having made their neighbourhoods





Protesters support a student who was allegedly killed by police officers during an anti-drug raid in Manila.  
Photo: Noel Celis/AFP/Getty Images

safer places as a result of the increasing invisibility of those people seemingly associated with the drug trade:<sup>73</sup> 'The troublemakers are gone or killed. People feel safer now.'<sup>74</sup> And, in the words of one Manila resident, 'The people killed are the dirt of society. What Duterte's doing, his war on illegal drugs, is right. It's good.'<sup>75</sup>

There were others, however, who wished only to protect family members or friends who were living with drugs from the violence of the campaign and its protagonists, known and unknown. At the same time, such people were afraid to be associated with drugs in any way, for fear of attracting the attention of the police.<sup>76</sup> As a result of the drug war and its related activities, people had become as fearful and suspicious of the police as they had been of those petty criminals and drug-economy actors who had inhabited their communities beforehand. The police reinforced among communities the notion that they could do whatever they wanted, that they could act with impunity.<sup>77</sup> As one resident said, 'It's like a death penalty is handed out without due process – Duterte gave free rein to the police. ... They say if suspects fight back, they can kill them, but people are getting killed without a fight.'<sup>78</sup>

A curious dichotomy emerged in communities, particularly in the Metro Manila area. While, on the surface, a large number of people appeared to support the drug war and its related campaign of violence, underneath many remained terrified of it and its perpetrators, fearful of becoming inadvertent victims themselves.

It is likely that the drug war, with its extrajudicial killings, escalated the already high levels of violence experienced in the significantly affected communities.<sup>79</sup> Alleged cases of retaliation against barangay captains are reported to have been carried out by relatives of victims of the campaign.<sup>80</sup> Vendetta killings of police officers and those alleged to have been vigilante killers have been reported.<sup>81</sup> One human-rights group documented 49 cases of minors killed in the campaign.<sup>82</sup> No one was held accountable for any of these deaths, even though, in some cases, the killers had been identified. 'The anti-drug campaign has ended up creating terrorists,' remarked one community leader.<sup>83</sup> 'If this madness continues, there will be anarchy,' a barangay leader observed.<sup>84</sup>

The impacts began to manifest in changes to the local democratic processes in some barangays, with some officials being appointed as candidates for vacant posts, rather than being elected, owing to government administration fears of electoral reprisals resulting from those who bore the brunt of growing public concern with the drug war. The functioning of some local barangays was alleged to have broken down under the pressures of community redressal: '...local officials resign[ed] out of fear of being dragged into the front line of the drug war, and because they [we]re frightened of becoming victims of retaliation.'<sup>85</sup>



Today, many of the killings in this campaign are still unresolved, and the perpetrators largely unidentified.<sup>86</sup> There are many strong evidentiary links suggesting that a number of the extrajudicial killings have been at the hands of off-duty police officers,<sup>87</sup> while others are said to have been victims of vigilante killers allegedly hired by police officers to serve their personal interests. Reportedly, police officers recruited these vigilante assassins from among prison inmates. These inmate assassins were allegedly released at night to carry out their operations, as tasked by the police, and were returned to their detention facilities after finishing the job.<sup>88</sup> In some cases, plain-clothed gunmen have been reported to have been accompanied by uniformed officers driving police-marked vehicles to carry out their killings, execution-style, indicating that the police were working in cooperation with hitmen.<sup>89</sup> Such reports would suggest that Duterte's campaign employed extrajudicial killings as a drug-war tactic, which the government has denied. Each of these so-called 'extrajudicial deaths', it has asserted, were the result of self-defence.<sup>90</sup>

“ From a political perspective, Duterte and his administration carefully framed the defeat of *shabu* as a vital and central question for the fate of the Philippines. ”

Importantly, the link between these contracted killers and the PNP is corroborated by the fact that the extrajudicial killings stopped when the police force was suspended temporarily from drug-war operations in early 2017, but then resumed when the PNP were reinstated to operations.<sup>91</sup> Interestingly, there have been no clashes reported between these vigilante-style killers and law-enforcement agents. This would suggest that the two groups worked in cooperation.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, police officers continued to claim that many of these vigilante-style killings were done by 'real vigilantes', who used the ongoing drug-war campaign as cover to carry out their own personal agenda.<sup>93</sup> There is no evidence, however, to support this scenario, and, as Philippine Senator Leila de Lima has noted, the argument is immaterial: 'Whether it's state-sanctioned or not, I would say at the very least all of these killings are state-inspired.'<sup>94</sup>

## Politics and the 'drug war'

Given the lack of reliable data, it is unclear what effect the campaign has had on the domestic consumption and production of *shabu*. There is some evidence, however, that the street price of the drug increased as a consequence;<sup>95</sup> there are also claims that levels of petty crime fell.<sup>96</sup> These types of short-term gains were evident also during the Thai drug war referred to earlier in this report, but disappeared shortly thereafter. What is clear, however, is that Duterte's war on drugs has not had any significant impact on the availability of *shabu*, and he has not achieved his aim of eradicating drugs from the streets and communities of the Philippines.<sup>97</sup> In the words of one university professor, drugs will always be there, despite the campaign.<sup>98</sup> This is a lesson learned also by the failed drug war campaigns of Thailand and Vietnam. Duterte's militarized approach to the campaign, and his tactic of putting law enforcement in the front line of the drug war, failed to achieve the campaign's core objective, or to live up to his electoral pledge to reduce the availability and consumption of *shabu*.

Although the campaign may have shaken up the structure of the drug economies, it has not destroyed them. In Manila, 'big fish' drug dealers fled the city for isolated rural areas, where they remained temporarily, away from the reach of Duterte's security apparatus and protected by private security guards, only to return to the cities later to resume their activities.<sup>99</sup> And, as was demonstrated in the wake of the Thai drug war, in the long run, those convicted and imprisoned for drug offences and the poor who lack any sustainable livelihood means are likely to return to drugs, or enter the *shabu* trade, given the continued absence of any other viable socio-economic



alternatives.<sup>100</sup> The Philippines drug campaign led to nothing more than a temporary disruption of the local drug economies, which are likely to reconfigure themselves through the formation of new alliances between drug lords, dealers, law-enforcement personnel and local officials – all consequences of the drug war itself. In the meantime, stakeholders historically involved in the local drug economies, including police officers, continue to refocus their positions in order to preserve their influence and maintain their relative position within the dynamics of the current drug-market structures.

From a political perspective, Duterte and his administration carefully framed the defeat of *shabu* as a vital and central question for the fate of the Philippines. The drug issue dominated his sociopolitical agenda, while other political imperatives, such as education, unemployment and inflation, were sidelined or somehow tied into the wider drug issue.<sup>101</sup> The Filipino discourse on drugs became a political battleground, polarizing Filipino society over fundamental socio-economic and human-rights-based principles. The discussion was characterized by divisive rhetoric: those who opposed the campaign were branded as being ‘with the criminals,’ and as traitors. The level of politically nuanced vitriol that characterized Duterte’s rise to power made it impossible for informed debate to occur on the subject of resolving the country’s drug crisis.<sup>102</sup> The subsequent apparent acceptance by most of the extrajudicial killings that occurred through the campaign marked a sad yet profound shift in the psyche of Philippine society, a majority Catholic nation whose dominant religion espouses the sanctity of life, among other Christian values.<sup>103</sup> Here, fact-based arguments had no credibility in the discussion on drugs because support for the campaign was based on emotion, and not reason.

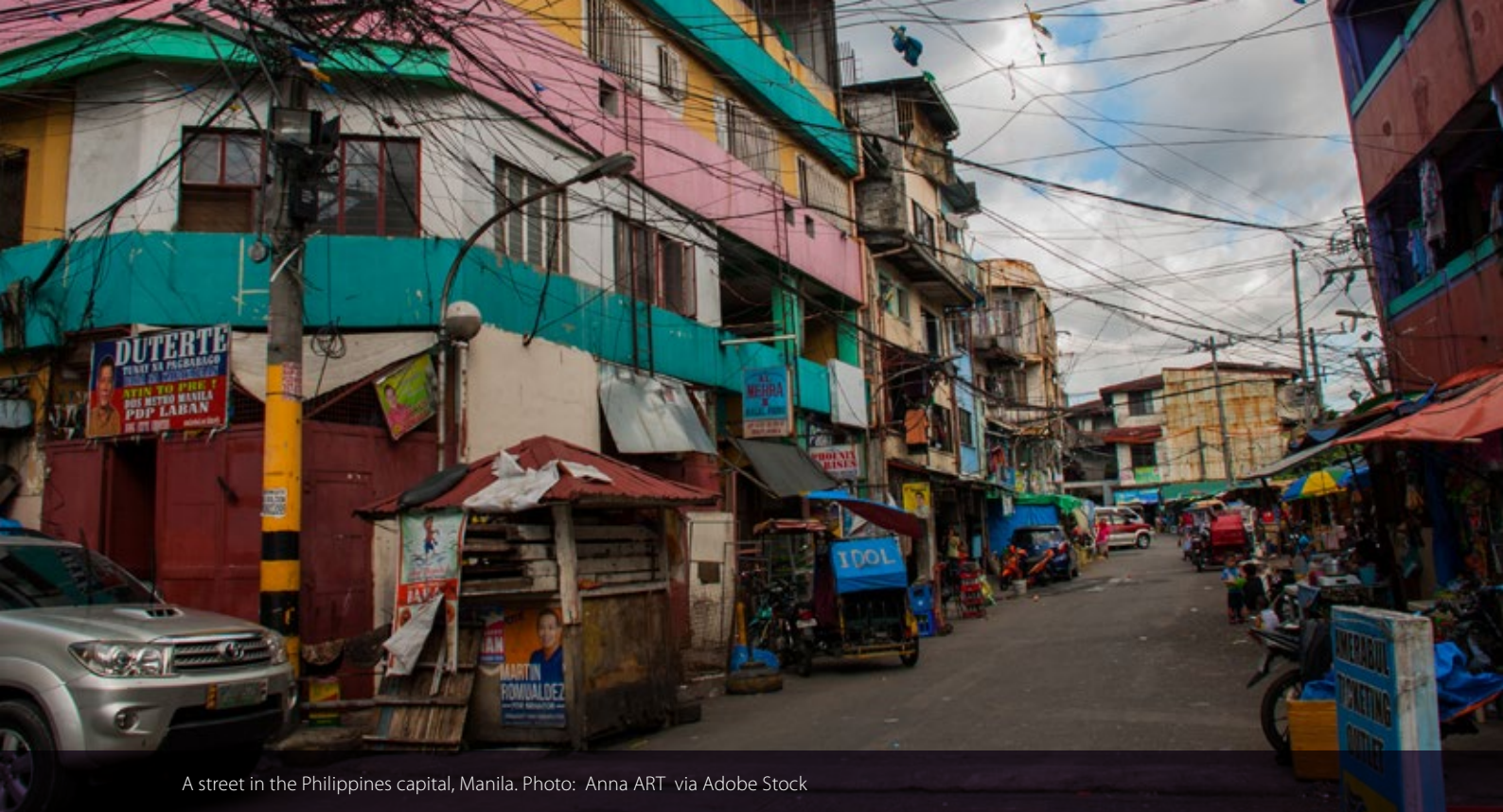
“ The campaign subverted the principles of rule of law by sanctioning the murder of citizens, in many cases through what were deemed to have been extrajudicial killings. ”

For Duterte, every sociopolitical issue was related to, and subordinated by, his fight against illicit drugs, and in particular *shabu*.<sup>104</sup> ‘The drug campaign was an election campaign, and the Philippines are still in campaign mode,’ said one NGO representative.<sup>105</sup> In this prejudiced policy environment, Duterte’s drug war campaign was used as a political weapon to intimidate and delegitimize political opponents.<sup>106</sup> The case of Senator Leila de Lima, a fiercely outspoken critic of Duterte, is a good example. De Lima was a human-rights activist, former Secretary of the Department of Justice, and Chair of the Philippines’ Commission on Human Rights. She was arrested in February 2017 after allegations were made that she had received money from drug dealers, and was involved in drug trafficking herself. The allegations are fiercely rejected by De Lima and her peers, who cite instead a vengeful leader angered by the senator’s probes into Duterte’s role in the extrajudicial killings undertaken by the infamous Davao Death Squads (DDS), which had occurred during his tenure as mayor of Davao City. De Lima has been imprisoned ever since and still is awaiting a trial.<sup>107</sup> As De Lima said: ‘... I never, for a single moment, ever imagined that he [Duterte] would be this vindictive. I never anticipated that I would be imprisoned ever... He really got pissed off. I knew he would not be taking it [her investigation] sitting down but not to this extent.’<sup>108</sup>

Duterte’s popularity is inextricably linked to public support for his drug-war campaign. Many Filipinos strongly identify with Duterte and trust him because he personifies the ideal of a strongman leader, a concept that runs through the veins of Filipino culture and the nation’s psyche.<sup>109</sup> It is an image that he built up during his two-decade tenure as mayor of Davao City, where he enforced a vigorous drug-war campaign.<sup>110</sup> In this former political leadership role, Duterte employed the DDS, a group that consisted of former rebels and members of other armed insurgent groups. The DDS operated under Duterte’s direct command, and played a critical role in wiping out alleged drug dealers and users by killing them extrajudicially.<sup>111</sup> When he became president in 2016, Duterte then took with him the blueprint of his Davao City drug-war campaign. Of particular note, the chief of the







A street in the Philippines capital, Manila. Photo: Anna ART via Adobe Stock

PNP during Duterte's national drug war, Ronald dela Rosa (aka Bato, Tagalog for 'stone'), appointed by Duterte in 2016, had served previously as the police commander for Davao City. What came next was therefore no surprise for many in the country – more of the same: 'For Filipinos ... Davao is proof that, with some bloodletting, things can change.'<sup>112</sup>

Against the backdrop of his Davao legacy, Duterte was credited by many Filipinos for putting the 'drug issue' on the national political agenda. Many thought that he would shake cages that no one had dared touch before.<sup>113</sup> His public persona of a rigid enforcer, with the experience of a crime-fighting mayor, was amplified by his focus on public security as his primary field for political action.<sup>114</sup> For many Filipinos, this made his brand of politics credible, and more palatable, including his proposed 'war on drugs'. Duterte employed straightforward rhetoric and spoke the language of the common person, which provides some understanding of the reason for his immense popularity.<sup>115</sup> His use of social media suggested also that he was an accessible man, and served to cultivate his image as a prominent public figure, one who was closely attuned to the everyday problems and concerns of the populace.<sup>116</sup>

In many respects, Duterte personified the antithesis of the typical Filipino politician. He drew on his experience as an outsider, one who was not associated with the ruling Filipino political elite.<sup>117</sup> He eschewed the empty, bland political rhetoric that was normal in electoral campaigns. He led a simple lifestyle, avoided the signs associated with elitist corruption, and capitalized on the perception that he had nothing to lose but everything to gain by eradicating the national 'drug problem'. Together with his disrespect for political convention, this approach underpinned his credibility and ruled out the notion of a hidden political or personal agenda – in particular the kleptocratic characteristic of self-enrichment (no corruption charges have yet been brought against him). His drug-war campaign came to symbolize Duterte as a man of action and, remarkably, as a man of the people. The electorate believed – correctly, as it turned out – that he was someone who did what he said.<sup>118</sup>

## Conclusion

The 'war on drugs' possesses the potential to provoke a permanent split in Filipino society and foster a crisis of state by demolishing liberal democratic principles and hollowing out the moral and ethical foundations of the rule of law. Duterte is universally invested in the idea that violence and fear are needed to govern the Philippines, with the assumption that Filipinos need to be disciplined by a strong leader.<sup>119</sup> Thus, by means of his national drug-war



campaign, the Duterte administration immobilized the mandate and authority of national institutions, such as the Supreme Court, that opposed his securitized drug-war policies. This undermining of the judiciary's independence crippled its role of ensuring for the state good governance and oversight in the form of independent checks and balances on the executive branch of government.<sup>120</sup>

The campaign subverted the principles of rule of law by sanctioning the murder of citizens, in many cases through what were deemed to have been extrajudicial killings. These killings cultivated a widespread public perception that the justice system was not capable of dealing with the burden of drug-related crime. This perception was promoted alongside the cultivation by Duterte administration officials of public sentiment among Filipinos – particularly those living in high-density, poor areas most affected by the drug economy – that *real* justice could only take place outside of the courtroom.

Following the August 2018 submission of a pleading to the International Criminal Court alleging Duterte engaged in premeditated murder and crimes against humanity in the execution of his 'war on drugs', it is feasible that the president could stand trial and be found guilty of these crimes. Numerous external groups, and some domestic-based organizations and consortia, have painstakingly documented the murderous outcomes of the drug war. Several reports and award-winning articles have exposed the nature of the campaign and its many human-rights violations. Recently, the Philippines Supreme Court, compelled by a group of local human-rights lawyers, demanded from the government full documentation of over 3 000 deaths, most of which the PNP still classifies as having been legitimate police operations.<sup>121</sup> These developments could pave the way for a judicial investigation and national reconciliation around the abuses and tragedies that constituted the drug-war campaign, and eventually make many of those less politically prominent, but equally responsible, face trial.

Today the economic elite continue to benefit from the impacts of the drug-war campaign. Deficiencies in Duterte's oligarchic economic model, such as the exploitation of the poor for cheap labour, conveniently remain out of the gaze of public attention as long as the drug issue retains the central political stage.<sup>122</sup>

Furthermore, like many strongman leaders before him, Duterte has infiltrated the military with his contemporaries in order to prevent a possible *coup d'état* – something not unlikely to happen in the Philippines.<sup>123</sup> As an important player in the national security sector, the president's moves are seen to minimize the potential for the military in playing a corrective role in the national system of checks and balances against the executive branch.<sup>124</sup>

Despite consultative talks, the international community has not yet agreed on a consensus-based position in regard to the national drug-war campaign. The UN and the European Parliament have expressed discontent, but focused their criticism only on fundamental human-rights violations. The US, a key economic and military ally of the Philippines, has displayed a divided stance on the drug issue. While former president Barack Obama and the US Congress condemned the human-rights violations, President Trump has praised the work of Duterte and his administration, indicating that he was doing an 'unbelievable job on the drug problem'.<sup>125</sup> Another regional economic and developmental power, Japan, although urged to condemn the violent crackdown, has supported the drug-war campaign by funding the construction of drug rehabilitation facilities.<sup>126</sup> Other ASEAN countries continue to monitor developments in the Philippines closely, without comment. Some, including Malaysia, Indonesia and Cambodia, now even show signs of looking to emulate Duterte's model.<sup>127</sup> Meanwhile, China and the Russian Federation have abstained from any harsh criticism, and have moved instead to strengthen their political, economic and military ties with the Philippines.<sup>128</sup>

More acute national security threats may yet emerge and dislodge the drugs issue from its dominant role in the national political discourse. For example, the growing influx of Islamic State fighters travelling from the Middle East to South East Asia appears to be strengthening domestic Islamist terrorist groups active in Mindanao and the southern parts of the Philippines' archipelago. Furthermore, despite all of the president's rhetoric and tempestuous diplomatic outbursts, Duterte and the Philippines are keen to retain a reputation as a reliable partner to the international community. Behind closed doors, representatives of the Filipino government have shown a



willingness to communicate over the intricacies of the war on drugs concerns, and do appear to be striving to avert the country's potential descent into a political and diplomatic pariah.<sup>129</sup> After all, the Philippines' economy depends on foreign investment, and the maintenance of sound international trade relations and development funds will remain an economic and fiscal necessity for many years to come.<sup>130</sup>

Illicit drug economies will continue to retain a significant socio-economic presence among impoverished communities of the Philippines. Despite a prolonged militarized 'war on drugs' campaign of violence, intimidation and death, the drug markets and their stakeholders remain in place still today. Although the campaign has appeared to have failed in its bid to curb drug consumption or supply significantly, its effects on the communities and the national security sector have been significant. In the country's poorest communities, which were most disproportionately affected by arrests, seizures, and extrajudicial killings, people continue to suffer from both the effects of the drug-war campaign, as well as the unaltered, endemic fundamentals of community poverty, inequity and isolation. The campaign has created an atmosphere of fear, which has destroyed pre-existing levels of social capital in these neighbourhoods, and severely impaired communal trust in the state's security and bureaucratic agencies.

Furthermore, even in the wake of the abuses and failures of the drug war, the domestic debate on the campaign will continue to be emotive and divisive. Duterte's politicization of his drug-war approach placed the drug issue firmly on the national political agenda, in a move that was motivated by a desire both to attain and then retain political power. Yet the Filipino 'war on drugs' is not an isolated example of a militarized response to illicit drugs globally, or even in the ASEAN region. It does, however, serve to reinforce the recent geopolitical phenomenon that neoconservative, securitized constructions of drugs as a public security 'threat' still remain vessels of attraction for the generation and maintenance of political capital. Militarized responses have not only resurged in the fight against drugs, particularly across South East Asia, but are also becoming increasingly more popular and more widely applied as part of national responses to organized crime.<sup>131</sup> In many cases, and as continues to be demonstrated in the Philippines, the characterization of implied security threats is far more politically palatable, and marketable, than confronting the reality of genuine ones.

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## Notes

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- 2 Reuters/Agence France Presse, Philippines police chief says 300 officers involved in drugs, 23 August 2016, [www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-23/philippines-police-chief-says-300-officers-involved-in-drugs/7777890](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-23/philippines-police-chief-says-300-officers-involved-in-drugs/7777890); P Ranada, Duterte names alleged police generals in drug trade, Rappler, 6 July 2016, [www.rappler.com/nation/138704-duterte-names-police-generals-drugs](http://www.rappler.com/nation/138704-duterte-names-police-generals-drugs).
- 3 Interview with senior law-enforcement officer, July 2017.
- 4 Interview with historian at the University of the Philippines, July 2017.
- 5 Interview with scholars from the Greater Manila area, July 2017.
- 6 Interview with a risk consultant and security expert.
- 7 Interview with a community leader from Metro Manila, who said that a drug dealer operating in his constituency claims that his drug supplier is a police officer. Interview with a senior law-enforcement official, and with a risk consultant and security expert.
- 8 In some cases, discussions with local law-enforcement officers reveal that it is not uncommon for two police officers to have to share a single weapon.
- 9 Interview with a senior law-enforcement official.
- 10 Interview with a human-rights activist. The average gross annual salary for a professional in the Philippines for 2018 was PHP800 104 (approximately US\$17 220), equivalent to US\$1 435 a month. See <https://www.averagesalarysurvey.com/Philippines>.
- 11 Interview with a representative of a national NGO.
- 12 Interview with a national legislator; interview with middle-rank PNP officers; interview with a senior law-enforcement official.
- 13 Interview with a representative of a human-rights group.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Interview with a representative of an NGO.
- 16 Personal communication with a community leader from Metro Manila, who said that a police commander confirmed payments were made to police officers.
- 17 Interview with middle-rank PNP officers.
- 18 See, for example, Floyd Whaley, Rodrigo Duterte's talk of killing criminals raises fears in Philippines, *The New York Times*, 17 May 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/18/world/asia/rodrigo-duterte-philippines.html>.
- 19 Interview with a representative of a national NGO.
- 20 Interview with a senior law-enforcement official.
- 21 See Yuji Vincent Gonzales, PNP: War on drugs suspended, purge of bad cops on, *The Inquirer*, 30 January 2017, <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/866507/pnp-war-on-drugs-suspended-purge-of-bad-cops-on>; Levi So, Bato suspends drug war for 'internal cleansing' of PNP, *The Philippine Star*, 30 January 2017, <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/01/30/1667930/bato-suspends-drug-war-internal-cleansing-pnp>; Fiona Nicolas, War on drugs suspended, takes back seat in war against rogue cops, CNN Philippines, 30 January 2017, <http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2017/01/30/war-on-drugs-on-hold-suspended-pnp-war-on-scalawags.html>.
- 22 Interview with scholars from Ateneo de Manila University.
- 23 Interview with a community leader from Metro Manila.
- 24 Interview with a political analyst and former legislator; interview with three Filipino investigative journalists writing on the drug war.
- 25 Interview with representatives of an international development organization. The depth of police involvement in these killings, often euphemistically labelled by them as 'deaths under investigation', has been revealed by an investigation done by Human Rights Watch in its 2017 report, *'License to Kill': Philippine police killings in Duterte's 'war on drugs'*.
- 26 Interview with a domestic political scientist at the University of the Philippines.
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- 28 Ibid.
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- 67 Interview with children's rights activist.
- 68 Interview with social worker from Caloocan, Metro Manila.
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 Interview with a community leader from Metro Manila; interview with a domestic political scientist at the University of the Philippines.
- 71 Interview with a social worker from Caloocan, Metro Manila; interview with a representative of a human rights organization.
- 72 Interview with a children's-rights activist.
- 73 Interview with barangay officials from Metro Manila; interview with a domestic political scientist at the University of the Philippines.
- 74 Interview with the representative of a non-profit organization working in the field of governance.
- 75 Jaime Co, resident of Pasig Line district, Manila, quoted in R Iyengar, The killing season: Inside Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs, *Time*, 10 October 2016, 46–49.
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- 80 Interview with a social worker from Caloocan, Metro Manila.
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- 82 Interview with a children's rights activist.
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- 93 Interview with middle-rank police officers.
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- 106 Interviews with a senior pollster, a national legislator, a historian at the University of the Philippines, a representative of a human-rights group, a representative of a foreign development organization, a domestic political scientist at the University of the Philippines and a representative of human-rights advocacy.
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- 116 Interview with a representative of a human-rights body; interview with a national legislator.
- 117 Interview with a representative of a human-rights organization; interview with a representative of a foreign development organization.



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