



Oriental and Western Worldviews on Extrajudicial Killings in the Era of Duterte with Facebook as Space of Discourse: A Discourse-Historical Approach

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Abstract

This study investigates from a Filipino perspective the extrajudicial killings (EJKs) and human rights during former President Rodrigo Duterte's administration using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and political discourse analysis (PDA) with a discourse-historical approach (DHA). It identifies Facebook as a space of discourse in which the articulations of four political actors showed a preference for socio-economic progress and community safety over individual political and civil rights. This Filipino worldview emphasizes cultural specificity, national sovereignty and an insistence on self-governance, illustrating resistance to the Western world's human rights practices and concepts. Thus, given the findings, this study argues for a nuanced approach of "culturally attuned rights and empowerment" to address EJKs, which respect the standards of international human rights and the local context that recognizes historical and cultural factors. Accordingly, this paper contributes to the study of CDA in the Asian context, particularly the discourse historical approach, wherein the historical dimension allows for explorations of how past discourses bear on contemporary political and social realities.

Keywords: *Extrajudicial killings, critical discourse analysis, discourse-historical approach, human rights, Duterte, Philippines*

1. Introduction

The grand narrative for human rights is that it is universally applicable. However, the emergence of Asian countries as major players in the world stage, vis-à-vis economics and governance, has challenged this universality with the argument that human rights are only applicable as far as their respective countries' historical, cultural and political contexts allow. This positioning has prompted a debate among scholars and academics regarding the "Asianness" of a specific set of human rights.

In the Philippines, questions arise as to why a predominantly pro-life Catholic nation does not have a majority of its citizens protesting against the EJKs during former President Rodrigo Duterte's "war on drugs". Upon winning the election in 2016, President Duterte launched a campaign against illegal drugs called "Oplan Double Barrel" (Marquez, 2016), which became known as one of the deadliest and most aggressive anti-drug campaigns in the world (Lamchek, & Jopson, 2024; Tusalem, 2024). According to the data of the Philippine National Police (PNP), as relayed to the media (Bueza, 2016), Duterte's war on drugs has claimed 4,726 deaths from July 1, 2016, to the third week of October 2016. Of this number, the PNP indicates 1,725 drug personalities were killed in police operations, and 3,001 were victims of vigilante-style or EJKs as of October 23, 2016.

The number of deaths from EJKs has gained global attention and polarized the archipelago. However, this polarization was most apparent on social media platforms, where Filipinos express their support or dissent for a political party or the government (Aperocho, 2023). Among the platforms, Facebook is the most used and the most dominant social media in the Philippines, as it has become an effective platform for communication, culture and expression (Tayco, Tubog, & Zamora, 2024; Meltwater, 2023, as cited in Aperocho, 2023). Furthermore, it has been considered a key element to Duterte's 2016 election victory, regarded as the "first social media election in the Philippines" (Sinpeng, Gueorguiev, & Arugay, 2020).

In the age of social media, Duterte's policies have reached a broad global audience with mixed reviews. While the United Nations and other international agencies condemned the violations of human rights and the rule of law under the drug war, this policy of violence has also attracted high public approval and tolerance throughout

Duterte's tenure as President (Galvez, 2018), even from Filipinos themselves (Javate de Dios, 2022; Lamchek, & Jopson, 2024).

This phenomenon was not limited to the Philippines. Other Asian countries have seen a comeback of authoritarian populism or a "democratic backsliding", though not always seen by Asians in a negative light (Dressel, & Bonoan, 2024). Among examples of Asian values in governance, the case of Singapore, under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew, rose to become the shining beacon of the success of an iron-fisted approach to governance in pursuit of development. However, while primarily authoritarian Asian leaders used the island-state's economic success as a model for governing their countries, this style met backlash and accusations of human rights violations – mostly coming from leaders and institutions in the West, who declared themselves prime movers and advocates of universal human rights.

Asian governments objected to Western hegemonic thought imposed on their Asian values. As Said (2003) stated in his book *Orientalism*, the West has inscribed its views of the East and uses them to inform its manner of dominating the East. Most scholars of Said's persuasion believe that this paradigm of the West has brought much conflict to countries it has colonized, left to self-govern and then "lecture on" every time their former colonies "stray" from their Western-prescribed methods, especially regarding human rights.

As for the Philippines, there are many explanations for why EJKs seem to be a way of life in the country, given that the republic has had a reputation for heightened EJKs since former President Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law on September 21, 1972. Yet, the tolerance to the blatant disregard for human life and due process during this regime coexisting with the assertion of freedom of expression and usage of American governmental, educational, business and transactional systems begs the question: What ideology is at play here?

The method used in this study involves a discourse-historical approach (DHA) to the human rights articulations (ideologies) of four political actors vis-à-vis EJKs on Facebook. Wodak (2015) emphasizes that DHA introduces a historical perspective to CDA. Fairclough (1992) supports this claim that any approach to discourse and social change should serve as "a method for historical analysis". Thus, this study examines the discourses that define a pivotal moment in Philippine history.

Facebook, as the space of discourse, was chosen because it is a very public platform that may be considered a barometer of public opinion and sentiment given its "like" and "share" applications and a new space for harnessing power to increase social status and ideology through user reach and engagement (Geukjian, 2013). Users who spend hours on the platform may be persuaded to conform to ways of thinking about the content they most regularly consume (Bourdieu, & Habitus, n.d.; Speller, 2011).

This extraordinary power of Facebook has significantly been advantageous in elections, galvanizing people for mass actions and propagating particular ideologies. Furthermore, Facebook contains real-world arguments viable for discourse analysis, and status posts are considered deliberations under political discourse. As Van Dijk (1997) argues, political actors are part of a political process, and their public discourse has political consequences.

These articulations or corpus belong to the Western or Oriental concept of human rights. This paper turns to Li's (1996) essay "Asian Values" and the Universality of Human Rights to make such categorization of Western and Oriental thoughts and, therefore, develop a clearly defined basis by which to begin a CDA and PDA. Li (1996) posed four claims describing juxtapositions between the Western and Eastern views of human rights.

In Claim I, Li (1996) indicates that rights are "culturally specific because the said rights materialize in the situation of specific economic, social, political and cultural conditions". Furthermore, Li (1996) claims that conditions in the West that forced the institutionalization of human rights do not exist in Asia.

For Claim II, Li (1996) writes that collective welfare outweighs the interests of individuals within the community. This claim emphasizes that in Asian culture, citing Singapore's view of the community as "a key survival value", the community is significant as opposed to the West, which puts value on the importance of the individual. Li (1996) further asserts that, according to the Asian perspective, the rule of law and human rights possess an individualistic nature that can potentially disrupt Asia's social framework.

As for Claim III, Li (1996) writes that civil and political rights are subordinate to social and economic rights in Asia. She opines, citing China, that civil and political rights are not meaningful to the impoverished multitudes who live in unstable conditions. Such rights will be extended to them only after their basic needs are met. Moreover, Asian leaders make their constituents understand that economic development will be achieved if leaders possess the authority to curtail individuals' political and civil rights to maintain political stability.

Finally, in Claim IV, Li (1996) argues that the determination of rights falls within national sovereignty. China exemplifies this stance when, in 1995, the Asian giant opposed and protested the hegemonic acts of “some countries” and their double standards in applying human rights to other nations. China also complained about the West imposing its pattern on others or engaging in the internal affairs of other nations under the pretext of “human rights”.

Li (1996), however, makes it clear that despite the dichotomy between Asian and Western exceptionalisms, some aspects of universal human rights have been accepted in many countries in the East. Consequently, circumstances unique to Asia have led to the formation of those claims for “Asian views”, and such views also face peculiar dilemmas. Li (1996) believes that “cross-cultural conversation”, or what Freeman (1996) calls a “cosmopolitan” approach, can make the human rights universality issue less problematic. Fairclough, and Fairclough (2013) argue that political discourse is primarily argumentative and chiefly involves practical reasoning or practical argumentation.

The general theoretical framework for this paper draws from Stuart Hall’s definition of ideology as “the mental framework – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation – which different classes and social groups deploy to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works” (Griffin, 2012).

This study analyzes the articulations of four Filipino political articulators on EJKs that reflect the dissonance between Oriental and Western views of human rights, illustrating a predilection for socioeconomic progress and community safety over individual political and civil rights. Using CDA, PDA and the DHA, the study emphasizes how historical experiences, cultural specificity and national sovereignty lead to a more nuanced approach that this study calls ‘culturally attuned rights and empowerment’ (CARE) to address EJKs while respecting international human rights standards and the local context of the Philippines.

2. Objectives

This paper has the following objectives:

1. Determine how four political actors in the Philippines view human rights, specifically EJKs, with Facebook as the space for such discourse;
2. Analyze how Asian or Western ideologies disseminate through these status posts (discourse fragments);
3. Locate unique Filipino perspectives on human rights and EJKs in the era of Duterte; and
4. Analyze if the political actors embrace solution-based discourses to address EJKs.

3. Materials and Methods

This paper analyzes the discourses by focusing on particular components of CDA and PDA from the perspective of Fairclough, and Fairclough (2013) and PDA from Van Dijk (2006). Notably, DHA is part of the Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) framework, which used to be called CDA. It is most appropriate for this paper because of its emphasis on a historical dimension that allows for explorations of how discourses of the present are influenced by historical legacies and how past discourses have a bearing on contemporary political and social realities. DHA, therefore, tracks how discourses change over time and connect to particular periods or historical events – in the case of the Duterte administration’s emphasis on EJKs to solve crime and other social problems.

The paper adopts Schneider’s (2013) process and manner of analysis of the CDA wherein the process begins by establishing the context and exploring the production process of the source material which in this case are the articulations of the political actors on Facebook. This includes understanding the social and historical background, the articulators’ affiliations, and the medium and genre of the text. The next steps involve preparing the material, coding it to identify key themes, examining the structure and individual statements, and identifying cultural references and linguistic mechanisms. Once the data is collected, it is interpreted to uncover the discourse’s meaning and implications. Finally, the findings are presented to convey the significance of the analysis effectively.

The categorization of discourse fragments as Western or Oriental claims is based on Li’s (1996) essay “‘Asian Values’ and the Universality of Human Rights”. Blommaert, and Bulcaen (2000) argue that “The way in which discourse is being represented, re-spoken or rewritten sheds light on the emergence of new orders of discourse, struggles over normativity, attempts at control, and resistance against regimes of power.” This discourse model is built upon a theory of ideological processes in society and is viewed in terms of changes in processes of

hegemony. Moreover, the study employs a CDA, given its unique view of the association between language and society and the relationship between analysis and the practices analyzed (Blommaert, & Bulcaen, 2000; Wodak, 2015). Fairclough's (1992) focus on CDA's attention to concrete textual features differentiates it from other approaches, such as Foucault's (2010) approach in *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, which focuses on power relationships in society as expressed through language and practices.

Fairclough, and Fairclough (2013) define PDA as the consideration of political discourse primarily as argumentative discourse by facilitating the integration of critical discourse-analytical concepts with the analytical framework of argumentation theory. Thus, in this case, the deliberation is in the context of persistent disagreement or contending narratives based on Western or Oriental ideologies regarding EJKs and the fundamental question of "what to do". As for this paper's choice of articulators in Facebook, Van Dijk's (1997) definition is used, wherein politicians are not the partakers in the political domain because from the interactional point of view of discourse analysis, the citizens, the "masses", the people, the public and other categories or groups are included if politics and its discourse are located in the public sphere which, in this case, is Facebook.

3.1 Selection of Articulators

The four articulators for this paper were chosen for their distinctive discourses on EJKs and human rights and their number of followers as an indicator of engaging the public with their thoughts. This situation may reflect public sentiment regarding EJKs and human rights. However, in no way does the number of likes determine the acceptability or non-acceptability of EJKs. This consideration relates to one of the many issues the articulators discuss on their Facebook pages. Moreover, the popularity of the Facebook articulator was determined by the number of likes and the articulator's consistency in posting.

The articulators whose status posts or discourse fragments were analyzed on November 15, 2016, include:

1. Sass Rogando Sasot, 34, a Masters' student in International Relations at Leiden University College in The Hague, views EJKs in a favorable light and has 188,435 likes on a Facebook blog page bearing her name.
2. Walden Bello, 71, a human rights activist and former congressman who called for an end to EJKs, has 4,999 friends on his Facebook page (International Sociological Association, 2024).
3. Martin Andanar, 42, the Presidential Communications Secretary of the Philippines, has 83,889 likers on his Facebook community page (Lacanilao, 2016).
4. Perfecto Yasay Jr., 69, the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, has 4,772 friends on his Facebook page (Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation, 2017).

3.2 Discursive Event

This paper uses the synchronous analysis with the Philippine Senate hearings on EJKs as the discursive event. The Senate held hearings on EJKs on August 22, 2016, and October 18, 2016. Discourses subjected to analysis were statuses posted on Facebook two weeks before the hearings and two days after they ended. The timeline of the discursive event was chosen because the issue of EJKs was relevant and came during the "peak season" for the articulators to engage with netizens. Without the Philippine Senate hearings on EJKs, other public concerns would have overshadowed the problem. The publication of these results adds to the studies on the history of human rights in the Philippines.

3.3 Collating Data for Discourse Analysis

The selection of status posts or discourse fragments of the four Facebook articulators was limited to posts that used the words "extrajudicial killings", its acronym "EJKs", "human rights", and its acronym "HR". These words, appended to the names of the Facebook articulators in this study, were then pasted to the Facebook search application to identify posts containing these words, effectively acting as a collating mechanism to choose data for discourse analysis. A total of 73 status posts were analyzed (39 for the Western Claim [WC] and 34 for the Oriental Claim [OC]).

The status posts, or discourse fragments, were then categorized based on Li's (1996) four claims on the "Asian View" of human rights, which were also juxtaposed with the Western concept:

- OC1 (Rights are "culturally specific") vis-à-vis WC1 (Rights are universal)
- OC2 (Community takes precedence over individuals) vis-à-vis WC2 (primacy of the individual)

- OC3 (Social and economic rights take precedence over civil and political rights) vis-à-vis WC3 (civil and political rights are paramount)
- OC4 (Rights are a matter of national sovereignty) vis-à-vis WC4 (the West is the “international police” of human rights).

4. Results

4.1 Western Claims

Table 1 Frequency of Western Claims, Discourse Fragments and Number of Discourse Fragments of Facebook Articulators

WESTERN CLAIM (WC)	Sasot	Bello	Andanar	Yasay	TOTAL
WC 1	2	7	0	1	10
WC 2	0	9	0	1	10
WC 3	3	9	1	1	14
WC 4	0	0	0	0	0
Total No. of Articulations	5	25	1	3	34

The four articulators concerning Western Claims indicated they believe in the essentiality of civil and political rights, as evidenced by 14 posts. This result is followed by WC1 (rights are universal) and WC2 (individual takes precedence over the community, which had ten posts each. For WC4 (the West is the “international police” of human rights), the analysis identified five posts or discourse fragments. Below is the analysis and discussion of the 39 discourse fragments categorized as Western Claims.

4.1.1 Western Claim 3 (Civil and Political Rights Are Paramount): Stop the killings and give due process vs. protect the victims and kill the perpetrators

Bello contended that the killings will not solve the drug problem, and supporters of EJKs and the administration behind it must be reprimanded. His nine posts articulated that the Philippines is most likely the only country with an official policy of killing drug addicts rather than rehabilitating them. With this position, he called for an end to the EJKs and for a lawful anti-drug campaign that champions human rights by respecting due process and prioritizing rehabilitation.

Yasay also opposed human rights violations and EJKs but cautioned that killings could be justified under police force engagement, citing the necessity of a “shoot-to-kill order” based on the rules of engagement followed by the police force.

Meanwhile, Andanar’s (n.d.) only post on WC3 centered on his concern for the due process of law after a mayor and suspected drug lord died in his prison cell because he resisted police arrest.

Only Sasot (n.d.) openly supported EJKs linked to the drug wars, with three WC3 discourse fragments invoking freedom of speech pluralism, tolerance and broadmindedness in safeguarding the rights of victims and potential victims of drug addicts.

4.1.2 Western Claim 1 (Rights Are Universal): Human rights are for all vs. rights is a contested concept borne out of real struggles

Bello and Sasot disagreed over universal rights, with Bello posting seven posts to uphold human rights and the basic tenets that go with them. Bello posted his speech in a meeting of a coalition, calling for the Defense of Human Rights and Dignity Movement (iDEFEND), where he emphasizes that the aggressive campaign against illegal drugs, which he describes as “violent”, would not yield effective results. In addition, he further criticizes it as a “war against the poor” and highlighted that resorting to killings only addresses the drug problem’s symptoms rather than its underlying causes. The rest of Bello’s six posts maintained the advocacy of upholding democratic ideals of human rights and the observance of due process.

On the other hand, Sasot (n.d.) interprets human rights differently. In two posts, she discusses how human rights is an essentially contested concept shaped by real struggles, highlighting that non-state actors like drug addicts may also commit violations.

4.1.3 Western Claim 2 (The Individual Takes Precedence Over the Community): No to EJKs, yes to humane treatment

Bello posted nine discourse fragments that, among others, called for an end to EJKs and the rehabilitation of drug addicts thrice. Meanwhile, Yasay only articulated his firm opposition to EJKs once.

4.1.4 Western Claim 4 (The West is the "international police" of human rights): The West should not meddle or destabilize

Except for Sasot, the other articulators had no status posts on WC 4. Sasot's five discourse fragments on WC 4 are presented in three separate status posts. The first suggests that US Ambassador Philip S. Goldberg is meddling in the internal affairs of the Philippines. The second relates to Sen. Leila M. de Lima's calling on the ICC to intervene in the human rights situation in the Philippines, describing it as destabilization. In a third status post, Sasot made three statements. First, she mentioned that external legitimacy is fragile as no head of State has condemned Duterte. Still, multilateral organizations like the United Nations (UN), international civil organizations such as Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International, and global public opinion do not support him. Second, she stated that the more the "global public's heart breaks", the more multilateral organizations and international civil organizations would mobilize heads of State to condemn Duterte. Lastly, she noted that anti-Duterte forces effectively utilized this situation to shape global opinion and mobilize worldwide sentiments against the President.

4.2 Oriental Claims

Table 2 Frequency of Oriental Claims, Discourse Fragments and Number of Discourse Fragments of Facebook Articulators

ORIENTAL CLAIM (OC)	Sasot	Bello	Andanar	Yasay	TOTAL
OC 1	0	1	0	2	3
OC 2	3	0	2	4	9
OC 3	0	0	1	2	3
OC 4	13	0	2	4	19
Total No. of Articulations	17	1	5	12	34

Of the 34 discourse fragments under the Oriental Claims, the strongest response related to "rights being a matter of national sovereignty" (OC4), with 19 status posts. This result was followed by OC2 (community takes precedence over the individual) with nine posts. There were three posts: OC3 (social and economic rights take precedence over civil and political rights) and OC1 (rights are "culturally specific"). Below is the analysis and discussion of the discourse fragments categorized as Oriental Claims.

4.2.1 OC 4 (Rights are a Matter of National Sovereignty): No to interferences, destabilization, and double standards in human rights violations

Sasot dominated OC4 with 13 posts, criticizing various world leaders and organizations for meddling in Philippine internal affairs. She targeted figures against Duterte's policies, such as US Ambassador Goldberg and US President Barack Obama, as well as entities such as the US government, UN, HRW, the International Criminal Court (ICC) and Amnesty International. Sasot's main concerns concerned sovereignty issues, external interference in President Duterte's governance and alleged US double standards in human rights. Furthermore, she cited "destabilization" attempts of the US media and government and "foreign interferences resulting in the retarding of the Philippines" political maturity.

Similarly, Andanar, in two OC4 discourse fragments, requested readers to help the President against "Bias (sic) international media" by supporting the "Stop Destabilizing the Philippines" Campaign. He also reposted a news report on Senator Tito Sotto praising the PNP's anti-drug campaign and warned against the international media's focus on EJKs.

Meanwhile, Yasay's four OC4 statements support Duterte's anti-drug campaign on the premise that it sought to improve Filipino lives. He argued that this war should not be evaluated solely based on international norms established and imposed by former colonizers, who are equally culpable for human rights violations. Additionally, he urged Filipinos to liberate themselves from Western-influenced inferiority complexes.

Bello did not contribute to OC2, reflecting his Western-oriented perspective.

4.2.2 OC 2 (The Community Takes Precedence Over the Individual): The war on drugs is to make communities safe

Yasay contributed four segments on OC2. First, he emphasized the “shoot-to-kill order on sight” for drug suspects, aligning with police rules of engagement. Second, he highlighted the profound impact of substance abuse and illegal drug operations, likening them to a dangerous, cancer-threatening society. Yasay stressed the urgent need for strict measures, political will and determination to eradicate this menace, which Duterte exemplified.

His remaining segments echoed Duterte’s stance on human rights, emphasizing that it pertains to the fundamental rights of a desperate and oppressed population who have become victims of criminals and law violators. Yasay underscored Duterte’s declared objective — a significant backing to his winning 2016 presidential bid—to eradicate illegal drugs to ensure the safety, security and productivity of Philippine communities.

Sasot’s three discourse fragments on OC2 focused on Filipinos’ desire for international validation, the importance of safe spaces free from domestic and drug-related violence, and the need for a president who can end narco-politics. She specifically emphasized its benefits for women and their children’s future, which can only be achieved by controlling and defeating the “monsters” that are *shabu* addicts.

Andanar’s two discourse fragments on OC2 praised achievements under Duterte’s administration, including reduced crime rates and socioeconomic progress due to police successes in combating drug-related crime. He also cautioned senators to support these changes or risk public disapproval and advised readers not to be swayed solely by the issue of EJKs.

Once more, Bello did not respond to OC2, maintaining his Western mindset.

4.2.3 OC 3 (Social and Economic Rights Take Precedence Over Civil and Political Rights): Government has to be tough against illegal drugs and offenders for the sake of national progress OC3 has three discourse fragments: two from Yasay and one from Andanar.

Yasay focused on the rampant illegal drug operations and activities in the Philippines, requiring swift and resolute action characterized by toughness, political will and determination. Anything less would reveal our weakness and incompetence in combating this deadly menace. Such inadequacies would only encourage and prolong the presence of illegal drugs, which offenders would exploit, hindering our national development and prosperity efforts. Other posts indicate it is crucial to perceive and comprehend the war against illegal drugs and the government’s initiatives for national progress within the context of the urgent needs and priorities of the people while adhering to the legal framework and prioritizing the national interest.

Concerning OC3, Andanar questions Sen. Drilon’s desire to get rid of Duterte when he should be happy with the socioeconomic gains brought about by the President’s war on drugs and criminality. Sasot and Bello have no discourses on OC3.

4.2.4 OC 1 (Rights Are “Culturally Specific”): Postcolonial sentiments

Yasay has two posts corresponding to human rights, which must be addressed from the viewpoint of the Filipinos’ urgent needs, aspirations, and national history and not through the lens of its former colonizer. Furthermore, he highlights Duterte’s stance that the fight against illegal drugs and the government’s efforts for national progress and advancement should be viewed and comprehended considering the pressing needs and priorities of the people, in line with the established laws and the paramount national interest.

Bello’s post on OC 1 indicated, “We must look at sociological rather than generic factors to explain people’s behavior”.

5. Discussion

5.1 Political Discourse Analysis (Modalities)

The articulators’ decisions and actions regarding the EJKs must be identified, thus initiating a PDA. This research looked at the modalities or any statements on EJK and human rights using “should” or “could be” and “such phrases that may create a sense of urgency, serve as a call to action, or imply hypothetical scenarios”. The following results indicate that sovereignty is a non-interference in internal affairs, there should be an end to judicial killings, destabilization activities must be stopped, and some solutions have been provided to end the EJKs.

5.1.1 Sovereignty is Non-Interference in Internal Affairs

In analyzing how “Asian” or “Western” ideologies emerge in the discourse fragments, the strongest arguments for sovereignty and non-interference come from pro-Duterte political actors Sasot, Yasay and Andanar. The most vocal with their modalities are government men Andanar, who had three discourse fragments, and Yasay, with four.

Andanar called on the public to support Duterte by joining the “Stop Destabilise (sic) in the Philippines” campaign and two calls on Senator Franklin Drilon to stop criticizing Duterte and help in the change process. Both calls were made in September, 2016.

Yasay called on the international community on September 4, 2016, to understand the “thematic message” of Duterte in his fight against illegal drugs, extremist violence, lawlessness and corruption. The thematic message Yasay referred to was Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano’s Open Letter to President Barack Obama dated September 4, 2016, concerning the possibility of a meeting between the two presidents even after Duterte disparaged the American President. In the letter, Cayetano asked that Obama should not judge Duterte for his actions or his “sometimes politically incorrect words” and that the former US President should also understand that the Philippines deserves its own national identity and be given a chance for an independent foreign policy.

This particular “thematic message” ties in with his three modalities, all made on September 10, 2016, where he stated, “We must continue to liberate ourselves from the mindset of being subservient, inferior, weak and reliant, which is even more humiliating and incapacitating during these times, but we call ourselves independent, sovereign, and free”. This statement was followed by, “We cannot be forever stunted as little brown brothers or wards of any world power. We have to grow up towards development and maturity and deserve our hard-fought liberty and right of self-determination as an equal of any nation”. Finally, “The concern for human rights must not be addressed by arbitrarily imposing international norms created mainly by those nations whose shameful colonial adventures of the past show a ruthless and cruel record of human rights violations against people they derogated as savages that included the native Filipinos.” However, the discourse fragments on self-governance free from external interference, and the Facebook posts’ emphasis on standing up for national identity and self-determination often juxtapose with posts calling for an end to destabilization attempts.

5.1.2 End Judicial Killings

Only Bello called for this action by taking advantage of the International Day of Peace on September 21, 2016, to demand that the Duterte administration end EJKs. He also asked the President to respect human rights and due process, desist from subverting the separation of powers and uphold democratic processes instead of curtailing them. In the same post, he called on Filipinos to join him in the “defense of our rights, our liberties, and our democracy”.

Pro-Duterte Yasay, like Pro-West articulator Bello, also stated that EJKs should be stopped with reservations. Yasay agrees to a “shoot to kill order on sight” for as long as these are allowed in the rules of engagement. Sasot implies that *shabu* addicts, who she called monsters, must be “contained and defeated” to protect future victims of drug offenders.

5.1.3 Stop Destabilization

Pro-Duterte political actors also criticize the West’s double standards in human rights violations and attempts at destabilization. Regarding the issue of human rights being an issue of sovereignty, Sasot had only one discourse fragment on October 15, 2016, which was a call for the international community to “stop the United States from destabilizing (sic) in the Philippines to oust a democratically elected leader and replace Duterte with their poodle”. With this, Yasay urges Filipinos to overcome their inferiority complex with the West and view the drug war through the lens of the Filipinos’ urgent needs, aspirations and national history, not of its former colonizer.

5.1.4 Solutions Offered to End the EJKs

The Facebook discourses of the four political actors do not offer concrete solutions to the drug menace but are more preoccupied with explaining or justifying the EJKs in the Philippines. The Philippines is a predominantly pro-life Catholic nation and follows the Western belief and value system, having been colonized by Spain for 300 years and then by the United States for 48 years. Thus, it is considered a phenomenon that

Filipinos do not aggressively and collectively voice their disapproval over the thousands of EJKs upon Duterte's assumption of power.

Of the four articulators, only Bello had an apparent discourse fragment on stopping the EJKs in a post on August 12, 2016, before the Senate hearing. He indicated the critical element of the anti-drug campaign should be addressing poverty, affording people the opportunity for social mobility and enabling them to live a life with dignity.

5.1.5 Other Modalities

Moreover, pro-Duterte articulators believe that an authoritarian government and a war on drugs are necessary to ensure communities remain safe and the nation progresses. These positions were found in the articulations on Oriental Claims that put the community and social and economic rights above the individual and his civil and political rights. Andanar, for instance, posted that the Philippine National Police has to be admired for their achievements in arresting drug suspects, besides a photo of a celebrity arrested for having drugs on her person.

Furthermore, on the first day of the Senate hearing on EJKs, Sasot suggested that Sen. de Lima consider including drug cartels in her operational definitions related to the drug trade vis-à-vis EJKs, implying that drug cartels may also be behind the EJKs. This post was made on August 22, 2016, on the first day of the Senate hearing on EJKs.

6. Conclusion

This study illustrates an idiosyncratic worldview shaped by a combination of historical, sociopolitical and cultural factors that provides an inclusive analysis of the Filipino perspective on EJKs and human rights. The findings reveal that based on the articulators' discourses, there is a complex interaction where the strong Oriental claims that emphasize cultural specificity, the importance of national sovereignty and the precedence of social and economic rights become offset by Western claims that focus on the primacy of political and civil rights and the universality of human rights. This situation shows the significance of cultural relativism, which states that human rights must be understood through a culturally attuned lens (Boas, 1938).

In the case of the Philippines, and only from the standpoint of this particular study, this may well be conceptualized as "Filipino cultural pragmatism in human rights" – a foundation for comprehending these complex and dynamic forces. This situation requires cultivating a careful balance that engages with global human rights principles and integrates local values. To address EJKs, this researcher proposes CARE or "culturally attuned rights and empowerment", which advocates for integrating historical and cultural contexts into human rights policies and discourses in the Philippines, other parts of Asia and the world with similar contexts.

The valuable insights to be gleaned from the interplay between human rights and cultural relativism in this study is that the discourse on human rights and extrajudicial killings in the Philippines is characterized by a fundamental tension between universal human rights principles and culturally specific, sovereignty-based perspectives. This tension reflects a broader struggle over the nature of rights and the balance between individual and community welfare. On one hand, there is a strong push for the protection of civil and political rights, emphasizing the need for due process, humane treatment, and the cessation of extrajudicial killings. This perspective aligns with global human rights norms, advocating for accountability and the rule of law. On the other hand, there is a counter-narrative that prioritizes social and economic rights, community safety, and national progress, which justifies strict measures, including extrajudicial killings, in the war on drugs. This view is often rooted in postcolonial sentiments, which reject external interference and assert national sovereignty, arguing that local contexts and cultural specificities should shape the understanding and implementation of human rights. Thus, the debate is not just about the protection of rights but also about who defines these rights and how they should be enforced, revealing deep-seated conflicts over power, identity, and justice in the Philippines.

It should be noted that this study is somewhat limited by the focus on discourse analysis and therefore, future research in this field should incorporate other theories, methodologies and a more significant population of articulators to capture the wide range of perspectives and experiences regarding how local contexts mold perspectives on human rights and contribute to a more context-sensitive and inclusive approach to civil liberties.

7. References

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