

***Desaparecidos* in the Philippines and Rodrigo Duterte's Drug War**

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### **Introduction: Minorities and Minority Histories**

A “minority” is someone who has been, in one way or another, “othered” in the historical and current context. In the current paradigm, a minority is usually referred to as someone who does not fit the constructs of “whiteness”, while both otherness and privilege are based on someone’s proximity to this whiteness as the current system is still based upon the rest of the world’s relations to the West. In “Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts”, Chakrabarty describes a “minority history” as the brand of history that expresses “the struggle for inclusion and representation that are characteristic of liberal and representative democracies.” (Chakrabarty 97) However, he also mentioned that definitions of what history actually is cannot necessarily be so easily defined. While the intent of those interested in minority histories ask themselves “How do you write the histories of suppressed groups?” or “How do you construct a narrative of a group or class that has not left its own sources?” (Chakrabarty 98), there is the condition of any historical fact to be “rationally defensible”. But this requirement may discard indigenous belief systems, which served as motivations for many, particularly anti-colonial, historical events as irrelevant “myth”. The requirement of “rationally defensible” claims, as a conduit to so-called “workable truths”, is, then, key to the historian’s pursuit of objectivity. Chakrabarty adds that subaltern pasts “act as a supplement to the historian’s pasts” and, as a result, “enable history, the discipline, to be what it is and yet at the same time help to show what its limits are,” allowing historians to distance themselves from “the idea that everything can be historicized or that one should *always* historicize.” (Chakrabarty 112) However, this objectivity is subject to Western ideas of how the world works which Chakrabarty cites as “the limited good that modern historical consciousness is.” (Chakrabarty 112)

The term, “minor”, itself “describes relationships to the past that the ‘rationality’ of the historian’s methods necessarily makes ‘minor’ or ‘inferior,’ as something ‘nonrational’ in the course of, and as a result of, its own operation.” (Chakrabarty 101) Thus, a strictly “objective” lens and adherence to historical convention limits the historian to anthropologize a subject of study, especially those who can be considered to have “minority” or “subaltern” pasts, in a way that mainly objectifies them. Take the Santal people as an example who claim that “I did as my god told me to do” in explaining the reason for their rebellion. While many historians claim this truth to fail as a “rationally defensible” claim, it’s important to also ask questions such as: “Does the Santal help us to understand a principle by which we also live in certain instances?” (Chakrabarty 108) Questions framed in this manner helps us to analyze the Santals’ motivations for revolt as it allows us to understand them as contemporary beings.

Such a discourse essentially discards the traditional “subject-object” relationship and, as a result, empathy with their personhood allows the Santal to have their own sense of “modernity”. For instance, the study of the histories of medieval Europe do not discard pagan belief systems as “myth”, but rather, they are legitimized as motivations behind the actions taken by these historical peoples. The same status of legitimacy should, thus, be given to minority histories, whether they be meticulously documented or orally passed down amongst generations.

### **The Minority History of Colonialism in the Philippines**

The Philippines is a modern conglomerate of indigenous peoples who populated what were organized (by the Spanish) as the Philippine Islands to readily and more easily control an island grouping that they had conquered. Colonial rule over disparate land masses was the basis for the unification of the neighboring countries of: Indonesia, Malaysia, Timor-Leste, Brunei and Singapore as singular entities rather than city-states as many of these lands were before

colonization. Centuries of colonialism by the Spanish (1521-1898) and the Americans (1898-1946) created a path dependency that still favors the West and the more politically influential Asian countries. For instance, the civil and common law institutions of the Philippines are derivative of the American judicial system and the largest trading partners of the Philippines are: China, the United States, and Japan. (The World Factbook) Thus, the Pilipino cultural mentality became rampant and has resulted in various forms of: colorism and the glorification of Eurocentric physical characteristics, classism and racism, the destruction of integral aspects of indigenous Pilipino culture, and privilege among certain groups.

After its occupation of the newly sovereign Philippines (with whom they allied themselves during the Spanish-American War), The United States considered the Philippines to be their Little Brown Brother, half devil and child. This was the inspiration of the infamous poem “The White Man’s Burden” by the Briton, Rudyard Kipling, which showed support for the Philippine-American War so that the United States could follow the lead of their European counterparts in creating an American empire. The ramifications of Western influence involved the imposition of the American colonial education system that emphasized Christianity and Western customs. (News Junkie Post) As a result of centuries of colonialism, machismo was enforced upon men, women were forced to be subservient, and queerness was essentially banned. Any deviation from this norm, as a function of survival, meant social estrangement while the concept of shame called “Hiya” was utilized by Pilipinos as “a defense mechanism for Pilipinos to police each other to stay within line and to survive the conditions imposed by their colonial masters. (Casasola) Centuries of colonial rule created a path dependence that resulted in Pilipinos keeping colonial values, acculturating colonial mentality, and keeping the colonial education system in the Philippines. (League for the Fifth International) All of these factors, alongside

endemic poverty and a relative lack of economic opportunities, have contributed to the colonial path dependence that has resulted in government instability and, thus, relatively low state capacity to provide for the needs of Pilipinos in the Philippines.

### **The Definition of Extrajudicial Executions (EJE)**

A current, and recurring, topic regarding the Philippines today are extrajudicial executions and *desaparecidos* (the disappeared). However, it is best to understand what constitutes extrajudicial executions and *desaparecidos* before going in-depth about these occurrences in the Philippines. Edy Kaufman and Patricia Weiss Fagen defined extrajudicial executions as not only “assassinations for the purpose of transferring political power, but also – and today overwhelmingly so.... assassinations for the purpose of retaining such political power.” (81) They also stated that “Over the past decades extrajudicial execution has become the tool of governments with precarious futures” and that “EJE governments have disposed of thousands of real or imaginary political enemies.” (Kaufman 81) Kaufman and Fagen also stated the following regarding extrajudicial executions around the world:

“A few selected figures provide a clearer understanding of the magnitude of EJE in all its forms: 25,000 politically induced murders in Guatemala since 1966; 7,000 murders of males between the ages of 15 and 50 of the Acholi and Langi ethnic groups in Uganda between 1972 and 1977 (out of an estimated 100,000 assassinations in that country, according to the International Commission of Jurists); between 5,000 and 30,000 murders in Chile following the 1973 military coup; and between 8,000 and 20,000 *desaparecidos* (missing persons and murdered victims in Argentina since 1974. Thousands of similar cases abound in Kampuchea, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, and other countries. (81)

Despite the global nature of the issue of extrajudicial executions and disappearances by governments around the world, these cases are often “treated rather as fragmented descriptive accounts within the coverage of human rights violations in individual countries.” (Kaufman 82). Kaufman and Fagen also claimed that despite the “wide literature on repression... [EJE]

normally comprehends more general issues such as the implication of military ideologies, national security, economic factors leading to repression, or the reaction to political mobilization and dissent.” (Kaufman 82) But differences between extrajudicial (outside the realm of due process) and summary executions (within due process) may be blurred as summary executions “are carried out on official orders of some kind” (Kaufman 82) and are not necessarily extrajudicial. However, “an officially ordered execution may be considered extrajudicial when the accused is left without legal protections, and the authorities pass death sentences as standard means to rid themselves of undesirable elements of society.” (Kaufman 82) Tolerance of summary and extrajudicial killings in the Philippines has been a hallmark of the Duterte-era thus far.

Kaufman and Fagen stated as of 1981, “the countries in which disappearances have occurred most systematically are Chile, Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Uganda, Equatorial Guinea, and the Philippines.” (83). But while in places like Chile, Argentina and El Salvador, the disappeared have been known to have been kept alive, “In Guatemala and the Philippines the majority of prisoners who are arrested and disappear are found within a few days, murdered.” (Kaufman 83) It was also stated that while:

“large-scale extrajudicial executions have long been associated in the popular mind with countries lacking well-established democratic traditions... among the gravest of EJE offenders are governments which have carried out acts that are forbidden by the domestic legal system. They then attempt to absolve themselves of responsibility for those illegal acts they consider necessary.” (Kaufman 84)

It should be noted that while acts of EJE are seemingly predominant in the Global South, “the genocidal acts of Germany under Hitler, Ku Klux Klan lynchings in the United States, extensive purges of Stalin before and after World War II, and executions of anarchists and POUM

members in Spain by Communist compatriots, provide more than ample evidence that EJE does not necessarily belong to less modern societies with 'non-Western' values." (Kaufman 84-85)

### **How are Extrajudicial Killings Committed?**

There are three types of extrajudicial executions, according to Kaufman and Fagen. The first type involves "no doubt or denial of accountability by the government even if the executions are themselves illegal". (Kaufman 88) They also involve "summary executions ordered by military or political officials for crimes which under national and international law would not warrant a death penalty, and/or those executions carried out without having provided the victim any legal procedures or rights to appeal." (Kaufman 88) In a sense, excessive force is utilized in these government-sanctioned murders, as is the case in the murders of thousands of drug addicts in the Philippines in the hands of the police. The second type of extrajudicial killing "consists of deaths of individuals in official custody in which the governments do not take responsibility for the execution: this category includes EJE during incommunicado detention." (Kaufman 88)

Another form of execution of this type is "carried out by military or police on the claim that the prisoner was killed 'for cause.'" (Kaufman 88) These executions are common in Latin America and were committed by the Philippine Constabulary Police during the Marcos and Corazon Aquino administrations as they attempted to justify such murders as self-defense from "assault" or would release prisoners to be killed by guerilla groups. (Kaufman 88) The third type is "death due to exceptionally poor prison conditions, lack of medical care, or assault by guards."

(Kaufman 88) Governments do not hold themselves accountable for this type of EJE either, and such executions may occur in four difference circumstances:

"1. EJE carried out by law enforcement or military authorities, but not necessarily ordered or even approved by the government, such as the activities of the Philippine PC in Mindanao against the Moslem resistance (the Moro National Liberation Front) and against the New Philippine Army.

2. EJE by different branches of the military, each with its own 'hit list.' This is a typical situation in the period immediately following a violent change in government before the new government develops a strategy for countering opposition groups, or before one branch of the military has asserted its dominance. In Argentina, however, the decentralization of repressive actions among different branches of the military has persisted as a matter of policy.
3. EJE by paramilitary groups, associated to varying degrees with official security agencies. In this category are the death squads which played so prominent a role in Brazil in the 1960s and early 1970s; the various antsubversive groups, such as the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance, whose functions were taken over directly by the military following the 1976 coup, and several rightist groups in Guatemala and El Salvador which murder with impunity but are never the objects of government prosecution. The members of the so-called paramilitary groups are frequently military or police with access to army and police vehicles and equipment.
4. EJE by civilians in the service of local authorities. Sometimes, as in the group called ORDEN in El Salvador, the units are composed mainly of local civilians or paramilitary groups in the service of local power holders, or other private agencies with access to police support. It is difficult to separate this category from the preceding one, because on the one hand the elite themselves often use the official security forces to protect their own private interests, and on the other hand, the officials in power generally deny that they are involved in military activity and allege that it is privately organized. In Honduras, landowners have used the group *Sangre y Fuego* (Fire and Blood) to defend their properties against peasant occupation." (Kaufman 89)

The fourth type of EJE is one "in which no official or unofficial entity assumes responsibility, and in which the victim's fate is kept secret." (Kaufman 90) This category of EJE coincides with disappearance since the majority of the disappeared prisoners are "persons whose arrest has not been officially acknowledged and who have been executed in secret by government forces."

(Kaufman 90) Such occurrences may be the cause of some murders during the Marcos administration due to the blurred line between private armies and the military at the time.

Recently, however, there has been question with Duterte-affiliated police death squads in Davao City to account for the disappearances of citizens during his term as mayor.

### **From Marcos to Ramos: The Dynamics of Government Violence in the Philippines**

Specifying on the forms of group violence, Justus M. van der Kroef identified:

“(1) military task forces; (2) the ‘armies’ controlled by powerful quasi-feudal local political figures, landowners, and businessmen; (3) those armed groups committed to radical change in the Philippine governmental structure, i.e., the Communist NPA guerrillas and the insurgents of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF); and (4) covert police death squads, such as Metropolitan Manila’s secret marshals.”

However, “In the Philippines even though the term private armies customarily tends to be applied only to groups in the second category, all organizations can be seen as operating more or less exclusively in terms of their own private mandate and leaderships and, in any case, outside the formal structure of judicially sanctioned violence.” (van der Kroef 2) Thus, there is a tendency to see judicially sanctioned violence as a result of the inherent corruption that has been endemic in the governance of the Philippines.

Ferdinand Marcos, perhaps the most infamous of the presidents of the Philippines, and the current president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte, hold many similarities in their exertion of power. For instance, “growing Catholic Church dissatisfaction with the increasingly corrupt and abusive Marcos regime” (Rosenberg 1006) matches the highest-ranking member of the Philippines’ Catholic Church’s call to Duterte that “We knock on the consciences of those who kill even the helpless, especially those who cover their faces with bonnets, to stop wasting human lives.” (Deutsche Welle) There was also the fact that despite their “seemingly identical goals of uplifting the poor”, the schism between Marcos and the Church stemmed from “Catholicism’s growing emphasis on social action and liberation after Vatican II collided with the concerns of the Marcos government for political order, national society, and an export-oriented industrialization development program.” (Rosenberg 1006). This proliferated in the implementation of martial law to defend Marcos’s “New Society” program that resulted in a “loss of civil liberties, increased military abuses, and the rise of economic mismanagement and corruption.” (Rosenberg 1006) Similarly, Duterte’s version of the war on drugs parallels this

ongoing battle between the interests of the Church and nationalism in the allowance of extrajudicial murders, implementation of death squads, and potential economic mismanagement associated with the massive funds necessary for the proliferation of Duterteonomics.

But even during President Corazon Aquino's time in office, "[military task forces] number perhaps about two dozen" (van der Kroef 2), though having been created "after Marcos's proclamation of martial law in 1972 and the special sanctions afforded to local military commanders to safeguard national security." (van der Kroef 2) However, "the 1981 repeal of martial law... did not lead to their demise" as "by that time not a few of the groups had evolved into semiautonomous, freewheeling and profitable bands of freebooters, nominally hunting Communists and Muslim secessionists." (van der Kroef 2) These groups were derivative of factions of two branches of the Philippine military: the regular Philippine Army and the Philippine Constabulary, who were instructed to engage in counterinsurgency and intelligence missions against separatists during the Marcos-era. "By 1974, taking a leaf from the early post-World War II anti-Communist campaign, the Marcos government authorized an Integrated Civilian Defense Force... this organization was and still is directed by a specially created office in the Philippine Constabulary" (van der Kroef 4) in 1987.

Furthermore, the Integrated Civilian Defense Force (CHDF) was considered to be "indistinguishable from and lending a spurious legitimacy to the private armies of local tycoons." (van der Kroef 4) The following report was recorded in the province of Negros Occidental at the heart of the sugar industry in the Philippines:

"In Negros, landlords have opted to beef up CHDF forces in their localities in anticipation of widespread social unrest over the sugar industry slump which has idled almost all of the provinces workforce. In fact, militiamen from nearby towns of Escalante, Negros Occidental (province), are now in hot water for firing into the ranks of protesting sugar workers last September 20, along with constabulary soldiers and local policemen. In other Negros towns, paramilitary units are on the

payroll of sugar barons. One such landlord, Angelito Colmenare of Hinigaran, reportedly maintains a sizable CHDF contingent in this sprawling hacienda, aside from his own private army.” (van der Kroef 4)

As the lines between private and military armies were blurred, corruption under the Marcos regime ensued, with “some of these [private armies] run by businessmen, with close ties to the Marcos regime”. (van der Kroef 5) In fact, in some cases, units of the CHDF would operate independently then, after a period of time, relegitimized themselves as “legitimate” CHDF units, rejoining the government payroll with the approval of local Philippine Constabulary commanders. Then, there were cases where CHDF-derivative armed units evolved under the Christian charismatic movement in Mindanao, as a reaction to Islamic self-determination movements in the Moro region.

Some of these Christian charismatic armed groups resided in the Moro region and, together with Muslim separatists, were encouraged to fight local Communist groups in Mindanao, leading to the extrajudicial killings of several members of the NPA and suspected sympathizers. However, these groups were also considered to be cult-like bands who lived in their own world. One group: the “so-called Tadtad cult around Davao (also known as the Corazon Senor, or Heart of the Lord), go forth ‘chanting pig Latin incantations and brandishing poison-tipped knives’ in their war against ‘Communist guerrillas and other ‘enemies of God.’” (van der Kroef 6) However, the Tadtad were only one of 38 such groups in Mindanao while it was noted that many such sects were “proliferating among the nation’s 3.5 million members of ethnic minorities” (van der Kroef 7) at the time. Members of these sects were reportedly “enlisted to do the dirty work of the Philippine military... and have been turned into much-feared armed groups after training by CHDF personnel.” (van der Kroef 7) Such sects would later

proliferate into groups, such as Abu Sayaf, as the economic situation among these ethnic minorities continued to deteriorate over the decades.

However, as tensions with these groups arose just before the fall of the Marcos regime, criticisms of the CHDF reached the forefront of the public's scorn, with the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines accusing "CHDF members of having become 'instruments of terror rather than peace' and demanded that the organization be disbanded unless it was reformed" in July, 1985. Then, on 22 September 1985, there were clashes between local CHDF personnel and militant sugar workers who were laid-off in Escalante in Negros Occidental province where personnel claimed "self-defense, fired into the crowd, leaving twenty-seven dead and thirty wounded." (van der Kroef 7) But, in spite of the CHDF's many criticisms, it had "powerful friends among the regional Philippine elite – estate and business entrepreneurs, most of whom are influential with, if not personally identified with, the political leadership in the Marcos or Aquino regimes." (van der Kroef 7-8)

The wealthy elite of the Philippines, or *hacenderos* (estate owners), "businessmen, and local government officials – have long felt the need for a private security force." (van der Kroef 10) Part of this was the ongoing threat of the National People's Army (NPA) who threatened the lives and capital of the elite, businessmen and local government officials who refused to pay taxes to their organization, clear as the NPA was a major target of these groups. However, when President Corazon Aquino ascended into office, many pro-Marcos local officials were dismissed (even if they were publicly elected). Their ensuing resentment to this "stiffened the local warlords' resistance to disband their private armies" despite the calls of the public, with some dismissed officials in Mindanao "'took to the hills' to carry on an armed gang struggle, linking up with existing Moro secessionist and other bands." (van der Kroef 10) To the present-day,

groups such as: the Moro National Liberation Front, Abu Sayaf, and local gangs continue to fight against the Pilipino establishment due to this history of government repression and association.

Clearly, the human rights situation in the Philippines did not necessarily drastically improve during the transition towards the Aquino administration as, in fact, “the number of political detainees imprisoned during the six years of Aquino’s rule was greater than those held during the last six years of Marcos’s tenure.” (Weissman 253) Additionally, “the military forcefully evacuated villages, and frequently resettled the occupants in strategic hamlets – regimented camps surrounded by barbed wire” in response to the growth of the New People’s Army. (Weissman 254) The human rights situation in the Philippines has also been volatile since after the Aquino administration. Robert Weissman stated that while “human rights [were] improving by certain traditional standards and political space in Manila is widening. In the countryside and in factories, however, human rights abuses continue at levels equivalent to or greater than those of the Aquino years” (251) as a result of the “Philippines 2000” economic development program under the administration of Fidel Ramos. On one hand, government acts that “receive the most international attention” such as: “torture, extrajudicial killings, political imprisonment, and warranties” declined under the Ramos administration. Simultaneously, “elements of Ramos’s economic plan... pitted the government against local communities in a struggle for control over land, natural resources, and factories”. (Weissman 252) This occurred as the military had “conducted large-scale military operations against villagers who have opposed plans to construct hydroelectric dams that would have flooded and displaced their communities” while “soldiers have harassed small-scale gold miners who have worked to prevent multinational mining companies from taking over their land”. (Weissman 252) And with the fact that “paramilitary forces have killed and abused labor organizers” during the Ramos era,

it is evident that there was a “war on the countryside and the corporate and governmental suppression of workers” (Weissman 252) that continues to this day. However, Ramos had also released hundreds of political prisoners and initiated peace negotiations with Muslim insurgents and the NPA due to the belief that “political stability is an essential precondition of his economic development plan, since it facilitates foreign investment and allows the government to concentrate its energies on economic programs.” (Weissman 254-255) With the ultimate goal of economic development, presidents Marcos, Aquino, and Ramos all utilized modes of government-sanctioned violence in the attempt to control the populace (to maintain stability) and usurp the resources necessary in the proliferation of their economic vision. Such tactics have continued with the reign of President Rodrigo Duterte, most evident in the proliferation of the Philippine Drug War.

### **Duterte’s Drug War**

The current president of the Philippines is currently Rodrigo Duterte, the most controversial public figure of the Philippines in the present-day due to his Reagan-inspired drug war. Embodying both anti-colonial tendencies and the ability to implement Western fears upon the Pilipino people, Duterte is an example of a leader who seized power in a complex political environment. On one hand, the legitimacy of the last mainstream president was questioned (former President Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III was charged with corruption) and, on the other, populist tendencies were fueled by fears of violence and drug use in a, still, poverty-stricken country. It was stated by Kaufman and Fagen that in Asia, “countries with less political stability and with ethnic unrest (such as Bangladesh, Malaysia, and the Philippines) ... have witnessed a higher rate of EJE by both the government and the opposition.” (87) This falls in line with the regionalization and colonization of Southeast Asia that left power vacuums throughout the post-

colonial East after these former colonies were formally decolonized. These power vacuums led to the rise of the drug trade in Southeast Asia, resulting in some of the highest amphetamine addiction rates in the world. Regarding Southeast Asian drug policy, it is stated that:

Much of Southeast Asia's drug policy dates to the colonial period. Myanmar's Excise Code of 1905 prohibits anyone from using or even carrying a hypodermic needle without a license. Violators are instructed to pay in rupees – a currency Myanmar stopped using over 60 years ago. Failing to register as a drug user, another outdated practice, is also illegal.

The colonial period was followed by a US-led global drug convention regime that favored prohibition and criminalization, leaving the door open for governments around the world to control their population by means of the war on drugs. Southeast Asian countries have taken interdiction further than most, consistently executing citizens and foreigners for non-violent drug crimes. Three ASEAN countries executed drug offenders last year. Earlier this year, Vietnam sentenced 30 people tied to heroin smuggling to death. (Oakford)

So as the Reagan-led “War on Drugs” reverberated worldwide, a region inundated by the globalization of the drug trade collectively used the “drug problem” to justify extreme sentencing and the extrajudicial murders of private citizens as attempts to legitimize state capacity, policies that remain to the present-day. For instance, 0.05 grams of marijuana can result in years-long jail sentences while 5 grams can result in a life sentence in the Indonesian state of Bali. And in Vietnam, 30 people accused of smuggling heroin were sentenced to death. At the same time, legal practices, such as the legal requirement to register as a drug user in Myanmar, are derivative of colonial policies. (Oakford) Thus, whether it is the military junta of Thailand or Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines it should come as no surprise, in a region plagued with addiction, violence and poverty, that governments would take such measures to find a common enemy to assert their capacity as the authorities of their respective states.

As the mayor of Davao City (elected for seven terms), Duterte condoned the extrajudicial murders of so-called “criminals” without due process utilizing his all-but-confirmed death

squads. Over 700 citizens went missing in Davao City between the years of 2005 and 2008, with most presumed dead. Not only that, but then-Mayor Duterte authorized police forces to shoot, on sight, “looters” after Typhoon Haiyan. While the city was ranked the “fourth safest place” in the world, based on data from numbeo.com, the extreme policies of brutality by both the police and vigilantes under Duterte had already resulted in international outcry. (Law) Nationwide, between July 1 and November 3, 2016, about 1,790 suspected individuals were killed by the police while an additional 3,001 suspected individuals were killed by vigilantes between July 1 and September 4, 2016. Compare this to 68 police-involved murders between January 1 and June 15, 2016 when President Benigno Aquino was still in power. (Santos)

Based on Kaufman and Fegan’s analysis of extrajudicial killings worldwide, it is clear that Duterte’s policies are permissive to extrajudicial executions against criminals and marginals for the purpose of their eradication. Such occurrences had also happened in Brazil, with the Brazilian police having earned itself “a reputation for ‘protecting; decent citizens from crime by killing criminals and petty thieves and leaving their bodies as examples to other would-be offenders” (Kaufman 93) in a manner similar to Duterte’s death squads. In Guatemala, as well, “well-to-do citizens depended on death squad violence to protect themselves from criminals.” (Kaufman 93) In both cases, however, “death squads not only were tolerated by broad sectors of the population but also appreciated by them as being more effective than the regular police” (Kaufman 93) as was initially the case during the rise of independent armed groups during the Marcos administration and in the EJE of drug offenders at the beginning of the Duterte’s presidency.

### **The Duterte Administration: A Continuation of the Past**

In terms of economic policy, the infrastructure and macroeconomic proposals by Rodrigo Duterte (called Dutertenomics) and macroeconomic policies of Noynoy Aquino (called Aquinonomics), who preceded Duterte, are considered imitations of Reaganomics. (Makabenta) This is no surprise owing to the massive political influence that the United States still has on the Philippines and the imitation of Reagan's war on drugs in Duterte's Philippine Drug War. However, in spite of Duterte's massive popularity within the Philippines, "His drug war has continued to draw condemnation from the United Nations and U.S. and its effects are slowly trickling in the economy." (Garcia) Additionally, measures, such as by those "published by Transparency International and the Global Competitiveness... suggests that the Philippines is getting corrupt and less transparent." (Garcia) Duterte's adoption of Reagan-era economic and social policies and overall lack of transparency, especially in the *desaparecidos* and murders of thousands of citizens due to the Philippine Drug War, continues an ongoing legacy of government repression since the Marcos administration. The confluence of corruption, violence and neoliberalism endemic in governance in the Philippines, continued by the Duterte administration, has clear roots in the colonial mentality of Pilipinos from centuries of European rule and the recency of American imperialism.

### **The Apparitions of the Disappeared**

The *desaparecidos* of Duterte's drug war, and those of past administrations, are also reminiscent of those who disappeared in Chile and Argentina during their respective shifts towards capitalism and, in fact, Duterte and Marcos both cite economic development as the "greater good" for which to justify their repressive government tactics. It is claimed by Walter Benjamin, in his explanation of materialist historiography that:

Materialistic historiography ... is based on a constructive [as opposed to an additive] principle. Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it crystallizes into a monad. A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he recognizes... a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past. He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history—blasting a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework. As a result of this method the lifework is preserved in this work and at the same time canceled; in the lifework, the era; and in the era, the entire course of history. (Gordon 65)

Gordon and Radman then state the following about the historical materialist approach:

The historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad, encounters what I have been calling the ghost. All of a sudden your thinking is stopped, shocked, as it were, into a configuration or conjuncture that crystallizes the social gist of a dramatic or mundane event. The monad or the ghost presents itself as a sign to the thinker that there is a chance in the fight for the oppressed past, by which I take Benjamin to mean that the past is alive enough in the present, in the now, to warrant such an approach. (Gordon 65)

It is, thus, apparent that there are numerous “ghosts” of the Pilipino past. These ghosts are not just of the current and past presidential administrations in the Philippines, but also including: the thousands of people massacred during the Philippine-American War, the millions brutalized in the eras of Spanish and American occupation, and the silenced disgruntlement of the impoverished masses. These ghosts are, now, joined by the thousands of Pilipinos who have been murdered under the guise of so-called economic and social progress and, according to Duterte, the goal to cleanse the Pilipino populace of its so-called “weakest links”, Pilipino drug users. As Duterte’s Reagan-inspired social policies continue to be implemented, these ghosts of the past have shown their apparitions in directing the newfound populism among present-day Pilipinos into anger towards the status quo towards the most vulnerable members of Pilipino society. Unfortunately, this only creates more ghosts and trauma that, along with the ghosts from the United States’ own persisting drug war, will continue to haunt the Pilipino people.

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