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Personality Matters: How Mayors Navigated Rodrigo Duterte's War on Drugs in the Philippines

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Abstract

This working paper explores how mayors' leadership traits and emotional responses influenced local political reactions to President Duterte's war on drugs in the Philippines. It reveals that mayors with high belief in personal control, need for power, and self-confidence were more likely to experience anger, proactively engage with local police, and shape law enforcement practices. Conversely, those with lower levels tended to experience anxiety or fear, leading to risk-averse choices and disengagement from the police.

The analysis is based on nearly 50 interviews with mayors, police chiefs, prosecutors, and other officials across major cities in the Philippines. The findings indicate that engagement with local police seemed to lower levels of deadly force use during the war on drugs, irrespective of the mayor's law enforcement ideology. Despite national directives governing police actions, local leaders wielded considerable influence over law enforcement practices.

This working paper contributes to understanding how individual characteristics and emotional responses can alter political output and outcomes, advocating for a greater focus on personality in political science. By highlighting the role of local political leadership, it underscores the importance of considering the political environment in which police operate in research on police use of force.

Zusammenfassung

Dieses Arbeitspapier untersucht, wie die Führungsmerkmale und emotionalen Reaktionen von Bürgermeisterinnen und Bürgermeistern die lokalen politischen Reaktionen auf Präsident Dutertes Krieg gegen Drogen auf den Philippinen als auch das Ausmaß tödlicher Polizeigewalt beeinflussten. Es zeigt, dass Bürgermeister*innen mit starkem Glauben an persönliche Kontrolle, Machtstreben und Selbstvertrauen eher Wut empfanden, proaktiv mit der örtlichen Polizei zusammenarbeiteten und polizeilichen Praktiken aktiv mitgestalteten – mit dem Ergebnis einer Verringerung tödlicher Gewaltanwendung durch die Polizei. Umgekehrt neigten Bürgermeister*innen mit geringeren Ausprägungen dieser Merkmale dazu, Angst oder Furcht zu erleben, was zu risikoscheuen Entscheidungen, einer Distanzierung von der Polizei und höheren Todeszahlen unter Verdächtigen führte. Diese beobachtbare Reduktion polizeilicher Gewalt in Städten mit engagierten Bürgermeister*innen zeigte sich unabhängig von deren Law-and-Order-Ideologie.

Die Analyse stützt sich auf nahezu 50 Interviews mit Bürgermeister*innen, Polizeichef*innen, Staatsanwält*innen und anderen Amtsträger*innen in wichtigen Städten der Philippinen.

Dieses Arbeitspapier trägt zum Verständnis bei, wie individuelle Eigenschaften und emotionale Reaktionen politische Entscheidungsprozesse und Ergebnisse prägen können, und plädiert für eine stärkere Berücksichtigung von Persönlichkeit in der Politikwissenschaft. Durch die Hervorhebung der Rolle lokaler politischer Führung unterstreicht es zudem die Bedeutung des politischen Umfelds, in dem polizeiliches Handeln stattfindet, für die Forschung zum Einsatz polizeilicher Gewalt und darüber hinaus.

Content

1. Introduction

In 1974 Henry Kissinger noted: "as a professor, I tended to think of history as run by imperial forces. But when you see it in practice, you see the differences personalities make" (quoted in: Isaacson 1992, 13). Almost two decades later Fred Greenstein noted a gap in political science that has hardly been addressed until now: the underestimation of personality's role in politics, favoring structural explanations over individual characteristics in shaping political actions (Greenstein 1992).

This working paper[1] addresses this imbalance by examining how personality influences local politics, particularly in high-pressure contexts, comparing Filipino mayors' responses to President Rodrigo Duterte's 2016 war on drugs.

The central hypothesis posits that differences in interaction dynamics between mayors and city police chiefs, were influenced by personality-based leadership traits and emotional responses of mayors and impacted local levels of police use of deadly force. I argue that differences in leadership traits and emotional reaction made mayors either engage or disengage from the local police. Continued engagement with local police appears to have positively affected the local level of police use of deadly force, regardless of mayors' law enforcement attitudes.

City mayors' reactions to the state of exception resulting from President Duterte's war on drugs invite comparison. Despite the police being a national institution, mayors hold significant power over local law enforcement through formal representation, budget control, and informal influence. The extent and manner politicians leverage these formal and informal powers shape local law enforcement practices. The Duterte war on drugs provides a suitable period for comparative analysis due to uniform national directives and widespread public attention, creating a controlled background for examining mayors' coping strategies. Further, focusing on local politics allows for the examination of personality in a context where actors face similar institutional challenges and pressures but respond differently based on their unique leadership styles and emotional processing of the perceived demands of their environment.

This research draws on interviews with city mayors, police chiefs, prosecutors, human rights representatives, and European law enforcement officials across the Philippines' major regions. While focusing on cities may limit broader generalizations, it allows for high comparability.

Theoretically, this working paper extends the analysis of leadership traits and integrates emotions as potential drivers of political choice, especially under crisis conditions. It aims to deepen understanding of how personality traits, emotional appraisals, and political choices intersect to shape responses to external demands in local politics.

Following this introduction, the author develops a conceptual framework that links personality traits, emotional appraisal, and crisis response. The empirical section sets out with an overview of the institutional framework of local security governance in the Philippines, delineating the scope of mayors' authority over law enforcement.

The empirical analysis then examines core leadership traits of mayors, their emotional appraisal of the war on drugs, and links these to specific action preferences. The final empirical section connects these choices to local levels of police use of deadly force.

Critics of the personality approach to politics tend to argue that due to the multitude of external constraints on office-holders, "the personality of the occupant matters relatively

1 Research for this paper was funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) – 439281758.

little in terms of political outcomes" (Lyons 1997, 792). This research demonstrates that the personality of political decision-makers can significantly impact political output and outcomes, even at local levels of government. The study thus underscores the need for greater attention to this, often overlooked dimension of politics.

2. A Framework for the Analysis of Personality in Political Choice

2.1 Leadership Traits and Political Choice

The role of personality in politics has been examined using various concepts and methods, from psychobiography to quantitative approaches focusing on operational codes or leadership traits. No single method encompasses personality as a holistic construct, including interlinked dimensions, traits, behaviors, cognitive styles, and emotional patterns unique to each individual. Methods range from historical case studies to quantitative evaluations (Rubenzer and Faschingbauer 2014;Visser, Book and Volk 2017), and at-a-distance techniques relying on coding leaders' statements. While the Five-Factor Model is widely used (Araya 2022), it lacks specific focus on traits impacting political leadership.

Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA) offers an alternative to the Big Five, defining independent personality traits relevant to political leadership (Hermann et al 2001; Brummer 2022). LTA identifies seven core traits: belief in ability to control events (BACE), need for power (PWR), conceptual complexity (CC), self-confidence (SC), in-group bias (IGB), task-related focus (TASK), and distrust of others (DIS).

These traits provide insights into how leaders navigate constraints, process information, and make decisions. LTA argues that leaders' effects are strongest in regimes where they possess extensive authority, and during perceived crises when standard procedures are suspended (Hermann 2001).[2] Moreover, leaders must demonstrate a willingness to exercise leadership within their respective spheres of governance, necessitating a personal agenda and interest in the relevant policy areas.

BACE reflects leaders' belief in their ability to control events, while PWR assesses their inclination to exert control over other actors. CC gauges leaders' capacity to transcend simplistic perceptions of their environment. SC denotes leaders' self-importance and confidence in coping with their environment. IGB highlights leaders' prioritization of their group's interests. TASK distinguishes leaders' focus on problem-solving versus group maintenance, while DIS assesses their willingness to trust others' intentions and actions (Brummer 2022).

Certain trait combinations are believed to influence leaders' decision-making, particularly during stressful times, as in the context of significant disruptions in security governance in the context of a war on drugs. Leaders with high belief in their ability to control events (BACE) and need for power (PWR) tend to challenge environmental constraints, while those with lower levels often comply. Self-confidence (SC) is also relevant, with more confident leaders being less adaptable to external pressures, prioritizing consistency in their actions (Hermann 2005). The TASK trait assesses whether leaders prioritize task

2 This role of exogenous factors for personality to become a significant driver of action is also emphasized by authors working in different traditions as for example by Mongar, who notes that the person must not only be in a position to influence events, but concrete situation must be so that typical patterns of behavior are no longer deemed adequate, which makes crisis decision-making one category of situation in which personality should become most visible, especially, if the crisis situation represents "a personally 'resonant' policy stimulus" to the decision-maker (Mongar 1969).

completion or group cohesion. Task-oriented leaders focus on problem-solving, while group-oriented leaders may delay tasks to maintain unity or adjust to group expectations (Hermann 2005).

Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA) evaluates these traits by coding spontaneous verbal statements from political leaders. It typically uses quantitative analysis to measure the frequency of words and phrases associated with leadership traits, comparing them to a reference group of consisting currently solely of national and foreign policy leaders (Brummer 2022).

2.2 Fear and Anger: Bringing Emotion in

Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA), operational code analysis, and the Five Factor Model largely overlook the emotional aspect of political decision-making. Even though the focus on the role of emotions in politics is rather recent, various studies could show that it can add important new insights into analyses of individual perception and decision-making (Ariffin, Coicaud and Popovski 2016; Markwica 2018; Wagner and Morisi 2019; Webster 2020; Redlawsk and Mattes 2022; Webster and Albertson 2022; Marcus 2023).

Emotions are subjective experiences involving several components: response to a significant event or situation, evaluation of its importance to individual goals, physiological reactions, motor expressions, and action tendencies. This process results in feelings that are then emotionally labeled by the individual (Scherer 2014).

Using emotion as an analytical tool in the analysis of political decision-making assumes that "evaluations arising from emotional processes, independent of prior or concurrent cognitive processes, can influence not only emotional expression but also thoughts, decisions, and political behavior" (Marcus 2000, 224).

Research on emotions in politics has identified a strong connection between political choices and two key emotions triggered by perceived environmental threats: fear and anger. Interestingly, the same trigger can elicit either fear or anger, depending on how an individual interprets the environmental stimulus.

Fear emerges when a situation is perceived as one where the individual has low certainty, limited self-control, and minimal external agency. This typically results in increased risk aversion and a higher likelihood of withdrawal (Wagner and Morisi 2019). In contrast, anger is considered a moral emotion, arising from perceptions of injustice, unfair outcomes, or obstacles to personal goals, values, or political views. Importantly, an angry individual feels "capable of countering the threat and fells the threat is illegitimate" (Erisen 2020, 11; McDermott 2017).

Consequently, angry individuals tend to make more optimistic risk assessments, perceiving lower risks (Erisen 2020), and may be motivated to challenge and confront the source of the threat (Marcwica 2019). Although both fear and anger stem from threats, they lead to markedly different outcomes in terms of threat perception, information-seeking behavior, risk assessment, and political decision-making (Erisen 2020).

In normal situations, standard operating procedures (SOPs) can help mitigate the emotional vulnerability of decision-makers. However, during crises where SOPs fail and threats are widespread, emotional vulnerability intensifies. In such circumstances, fear and anger may become crucial factors in shaping political choices, with their influence largely dependent on the decision-maker's political personality. These emotions can significantly alter how leaders perceive and respond to challenges in crisis situations when SOPs are inadequate.

2.3 An Integrated Model Linking Personality Traits, Affect, and Response to External Constraints

The discussion emphasizes that specific traits and emotional appraisals tend to converge in practice, influencing political choices that either confront challenges or adopt conciliatory and self-protective behavior. Leadership traits and emotional appraisals shape reactions to external constraints in characteristic ways, situating individual actors' policy choices between the extremes of fight and flight.

The right-hand path of the conceptual model (see figure 1 below) illustrates how flight, risk avoidance, and self-protective behavior emerge from particular combinations of leadership trait configurations and emotional assessments. It suggests that a low belief in control of events often correlates with low need for power, low self-confidence, and a focus on relationship maintenance. This combination is likely to induce fear when confronted with strongmen-figures like Duterte, reinforcing risk-averse choices such as passivity or tacit support for controversial policies without attempting to influence local dynamics.

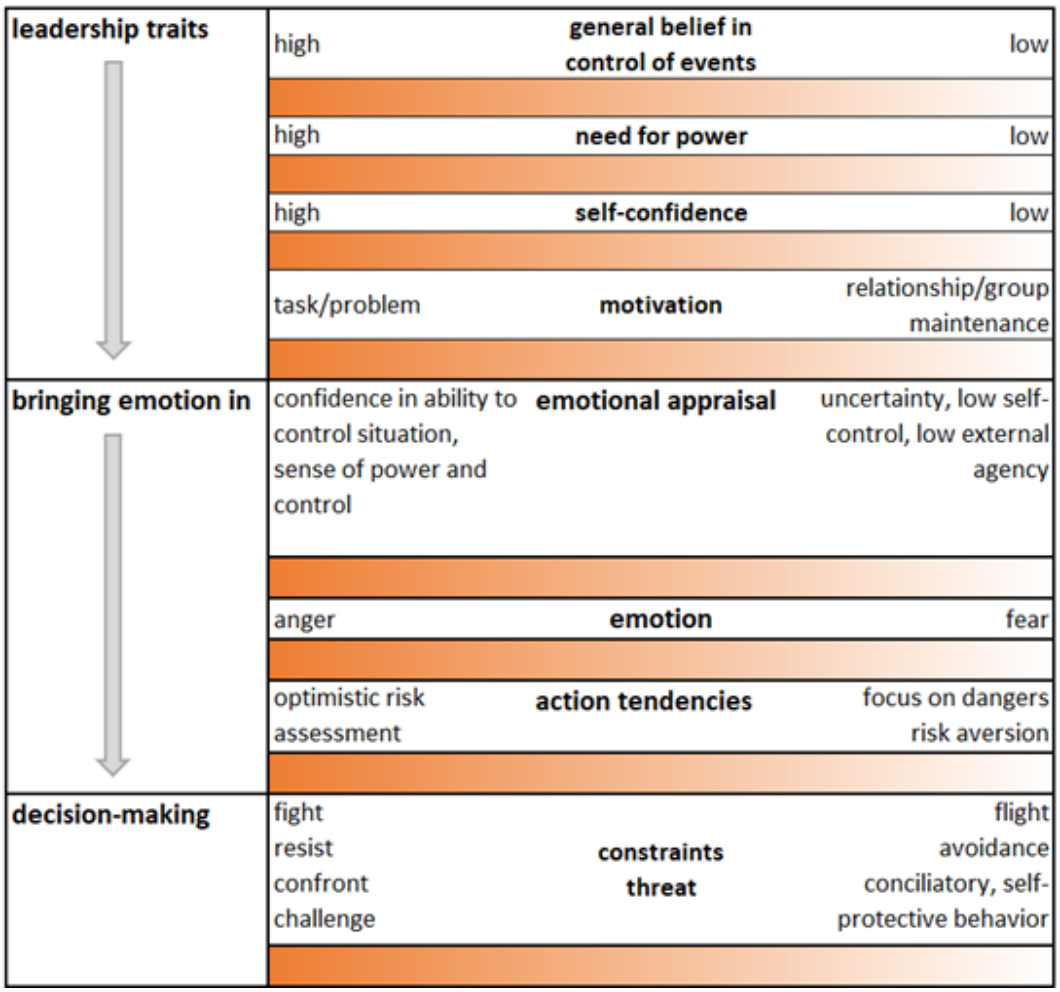

Figure 1: Preliminary Model on Links Between Leadership Traits, Affect, and Response to External Constraints

The left-hand path of the diagram illustrates how traits and emotions can prompt political choices that challenge new constraints. Mayors with high belief in personal control, need for power, self-confidence, and strong task focus are likely to view new situations as demanding proactive measures to protect their authority. These leaders would aim to shape local implementation of policies like the war on drugs, leveraging their networks and cred-

ibility with law enforcement. New constraints would elicit anger, and given the personality traits a rather positive risk assessment and heightened willingness to resist. In contrast, mayors with low belief in personal control in events, need for power and self-confidence would feel threatened and "fearful" in the face of additional external constraints and tend to adjust and "appease" the origin of the constraints.

This model adopts Leadership Trait Analysis categories, distinguishing between leaders who challenge constraints and those who adhere to them. Further, depending on the extent of the power asymmetry between local and national leadership, challengers' options for resistance at the local level varies. In cases of strong asymmetry they are unlikely to take strong public stances against national policies. One would expect covert resistance that aligns with an incremental leadership style aimed at preserving "maneuverability and flexibility" (Hermann et al 2001, 95). Non-challengers are expected to pragmatically adhere to constraints, neither openly nor covertly opposing the government's course of action during crises, but focusing on reacting in ways that secure their political survival.

A crucial question is whether mayors' political choices to resist and defend their local authority over law enforcement or passively align with national policy affects actual levels of police use of deadly force in their cities.

The process from presidential directives to violent deaths due to police intervention can be divided into four steps:

- Input: National war on drugs ordered by the president and implemented by the police.
- Throughput: Mayors' processing of this stimulus, influenced by their leadership traits and emotional responses.
- Output: Concrete political choices made by mayors.
- Outcome: Impact on local law enforcement practices and police use of force.

This paper aims to address three core questions:

- To what extent do mayors exhibit uniformity or variation in their leadership traits and emotional appraisal of the war on drugs?
- Did variations in leadership traits and emotional appraisal lead to different political choices regarding engagement with local police?
- How did variations in such engagement affect local policing, particularly in the use of deadly force?

The empirical analysis will first establish whether mayors acted differently in their relations with local police, based on interviewees' descriptions of relationships and interaction patterns. Next, it will determine if variations in output can be attributed to personality-based factors (traits and emotional appraisal).

This approach aligns with previous qualitative studies, such as Burke and Greenstein's investigation of presidential administrations' responses to potential ally defeat in Vietnam (Burke and Greenstein 1989). Recent Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA) studies by Fouquet and Brummer (2022) and Thiers and Wehner (2022)[3] have used similar approaches to explore links between populist ideologies and specific leadership traits.

Finally, the study will assess whether variations in local leadership choices significantly impacted outcomes, considering the context of a national campaign and top-down pressure on local police from higher echelons that might suggest a negligible impact of local government.

3 For further uses of LTA in political science see for example: Dyson 2006, Keller and Foster 2012, Esch and Swinkels 2015, and Kaarbo 2018.

2.4 Sources and Approach

This analysis draws on nearly 50 interviews conducted by the author from late 2021 to late 2022, including city mayors, high-ranking police officers, prosecutors, Commission on Human Rights members, and European law enforcement experts who worked within Philippine institutions. These were supplemented by publicly available interviews with mayors from 2015 to 2023.

All interviewees consented to recording, with some agreeing to be quoted by name while most requested anonymity. To maintain consistency, the author anonymized all interviewees except when relying on publicly available information. This necessitated anonymizing local government units as well. Direct quotes in the text are anonymized by naming the function with a letter that identifies the respective officeholder (e.g. mayor A). Such direct quotes are used only sparingly in the text. The majority of evidence from interview quotes is provided in the appendix. Here, one can also find the quotes used in the text, often in a more extensive form than in the text itself. In the text, [4] the corresponding references are clearly indicated using the attribution of the person (e.g., mayor A=MA), the city (CA), and the quote number (Q1) in the form MA_CA_Q1. More detailed information on the procedure can be found in the appendix.

This working paper adapts Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA) categories while making significant methodological adjustments. Unlike traditional LTA, which relies on quantitative analysis of diverse statements over time due to limited access to political leaders, this research benefits from direct access to local government executives through interviews.

LTA functions as an "at-a-distance" assessment technique to provide valid data on leaders without direct access (Dyson 2006: 290). In contrast, the interviews with mayors and key security governance figures provide detailed information in the form of verbatim statements about politicians' self-perceptions, situational assessments, and actions of and in the specific sphere of interest – local security governance. The interviews were tailored to local contexts, focusing on specific events, patterns of police violence, and local incidents of importance. Conducted in a semi-structured format, these interviews typically lasted one to two hours, giving respondents the freedom to articulate their narratives and perspectives. This allowed the use of in-depth qualitative verbatim analysis, delving beyond word frequency and issue salience to capture nuanced insights. While some statements are directly quoted in the text, most are referenced in the appendix. To ensure confidentiality, certain content has been paraphrased or abstracted, with these portions italicized in the quotes.

Overall, this methodology leverages the unique advantage of direct access to subjects, providing a deeper understanding of local politicians' actions and reactions to the breakdown of standard operating procedures in local law enforcement. This approach yields rich, contextual data that traditional "at-a-distance" LTA techniques cannot capture.

4 In many cases, the quotes listed in the appendix are extensive quotes that include the context in which the central statements are made with some running to several hundred words. This allows the reader to verify the plausibility of their use in the analysis.

3. Philippine Mayors in Local Security Governance

3.1 Why Mayors Matter: The Institutional Frame of Local Security Governance

Before examining the empirical evidence, it is essential to explain why mayoral influence over the local police is expected despite the Philippine National Police (PNP) being a national institution.

The Philippines, a presidential democracy, grants the president authority to appoint the national chief and top echelons of the PNP. The National Police Commission (Napolcom), under the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), exercises administrative control and operational supervision over the PNP, which possesses comprehensive law enforcement powers (Congress of the Philippines 1990).

At the sub-national level, the Philippines is divided into provinces, independent cities, component cities, and municipalities. Although the PNP is a national entity, political influence permeates all sub-national levels, particularly in cities and municipalities. This is due to local mayors and provincial governors being deputized as ex-officio representatives of Napolcom.

As Napolcom representatives, mayors have significant authority over local police (Congress of the Philippines 1999, Sect. 43+51, Congress of the Philippines 1998, Sect. 36):

- They participate in selecting their preferred local police director.
- They can recommend reassignments and transfers of local PNP members.
- They exercise operational supervision and control over PNP units within their jurisdictions.
- They contribute to establishing community safety plans.
- In collaboration with local People's Law Enforcement Boards (PLEBs), they oversee PNP discipline and adjudicate citizens' complaints against erring policemen.

These legal provisions grant mayors and local government institutions substantial political, operational, and disciplinary authority over the local PNP, despite its status as a national institution.

Mayors also exercise considerable financial influence over the Philippine National Police (PNP) by providing essential equipment and operational funds, making the PNP dependent on local government support. Furthermore, PNP officers have additional incentives to follow guidance from Local Government Unit (LGU) executives, as many LGUs offer supplementary financial benefits to PNP members within their jurisdiction (Congress of the Philippines 1990, Congress of the Philippines 1998). This financial leverage enables mayors to reward or penalize the local PNP as they see fit.

Consequently, both formal authority and informal means, when utilized by determined local administrations, can significantly shape local PNP behavior, potentially overriding the vertical PNP chain of command (appendix: ProPro_Q1; RePro_Q1 and CHR_RegB_Q1).

3.2 Engaging with or Disengaging from the Police

This chapter details how mayors perceive adequate LGU-police relations and how they reacted in different ways to the Duterte rupture. The question of how they explain their choice will only be touched upon here. It will be examined in more detail in the following chapter, as it directly links to leadership traits and emotional appraisal.

The key question is whether all mayors utilized their legal and financial means to influence local policing. Interview findings suggest significant variation in mayors' approaches to police relations, with two distinct groups of mayors emerging from the interviews.

Disengagers: steering free from involvement

One group of mayors explicitly distanced themselves from local law enforcement, describing local government as a passive partner of the police, solely focusing on "soft" issues of local social control, which, in the context of the war on drugs means the provision of treatment facilities for drug-dependents and operational finances as requested by the police (appendix: MA_CA_Q3; MA_CA_Q9; MF_CF_Q5). Communication with the police leadership seems to have been minimal, focusing either on formal institutions like the Peace and Order Council or communication initiated by the police, as when "the chief of police communicates with the city every now and then" (mayor F 2020; appendix: MF_CF_Q5). This group will be referred to as disengagers.

They constructed a skewed alternative between their stance of upholding a strict separation of spheres and disengaging from the police and active involvement they equated with the mayor conducting raids (appendix: MF_CF_Q3) or catching "the drug runners, the drug dealers or the drug lords" (appendix: MA_CA_Q3, see also: MG_CG_Q1). Their statements that focused on the legal expectations on the role of mayors in local security governance exhibited a strong sense of avoidance and refusal to confront the local or superordinate police leadership on account of their powers and responsibilities as representatives of Napolcom if necessary. Thus, they claimed to avoid using their rights in the appointment of the city police director, even though the final choice is their right under the law. One mayor even stated that he consistently told "the regional director [of the PNP] to choose whoever is most acceptable to him" (mayor F 2022; appendix: MF_CF_Q10). They likewise refrained from asking for a non-performing police director's replacement, or claim their right to "operational supervision and control," (Congress of the Philippines 1998, Sect. 62) insisting "The mayor is part of the local government. And the role of the mayor is, we do not control the police" (mayor F 2022; see also appendix: M_CF_Q11, MA_CA_Q4).

Reasons for their passive stance varied from a proclaimed belief in the separation of powers (appendix: MF_CF_Q1, MF_CF_Q6, MF_CF_Q7), linking a more active stance to usurpation of police powers by the local government (appendix: MA_CY_Q4), to simple acceptance of police fait accomplices, as when the police appoints city police directors without consulting with the mayor: "There's always been this, 'This is your police chief.' I like it now. Yeah" (Mayor A, 2022, appendix: MA_CQ_Q1). Despite their critical stance on police behavior during and before the war on drugs, [5] disengagers also legitimized their passive stance with the claim of lack of competency in law enforcement matters (appendix: MF_CF_Q2, MG-CG_Q2). and conflict avoidance, as when one mayor claiming to know about the problem of especially high numbers of killings in one part of the city argues: "there are so many reasons there, because there's a lot of politics there, that I'd rather not delve into" (Mayor A, 2022, see also appendix: MA_CA_Q1, MG_CG_Q3).

Engagers: insisting on control

A majority of mayors reported an active interest in close interaction and a strong desire to influence local policing patterns. These mayors maintained frequent contact with their police directors, sometimes even micromanaging specific cases. They were typically involved

5 This criticism is not only directed against excessive police violence, but particularly against the criminalization of the police, who, from the perspective of some politicians, are often part of criminal networks (appendix: MA_CA_Q2).

in appointing city police directors and believed they had a right to significantly influence local law enforcement. These mayors will be referred to as engagers.

While not all engagers felt it necessary to challenge the police in the past, all expressed a strong willingness to do so, when they assumed their authority or understanding of effective policing being threatened (appendix: MJ_CJ_Q2, MC_CC_Q1, MC_CC_Q3). In fundamental difference to disengagers and notwithstanding the Duterte war on drugs, several engagers publicly disputed the PNP leadership's attempts to appoint police chiefs without consulting them, using strong language even publicly. Mauricio Domogan, mayor of Baguio City, experienced this situation twice in 2016 and 2018, speaking publicly of his "disgust" and feelings of being "insulted" by these decisions. He emphasized the need for "courtesy and respect" and threatened that cities without a voice should no longer allocate funds to the police (quoted in: See 2016; Llanes 2018; Agoot 2018; see also appendix MD_CD_Q1 to Q3). Law enforcement hardliner and Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña escalated the confrontation in a broadly similar situation to the extent that he was temporarily stripped of his powers as Napolcom representative. A further mayor, who refused to accept a police director appointed by the PNP without consultation, described such efforts to widen police authority at the expense of the local government executives' rights as "usurpation. […] It's my police. […] It's an imposition on the mayor. Honestly, supremacy should rest with the civilian" (mayor J 2022, appendix: MJ_CJ_Q1). Other mayors focused on anticipating situations and push through their preferred candidates through contacts with higher-level police: "if you want your choice to be included, then you better tell them in advance. Otherwise, you might get into a rigmarole getting none" (mayor I, 2022; appendix: MI_CI_Q2). In a different approach, one mayor who chose not to contest higher-level PNP decisions regarding his city's police director sought to build a strong relationship with the new chief of police by leveraging access to barangay captains for cooperation, thereby securing a voice in local security governance (appendix: MB_CB_Q7).

This focus on maintaining control is also evident in the fact that all engagers vetted candidates for police director according to specific criteria (appendix: MI_CI_Q1, ME_CE_Q3, MC_CC_Q1). While some decided on their own, others consulted small groups of advisors (appendix: MI_CI_Q2). In one city, the decision was made through hearings conducted by a committee composed of city officials and local civil society representatives (See 2018). Another mayor claimed to have sought input from non-commissioned police officers, who often serve for many years in the same municipality, thereby establishing a direct connection and significant social capital with these lower-ranking officers (appendix: MJ_CJ_Q3).

Crucially engagers claimed not only engagement in the selection of the local police leadership, but active engagement in local security governance on a regular basis, conceptualized along a range from a cooperative to a hierarchical relationship with the mayor in command. As one mayor put it:

> "It is very important that the city mayor and the police are in sync with the kind of work that they do. […] As a mayor, you really have to be strong with the main objective of what you want to do. If you want a strong anti-drug campaign program, then you have to push the new or the incoming director to go on and continue the program. Since the police is really under the supervision of the mayor" (mayor C, 2022, appendix: MMC_CC_Q2).

While few of his colleagues share his conception of a hierarchical relationship, all assert their leadership role, typically focusing on dense communication and cooperation outside of or beyond the formal arenas of the city peace and order councils, either in small, in-

formal groupings (appendix: MK_CK_Q1, ProPro_Q3, PD_CH_Q1, PD_CH_Q2) or bilaterally with the police director. As one mayor points out:

> "I talk to my chief of police almost every day, either in person or by phone. I spoke with him this morning, and if something comes up, I discuss it with him in the afternoon. If I have new policies to implement—mostly strategic—I call him and ask him to report to me personally. It's only about 100 meters from my office, so I can reach him anytime" (Mayor E, 2022; see also appendix: ME_CE_Q6, MJ_CJ_Q8).

In exceptional cases mayors also engaged in pushing police towards conducting community consultations and intervened personally in individual cases of excessive force reported to them (appendix: MJ_CJ_Q5; MJ_CJ_Q6; MJ_CJ_Q9).

While patterns of engagement differ within the group of engagers, with some willing to publicly confront the higher echelons of the police, whereas others prefer behind-the-scenes activities, engagers are united in advocating a rather high level of "supervision and control" through dense communication, and proactive participation in the local agenda setting activities of the police.

External expectations

A small number of interviews with police officers suggests that the engaging, "activist" stance aligns well with police directors' expectations of police local government relations. Police officers interviewed by the author valued dense and cooperative relationships with local government for practical reasons (appendix: PD_CJ_Q1, PD_CJ_Q2, PD_CJ_Q3, PD_CH_Q2, PG_A_Q2, PC_A_Q1, PC_A_Q2, PC_A_Q4, PD_CC_Q1), often claiming to align national programs with local preferences "if there is an instruction from our local government unit" (Police Colonel, 2022, see also appendix: PC_A_Q6, PC_A_Q3).

External observers in law enforcement interviewed, such as prosecutors, also tended to assume and value active engagement in local policing over symbolic distancing from police oversight (appendix: CHR_RegC_Q1, CHR_RegF_Q1), as they viewed engagement as a more effective strategy for influencing policing practices (appendix: ProPro_Q2, ProPro_Q5, CHR_RegA_Q1, CHR_RegA_Q2). Crucially, they advised against public protest against national policies in favor of employing more subtle strategies that focus exclusively on engaging local police (appendix: ProPro_Q4), allowing both parties to operate under the radar of national authorities.

Thus, engaging mayors are likely to have their voices heard, as police officers appreciate "leaders who have political will. I experienced this in City X with Mayor X, where everybody is equal" (Police General A, interview 2022, see also appendix: PG_A_Q1). Resentment tends to arise only against political interference with ulterior motives (appendix: PC_A_Q6, PG_A_Q1, PG_A_Q3, PG_B_Q1).

4. The Role of Leadership Traits and Affective Appraisal for Mayors' Decisions on Their Stance during the War on Drugs

The following section will explore how differences in the management of local police-political relations by chief executives reflect variations in their leadership traits and emotional responses to the signals conveyed by the national government's advocacy of a war on drugs.

While the theoretical introduction already introduced the expectation that disengagement and conflict avoidance might be linked to low belief in being in control, low need for power and low self-confidence, whereas the insistence on being in control expressed

by the engagers fits the expectations linked to high loadings on those three leadership traits, the complete divergence of disengagers' and engagers' statements along these exact lines is indeed surprising, as is the exclusivity of fear among the disengagers and anger among the engagers. This clear-cut contrast between the two groups of mayors was not anticipated.

4.1 Belief in Control of Events

While a principled argument for disengagement like the one referring to the necessity of a clean-cut separation of powers provides no hint with respect to a mayor's belief in his being in control of events, other arguments, mostly focusing on the assumed lack of competency and the perceived need to avoid conflict do. Detailing their perspective on local law enforcement disengagers also referred to their own helplessness or claimed a lack of information and knowledge, that put them at the mercy of the local police leadership.

One of the disengagers for example claimed to have been unaware of the high numbers of police killings in his City, which were not unique to the Duterte era but had already occurred in previous years, albeit on a lesser scale. Throughout the interview, he reiterated his lack of knowledge and inability to intervene, stating, "when I was the vice mayor [before Duterte], I did not also get any reports about police brutality or about unsolved murders. I did not get any. I'm sure I didn't […] I can very honestly say when I was the vice, I did not get that information" (mayor A interview 2022, see appendix: MA_CA_Q5 and MA_CA_Q6).

This theme of lack of information and personal ignorance or cluelessness permeates the statements of "disengager" mayors, resulting in statements, as in the case of one mayor who argued that he told his police director that he did

> "not approve of any kind of extra-judicial killings with regards to drugs. So kindly not do that. And so it was clear to him that that was not the direction I wanted to take this campaign" (mayor A 2022, see appendix: MA_CA_Q5, MA_CA_Q6).

Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the mayor in 2022 still claimed that he did not believe that his city

> "was one of the cities with high extra judicial killings pertaining to drugs. That's my opinion. In relation to other LGUs, because I was very clear to the City Police Chief, no, that's not the direction we're going. And unless he did it, and without me knowing, and killed people [laughs]." (mayor A 2022, appendix: MA-CA_Q5).

Another disengager followed a similar line, arguing

> "I have made myself very clear. I am against extrajudicial killings. I am against summary killings. […] But I did not have the thinking that the police had been somehow made to resort to extra [judicial killing], no, no. Probably they did that, but you know, this I can say […] I do not tolerate extra judicial killings or summary killings" (mayor F, 2022, see appendix MF_CF_Q4, MF_CF_Q8).

Both are keen on signaling their principled distance to the killings accompanying the war on drugs, while at the same time professing complete ignorance about the local situation. Their rather similarly structured answers signal a claim to innocence, underlined by their claims of publicly voiced resistance coupled with their expressed powerlessness to effectively address the local situation (appendix: MF_CF_Q9).

Both mayors also used the argument of lack of competency, with Mayor F. claiming that he has "never thought that I can do a better plan than that [operational policies established

by the police]" (mayor F, interview 2022, see appendix: MF_CF_Q2). Mayor A likewise tends "to agree as long as the police are impassioned by a certain issue." For him, "usually it's the police chief that has a vision […].And that's fine because, okay, that's your trust, then that will be our trust, the city's trust as well" (mayor A, 2022, see appendix: MA_CA_Q11, MA_CA_Q12). A complete absence of any belief of being in control was expressed by another disengager, already in place during the Aquino years, which he described as being under the spell of drug-crime, with both politicians and police officers complicit and the upright police unable to go against those forces:

> "So that is the situation then. We don't know really. We don't know where to go. The policemen there, maybe most of them are honest, but if they do this [go against drug crime], they will be transferred to another station, they will be put to far places. We don't know. [...] Actually I have also this information, that not only politicians then, but even high-ranking police officers, they are within our province, they're not doing anything about it. We just don't know how to deal with it during those times"(mayor G, 2022, appendix: MG_CG_Q2).

Whereas other disengagers focused on their disengagement from the police and the ensuing lack of control (appendix: MA_CA_Q10), this mayor went further, arguing that even within the police higher ranks did not have the capacity to strictly supervise the lower ranks, a situation that in his view resulted in high levels of criminalization of the local police that cannot be prevented by their superiors much less the local government:

> "there are groupings from within the station that have their own motivations. They have their own skills and habits of doing something from within the station that […] they can easily hide that from their city director, a police director. So just the same, they can also do something that their police director doesn't want them to do, or whatever. They have their own ways of doing things. And they're all policemen. It's just that the difference is the rank" (mayor G, 2022, see appendix: MG_CG_Q4, MA_CA_Q2).[6]

Thus, underlying mayors' choice for disengaging from the police is a perceived inability to fulfill the tasks assigned to them by law: supervision and control.

In contrast, engagers exhibit a strong belief in their ability to control events and assert their authority over policing. They clearly see themselves as actively overseeing and controlling policing in their jurisdictions (appendix: MI_CI_Q3; MB_CB_Q3, Q4 and Q 7). For them, it is self-evident that they exercise control and take a leading role in local security governance, a perspective mirrored for example in their description of the relationship, as when they claim to define objectives, enforce compliance (appendix: MB_CB_Q5, MC_CC_Q3 and Q4), provide incentives for law abiding policing (appendix: MB_CB_Q6) or issue directives to their police directors (appendix: ME_CE_Q4, MK_CK_Q2).

One engager put his belief in being in control in a more general way by voicing his support for strong leaders wielding big government and big police as a core requirement to subdue crime (appendix: MB_CB_Q3, MB_CB_Q4). Throughout the interview he used the term "strong leader" 14 times, together with the term of "big government" used 16 times and big police used six times. Another mayor signaled his personal leadership in engaging the police by consistently using "I," when talking about local initiatives directly supporting the police, but "we", when discussing measures directed to non-police actors.

6 An opposing view, focusing on the criminalization of local politics that renders local police powerless is also held by several of the mayors and police officers (appendix: ME_CE_Q1, ME_CE_Q2, PC_A_Q5).

Thus, belief in being in control varied sharply between disengagers and engagers in a way that resonates with expectations derived from the LTA literature.

4.2 Need for Power

While belief in being in control of events refers to the mayors' perceptions of the situations, they find themselves in, with disengagers typically arguing that they lack the respective control whereas engagers typically claim such control, need for power focuses on whether mayors perceive whether they should have the respective powers.

Disengagers demonstrate a diminished desire for power in local security governance. They perceive the mayor's role as supplementary to the police: "the role of the mayor is to supplement, come up with activities, programs that would help people avoid drugs, like education, for instance, and make sure that there is drug education and so on, so forth, sports and so on"(mayor F 2022, see also appendix: MF_CF_Q12), while at the same time supporting "everything the police ask for" (mayor A interview 2022, see also appendix: MA_CA_Q9), reflecting their voluntary relinquishment of power. To them the mayor's role is passive supportive rather than assertively supervising and controlling in security governance: "the role of the mayor is, we do not control the police" (mayor F, interview 2022, see also appendix: MF_CF_Q11). These statements indicate a limited need for power in a sphere where mayors actually have the legal authority to be more assertive.

In contrast, engagers advocacy of an active role in security governance as well as their resistance to police actions questioning their authority, signal a strong need for power in the sphere of local security governance. For them, to be successful "as a mayor, you really have to be strong with the main objective of what you want to do. If you want a strong anti-drug campaign program, then you have to push the new or the incoming director to go on and continue the program" (Mayor C, 2022, see also appendix: MC_CC_Q3). Others put a similar message differently, equaling leadership first with decisiveness und a capacity to stand one's ground even under adverse circumstances:

> "you make the call, whether right or left, you make the call. There is no [other] center to the decision-making. And when you do make the call, you better make sure that you're standing by it all throughout. You don't fall back in the middle of making that call. […] I think to some degree when you have 110 million Filipinos you somehow need to have that dictator's tendency in you" (Mayor B, 2022, see also appendix: MB_CB_Q4).

An even stronger need to power was expressed by Cebu City mayor Osmeña, who offered bounties to police who killed drug-suspects, when he self-consciously extends his sphere of power to the limits of legality or beyond:

> "I don't instruct the police to shoot a drug lord. But that said, if they end up shooting somebody, you get 50,000 [Philippine Pesos] from me. There's a very thin line there. It is a thin line. I'm pushing the envelope. I'm really walking right on the edge of the cliff. I'm like walking on a tight wire. But I'm using my power and influence to protect the people of Cebu City. Because no one is protecting them. Because they are being murdered. […] I'm not going to take a sitting down" (Osmeña interview, Monsod 2016).

In this perspective, the mayor's claim to power is almost absolute, legitimated by the end, that justifies highly questionable means, with the mayor himself self-consciously deciding that his actions are necessary to achieve a larger good.

However, in this respect, Osmeña is an outlier, as engagers need for power is more often tempered by a pragmatic outlook aimed at maximizing control over events. Mayor B, for instance, refrained from protesting uncoordinated police appointments and instead focused on establishing productive relationships (appendix: MB_CB_Q7). Similarly, Mayor K leveraged local government support to influence police decisions (appendix: MK_CK_Q3), both recognizing the importance of cooperation over confrontation as necessary to maximize their impact on policing.

4.3 Self-Confidence

Self-confidence also links with belief in control of events. Mayors who expressed a lack of belief in being able to control their local environment, are characterized by lower levels of self-confidence, whereas those who expressed a high level of belief in being in control did so from a self-confident basis.

Lack of self-confidence is for example mirrored in disengagers ready acceptance of the autonomy of the police, despite their insistence on principled resistance to the violent streak of the presidential war on drugs. While disengagers emphasized their principled stance against targeted killings, none of them drew the conclusion that he should do everything in his power as representative of Napolcom to stop the killing at the local level. Instead, they focused on a variety of arguments, from adherence to the separation of powers, over lack of competence, to fear (more on this later), to legitimize their refusal to take over supervision and control as mandated as representatives of Napolcom. This lack of self-confidence was further heightened during the war on drugs, as fear became an important additional dimension coloring the personal experience and dictating political choice (appendix MG_CG_Q2, MG_CG_Q3; on fear and anger see below).

Indirect evidence of low self-confidence is seen in disengagers' party affiliation. While all of them ran under the Liberal Party in 2016, all but one of them joined the President's party PDP-Laban following his 2016 election victory, in preparation for the 2019 elections, with one mayor even becoming the provincial party president.

This shift is in stark contrast to the corresponding behavior of engagers. While on of them had already run under the PDP-Laban ticket in the 2016, and one shifted membership to the Presidents party, all others stuck with their existing national memberships or chose alternatives to PDP-Laban. Disengagers choice reflects a low level of self-confidence resulting in self-protecting behavior, whereas the engagers' decisions indicates confidence in being able to survive politically without symbolically submitting to the president.

This self-confidence is also visible in engagers statements, as when for example Tomas Osmeña, points out: "I've been mayor five times, you know. I know what works and what doesn't" (Osmeña interview, Tulfo 2016), or argues that :"It's not that I act as if I own Cebu. I'm the captain of the ship. I'm not the owner of the ship. When you're captain of the ship, you captain the ship"(Osmeña interview, Talabong 2028).

These quotes not only reflect the mayor's self-confidence as politician, but make visible the background for his willingness to bend the law by providing bounties for the killing of suspects, signaling that for this mayor the relevance of the rule of law depends on his judgement. While exceptional in this respect, Osmeña's self-confidence in his ability to provide the necessary guidance and leadership is mirrored by all other engagers (appendix: MC-CC-Q2, MI_CI_Q3, MI_CI_Q5, MJ_CJ_Q6, MJ_CJ_Q7, MK_CK_1).

4.4 Group Maintenance vs. Task Orientation

While notable differences exist between the two groups in the aforementioned leadership traits, group orientation is rather similar with both engaging and disengaging mayors emphasizing community orientation and responsiveness (appendix: MA_CA_Q7, MJ_CJ_Q6, MJ_CJ_Q4). This perception is in line with survey-based observations as to the crucial role of linkages with constituents. While more than 40 percent of the mayors interviewed reported several interactions with barangay captains and municipal councilor, 60 percent reported such interactions with "Common residents" on the one hand and local NGO and people's organizations on the other (Nishimura 2018). Nishimura's study suggests that more than 40 percent of mayors view not themselves, but local actors (officials, common residents and local NGO) as the sole sources for local government projects. Put differently they perceive themselves being implementors but not initiators of policy decisions that have been arrived at by their various local constituencies (Nishimura 2018, 73).

The distinction between disengagers and engagers lies in their perception of their leadership function and the emphasis placed on task orientation. Engagers, such as Tomas Osmeña, recognize the community's role in identifying tasks for local governance (Osmeña interview, Rappler 2016). However, they strongly assert the mayor's responsibility to provide direction and purpose. As already noted, Osmeña perceives the mayor as the Captain of the ship and his task as guiding and giving a common sense of purpose and direction (appendix: MH_CH_Q4). Another engager styles himself as a visionary leader: "It is listening to each other as much as possible, bringing them to a directive like what I'm doing, I brought them to the vision" (appendix: MI_CI_Q4). Thus, for engagers, the community serves as a vital foundation for advancing the chief executive's political agenda, but holds no agenda setting agency. For engagers clearly task orientation and personal leadership take precedence over group-maintenance orientation (appendix: MC_CC_Q4, MB_CB_Q4, MB_CB_Q8). This distinction mirrors the one established in the survey by Nishimura, with respect to mayors' perspectives on local governance, that suggests that while a majority of mayors prioritize project efficiency over constituency satisfaction and participation, a large minority (40 percent) comes to the opposite conclusion (Nishimura 2018: 73).

4.5 Emotional Appraisal: Fear and Anger

Emotional responses varied among both engagers and disengagers in both intensity and orientation. While some appeared unaffected, others had strong reactions to Duterte's war on drugs. Disengagers expressed fear for political survival, while engagers were angered by perceived encroachment on their authority in local crime management. This divergence corresponded to differences in core leadership traits, like belief in control of events, need for power, and self-confidence. These findings suggest that emotional appraisals of the same stimulus—Duterte's statements and the PNP's actions in the war on drugs—were shaped by variations in the leadership traits of the mayors.

Consistent with theoretical expectations, only mayors high on BACE, PWR, and SC emphasized threats to their prerogatives in presidential messages and PNP efforts to bypass them in filling positions. They ignored or downplayed threats against narco-politicians and all others supposedly linked to illegal drugs. To them, the relevant threat was the strengthening of vertical accountability in the police force and the reduction of their role in local security governance. While not all engagers pushed these aspects, those who did, expressed anger. For example, Mauricio Domogan, mayor of Baguio City, used terms such as "disgusted" and "insulted," in the context of a change of police leadership in which he did not participate, publicly criticizing the PNP actions as lacking in "courtesy" and "respect"

(appendix: MD_CD_Q1, MD_CD_Q2, MD_CD_Q3). Other mayors voiced similar sentiment, calling it "usurpation" (appendix: MJ_CJ_Q1) and claiming lost confidence in the PNP leadership (Cebu News Digest 2016).

Duterte's campaign did not elicit fear amongst engagers. When fear was mentioned, it was in different contexts, such as explaining, why fear worked against crime (appendix: MB_CB_Q9, MB_CB_Q5), why they were not afraid of being killed (appendix: MB_CB_Q1, MB_CB_Q2), or describing their response if attacked: "somebody starts shooting at me, don't run away. Just drop down to the ground. So that, whoever's standing, that's who I'll shoot" (Osmeña interview, Talabong 2018). [7]

Mayors low on the analyzed leadership traits focused on the threatening aspects of the administration's war on drugs pronouncement. Given the publication of lists and violent deaths of "narco-politicians" these mayors clearly expressed anxiety or fear. Based on high risk assessments they remained passive or appeasement-oriented, aiming at safeguarding political survival. An anonymous administrator, tasked by his mayor to deal with the police emphasized that "the mayor cannot speak out that he is against the President" thus delegating responsibility to his administrator (appendix: CA_CL_Q2, CA_CL_Q1). Another mayor mentioned being relieved not to have incurred the President's ire (appendix: MA_CA_Q8). Rather extreme is the case of a mayor, who used the word "fear" 12 and "afraid" 7 times, when discussing his perceptions and actions during the war on drugs:

> during the implementation of that double barrel […] everybody's afraid. If you will not go with the double barrel, maybe you're one of the protectors of the drugs. Everybody, all, everybody, the judges are scared, the policemen are scared, the politicians are scared. The fear is there […] So why will you be afraid? You don't know when it is coming, how will it happen, and who will be the next. […] The mere gossip of your name being part of that, it destroys a lot (mayor E 2022, see also appendix: MG_CG_Q3).

This mayor took self-protective behavior to the extreme by becoming not only member, but also provincial president of Duterte's PDP-Laban in early 2017. His depiction of an unmanageably dangerous environment contrasts with that of engagers, who downplayed threats. One mayor stated

> "one thing about President Duterte, I know he's a very aggressive president. And he was a very aggressive mayor when it comes to crimes, you know, but, […] in fairness to President Duterte. We never experienced any pressure from him to let us, say, undertake hardline stance against crimes against criminals. He never do that. […] He leaves it to us, to manage, the way we manage our peace and order situation (mayor E 2022, appendix: ME_CE_Q5).

Emotional appraisal thus varied among mayors. While some exhibited strong emotional responses, including fear or anger, which influenced their political perceptions and deci-

7 One should mention that threats against physical integrity and assassinations of politicians are not exclusive to the Duterte campaign or period, but are a constant in Philippine politics and thus are often noted in a sober reporting style (See appendix: CHR_RegC_Q1, CHR_RegD_Q1, CHR_RegE_Q1).

While the number of assassinated incumbents and candidates for elective office increased by more than 60 percent to 859 during President Duterte's six-year term, it had already reached 525 during President Aquino's corresponding six-year tenure. In the first 30 months of President Marcos's administration, 191 officeholders and candidates lost their lives in assassination attempts. These figures exclude the smaller, yet still significant, number of officeholders and candidates who survived assassination attempts, either wounded or unharmed (Aquino: 168; Duterte: 239; Marcos: 63; all data documented by author), as well as former elected officeholders targeted in assassination attempts.

sion-making, others displayed more subdued emotional reactions, with neither fear nor anger significantly impacting their outlook. Crucially, fear was exclusive to the disengagers, while anger was exclusive to the engagers.

4.6 Leadership Traits, Emotional Appraisal and Political Choice in a Crisis

In summary, this section showed how political decision-making in crises reflects various leadership qualities and mayors' perceptions of the operational environment. The analysis confirms expectations from existing literature regarding the link between personality traits, emotional appraisal, and political choices.

The above-detailed arguments can be summed up to the overall conclusion that the choice to either engage with or disengage from the local police, to try to impact local law enforcement also in times of crisis, or emphasize the separation of spheres and voluntarily retreat into a role of passive assistance is directly linked to specific combinations of leadership traits that also tend to engender different emotional appraisals.

Notably, the disruption of standard operating procedures in local security governance caused by the crisis initiated by the President resulted in the adoption of passive stances concerning local law enforcement respecting not only formal constraints but also not contesting police efforts to extend their informal authority, by mayors who expressed less self-confidence, lower belief in being in control, less need for power in this sphere of local governance and less task orientation.

The same situation was perceived fundamentally differently by mayors with strong self-confidence and the conviction that they had control over events. For them, the relevant threat was not the visible potential danger to their career or well-being, as reflected in the presidential rhetoric and the emerging violent practices. Rather, their primary concern was the threat to their authority in local security governance posed by the new situation, which they aimed to counter by proactively engaging in local security governance. Some chose to ignore efforts of the PNP to informally extend their authority, and for example not oppose unilateral transfers of city-police chiefs, whereas others protested vehemently. However, all, except Cebu mayor Osmeña used their informal authority to impact local policing via rather dense interactions with their city police directors, aimed at upholding flexibility and maneuverability while maintaining an active role in local policing.

4.7 Effects on Local Levels of Police Violence During the War on Drugs

The preceding examination of a limited number of cases precludes a comprehensive analysis of how variations in leadership traits influenced outcomes related to the police's use of deadly force during the anti-drug campaign. However, given the fact that all LGUs analyzed belong to the category of cities, with most being highly urbanized cities, overall comparability is rather high. Further, all mayors except one distanced themselves during the interviews from the Duterte radicalism in the war on drugs. Disengagers tended to proclaim a principled disapproval, while engagers tended to focus more on the local level, advocating for minimizing fatal encounters. While acknowledging that structural variables explain a significant amount of the variation in use of fatal force by the police, the results of the comparison of fatal use of force levels in cities governed by engagers as contrasted by those governed by disengagers suggests that engaging mayors had some, albeit limited, restraining effect (see figure 2 below).

A comparison of police use of deadly force adjusted for population shows that the top three cities were governed by disengagers. These cities, all located within the wider Central

Luzon Regions (NCR, Regs 3, 4a), exhibited significantly higher kill rates than two other cities within the same regions governed by mayors, who actively engaged their local PNP. Beyond this regions, violence levels were generally lower with less variation, except for City D, which had by far the lowest rate and absolute number of police killings, with fewer than ten documented cases during the six years of the Duterte presidency. Given that only one of the cities beyond the wider central-Luzon region had a disengaging mayor, it was impossible to assess the effect of engagement levels.

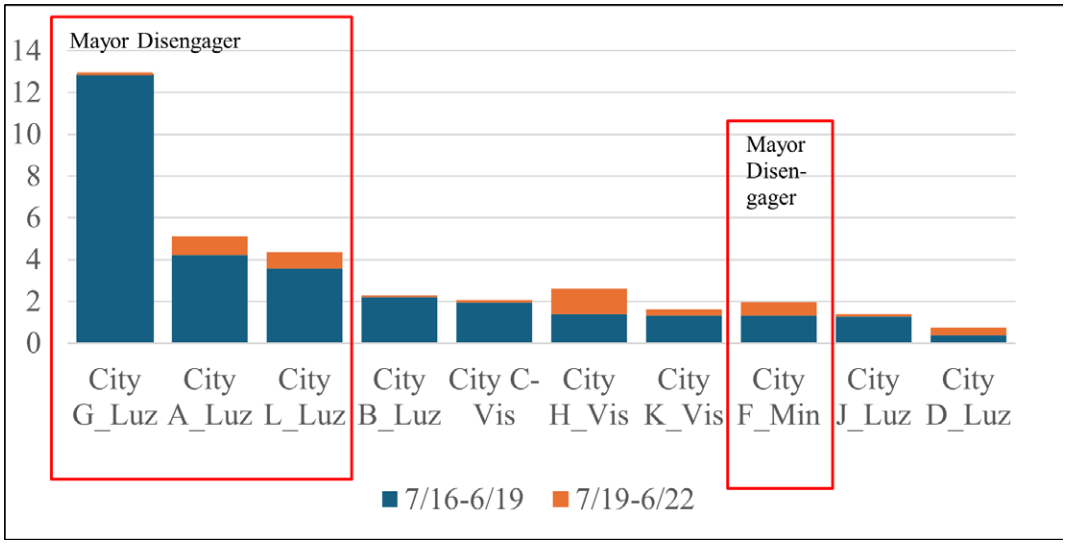

Figure 2: Police Use of Deadly Force per Year and 100,000 Inhabitants in Selected Cities during the War on Drugs. Source: ABS-CBN dataset + author's dataset; abbreviations: Luz = Luzon, Vis = Visayas; Min = Mindanao

The rather outstanding City G provides strong evidence regarding the influence of individual personality. Here, a mayor who admitted to being driven by fear was succeeded by another mayor in July 2019, resulting in dramatic changes regarding police use of deadly force. Fatal violence decreased substantially from 99 recorded killings between July 2016 and June 2019 to just one in the following three years. This is particularly notable considering that fatal police interventions remained prevalent in many local government units (LGUs) across the province with over 160 fatalities from January 2020 to June 2022.[8] Two adjacent and broadly comparable cities still saw a total of 57 and 19 killings in police operations during these 1.5 years, or an annual rate of 5.8 and 4.9 respectively. The only distinguishing factor between these two periods in City G was the mayor in office. This stark contrast underscores the preliminary findings suggesting that differences in leadership traits not only influenced political decisions and behavior but may also significantly affected political outcomes. Therefore, while only preliminary, the available evidence indicates that engagement had a modest yet discernible impact on police use of deadly force.

5. Personality and Political Choice in Local Security Governance

The analysis examined mayors' responses to a situation where standard law enforcement procedures were suspended and replaced by a national war on drugs, granting police broad

8 Provincial PNP data, detailing individual police operations, initially online on the provincial police homepage (*https://bulacanpnp.com*), no longer available since May 2024. No data for second half of 2019. Respective data can be retrieved from the wayback machine (*https://archive.org/*).

informal authority to kill suspects. The study aimed to answer three questions: whether mayors' reactions varied, if variations related to their leadership personality, and how differences in handling the suspension of established local security governance affected local levels of police use of deadly force.

Findings revealed significant variations in mayors' reactions, despite most not supporting the excessive use of deadly force promoted nationally. Two distinct groups emerged: disengaged mayors, who refrained from exercising authority over local policing and reduced interactions with police leadership, and engaged mayors, who continued to try to shape local law enforcement through active engagement with the local police.

Disengagers consistently demonstrated a perception of limited control over events, exhibited no desire for power in local law enforcement, and displayed low self-confidence, often citing their perceived lack of competence.

In contrast, engagers exhibited a strong belief in their ability to control events the war on drugs. They viewed their role in local security governance as an exercise of legal authority, supplemented by informal influence. All engagers demonstrated high self-confidence in maintaining influence over local policing, despite the exceptional situation. The analysis suggests that the engagers' sense of ownership and confidence in their ability to control their environment motivated them to defend their prerogatives and preferred local practices, even in times of crisis.

These findings align with existing literature on leadership traits, associating leaders scoring low on the traits of Belief in Ability to Control Events (BACE), Need for Power (PWR), and Self-Confidence (SC) with self-protective political choices that respect constraints and avoid confrontations, particularly in high-risk environments. Conversely, leaders scoring high on these traits are expected to be more willing to challenge constraints, being less inclined to adapt to contextual pressures (Keller and Foster 2012; Brummer 2022; Thiers and Wehner 2023).

These differences explain variations in how mayors perceived relevant dimensions of the war on drugs. Although faced with the same disruption to standard operating procedures disengagers and engagers interpreted signals from the national government and Philippine National Police (PNP) in fundamentally different ways and thus exhibited markedly different responses to Duterte's war on drugs.

Engagers, keen on maintaining their control over local law enforcement, focused on police practices that threatened to undermine their authority. This resulted in active engagement with local police directors to counterbalance vertical authority with horizontal influence. It also led to resistance against efforts by superior police levels to curtail political influence on the selection of police directors, with some mayors clearly experiencing strong outbursts of publicly vented anger, an astonishing fact in a period, when a more than trifle number of local politicians were publicly accused by the president of being in cahoots with drug lords. Several of these were killed, either by unknown hitmen or in police operations, others fought to clear their names in this dangerous situation. Clearly engagers had an optimistic risk assessment, founded on their self-assuredness that allowed them to ignore the threat emerging from the narrative of "narco-politician" and instead focus on countering the threat to their authority over local security governance inherent in a strengthened hierarchical chain of command in the PNP.

Disengagers in contrast focused exclusively on the threat of being in one way or other linked to narco-politics, a means that could be used arbitrarily, as proof was not necessary, due process was suspended and consequences of being labeled "narco-politician" unforeseeable. The perception of a threat to their authority was absent for disengagers, who had

voluntarily waived their powers of supervision and control over local policing, as well as their rights in choosing their police director. Thus, for disengagers anxiety and fear were the relevant emotional categories that framed their perception of the situation and their choice of response: disengagement and appeasement.

A significant further, albeit preliminary finding of this working paper is that active mayoral involvement with the police during the war on drugs appears to have mitigated the use of deadly force by law enforcement, irrespective of the mayor's law enforcement ideology.

The Duterte war on drugs in the Philippines demonstrates the significant impact of politics on policing practices. A determined president was able to override constitutional and legal safeguards against excessive use of deadly force almost single-handedly. The brutal implementation of the war on drugs was primarily driven by the President, whose directives were followed by the police.

Police compliance with extralegal orders from higher political and institutional levels may be attributed to alignment between these directives and the preferences or past practices of personnel implementing the war on drugs. However, it also requires loyalty and subservience to the person in power to be valued more highly than adherence to formal principles and rules established in national laws and police regulations designed to ensure public security through lawful means.

Despite the overall failure of control institutions to curb violence, local chief executives could make a modest but important impact on implementing the fatal strategy locally. While police depoliticization is ideal, in a system prioritizing loyalty to superiors, and the President demands a violent anti-crime strategy, active local governments can positively influence local policing practices. This is achieved by countering top-down pressure with horizontal influence, provided local leaders do not align with extreme national positions.

The effectiveness of local government intervention depends on two factors: The availability of formal or informal means to present dissenting views of local government and local leaders' willingness to proactively use these means.

This willingness largely depends on the personality of local chief executives. While an impartial politically insulated police force is ideal from a liberal democratic perspective, when unattainable, proactive local politicians willing to assert their governance mandate and intervene using available formal and informal means can be crucial in mitigating excessive violence.

Future research should expand its focus to encompass a broader range of local government units, policy areas, and governance contexts. This expansion would provide deeper insights into how personality traits of local political leaders influence policy implementation at the local level.

Additionally, there's a pressing need to examine the politics of policing more closely. This involves investigating how, when and why national and subnational political decision-makers attempt to influence policing practices and with which effects. While extensive literature exists on the impact of police structure and culture on use of force, there's a notable gap in research examining civilian chief executives' interference in policing outside the United States. Such studies should explore when, how, and why these interventions occur and with which consequences on police use of force practices.

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To online appendix (download)

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