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Political Dynasties and Terrorism: An Empirical Analysis Using Data on the Philippines

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Political inequality may cultivate grievances against the government and eventually provoke conflict. In the Philippines, this is reflected in the prevalence of political dynasties. Often these dynasties face deep conflicts of interest as they prioritize clientelist ties over the public good, and act as *bosses* in their local constituencies. Through regression analysis, this paper finds robust statistical evidence that two out of three measures of political dynasty persistence are positively associated with political violence. Results suggest that a concentration of power leads to weaker governance and worse development outcomes, excludes critical sectors, and ultimately provokes political violence. The study emphasizes the importance of promoting checks and balances for more inclusive and peaceful development in emerging democracies such as the Philippines.

Keywords political dynasties, Philippines, political violence, conflict, bossism

Introduction

The Philippines has a long-standing history of political violence and high terrorism risk linked to the Moro rebellion that can be traced as far back as the Spanish colonial period. The Philippines is also home to the longest running communist insurgency in Asia (Robles 2019). The rising threat of cross-border terrorism and local militant groups pledging alliance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has also exacerbated the situation in the Southern Philippines (Panes 2016). Interestingly, instances of violent conflict are concentrated in parts of the country that are also plagued by dynastic persistence (International Crisis Group 2011a). Some of these political clans are also known to maintain their own private armies and foment violence to further their political aims. We then turn to the question "Do areas with bad governance and chronic underdevelopment

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provide fertile ground for violence and extremism?"

From the national security policy standpoint, understanding the link between political inequality and political violence in the Philippines could provide a different perspective on how best to address the persistence of political violence. In the view of political analysts and human rights organizations, the Philippine government's highly militarized approach has failed to curb terrorism in the country and likely exacerbated abuses like the unlawful killings of activists, civilians and journalists who were believed to be victims of red-tagging (Amnesty International 2021; Beltran 2020; Human Rights Watch 2022; Lischin 2020). Studying what factors could be at play in the complex and unique character of political violence in the Philippines is, therefore, crucial in deriving more effective counter-insurgency and anti-terrorism measures that may help recalibrate and improve the government's militarized approach.

International literature suggests several factors that could exacerbate political violence in different contexts, including social exclusion and high ethnic fractionalization (Danzell, Yeh, and Pfannenstiel 2019; Python, Brandsch, and Tskhay 2017), inequality and underdevelopment (Feridun and Sezgin 2008; Freytag et al. 2011; Krieger and Meierrieks 2011, 2019; Lai 2007), and long standing social injustice and human right abuse issues (Gassebner and Luechinger 2011; Krieger and Meierrieks 2011, 2019). These factors are intimately linked to public sector governance, particularly at the local level. Previous studies have mostly undertaken qualitative analyses in examining these links (Lara 2014; McCoy 1994; Torres 2014).

This study contributes to the literature by exploring the empirical links between political violence and political inequality using unique datasets on both these phenomena in the Philippines. This study postulates that political inequality, as defined by Mendoza et al. (2016) as the excessive concentration of political power in the hands of political dynasties, creates conditions for political violence through poor governance, impunity and weaker development outcomes. The study will specifically examine whether and to what extent political power concentration, an indicator of political dynasty dominance, contributes to political violence and terrorism in the Philippines.

In what follows, section 1 discusses previous research on political violence. It considers political dynasties, through its channels of social exclusion and political warlordism, as possible factors behind political violence and terrorism in the Philippines. This is then illustrated in section 2 which elaborates on the case of Maguindanao, Philippines. Section 3 then elaborates on the data and models used to empirically measure and examine the determinants of political violence in Philippine provinces. A fourth section briefly analyzes the main results, and a concluding section offers a brief synthesis of the main empirical results and their policy implications.

Determinants of Political Violence

Political violence refers to the "deliberate collective attempt to use force against people or objects for political reasons" (Sageman 2017, 14). This covers violence or threats committed by those part of a political community which are perceived as a threat to political stability. Oftentimes, this is used interchangeably with terrorism which is the threat or use of violence by non-state actors (University of Maryland 2020). Empirical studies illustrate various determinants of political violence. Political violence has been linked to demographic factors, namely population size (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Krieger and Meierrieks 2011; Lai 2007; Python, Brandsch, and Tshkay 2017) and the relative size of urban populations (Gassebner and Luechinger 2011). Political violence is often more likely in mountainous areas, and those with rough terrain since these offer conducive environments for armed groups to safely gather together, store their weapons, train recruits, and evade government oversight. In the empirical literature, terrain has been operationalized as average elevation (Abadie 2006), degrees of elevation (Danzell, Yeh, and Pfannenstiel 2019), and ruggedness (Ezcurra 2019).

Several studies have pointed out the link of political violence with unfavorable socioeconomic conditions and regional underdevelopment (Feridun and Sezgin 2008). The mental rewards and potential economic benefits of supporting terrorism become more attractive to citizens experiencing social and economic exclusion. An empirical link has been found between regional underdevelopment and terrorism incidence (ibid.). Indeed, many poor provinces in the Philippines, mostly in Mindanao, have become a sanctuary to local non-state armed groups. Yet empirical evidence shows that this is not necessarily the case (Gassebner and Leuchiner 2011; Piazza 2006).

According to Krieger and Meierrieks (2011), poor development outcomes must be accompanied by low political and economic participation to provide sufficient motivation to engage in political violence. The ongoing civil war in Yemen, for an instance, was seen as a result of the interplay between poor socio-economic conditions, political marginalization, and economic disenfranchisement (Ahmed 2019). This points to a gap in the research on political violence. Researchers are often focused on looking into a multitude of definitions and identifying as many individual determinants of political violence as possible without exploring the links between these factors, nor their relative empirical importance (Mider 2014; Sanchez-Cuenca and de la Calle 2009).

As earlier suggested, it is likely that poor socioeconomic conditions need to be coupled with political inequality to instigate political violence from constituents. In this paper, we focus on political inequality in the form of political dynasties. We posit that dynastic rule can inspire political violence from the people through poor governance and social exclusion. In addition, some political

dynasties in the Philippines also instigate political violence to maintain rule in areas with weak institutional oversight and stark inequality. Hence, the channels affecting political violence are both direct and indirect when it comes to political power concentration.

Linking Dynasties and Political Violence: Social Exclusion

Dynastic persistence has concentrated political power in the Philippines among wealthy and well-connected political families. These families have institutionalized themselves in government, and thus granting them electoral advantages in elections (Dal Bó, Dal Bó, and Snyder 2009). Quality of governance suffers as members of a political clan are elected based not on merit or performance but rather on familiarity or gratitude attached to one's family name. In the Philippines, dynastic persistence in provinces is empirically linked with lower public goods provision (Tusalem and Pe-Aguirre 2013) and higher poverty (George and Ponattu 2018; Mendoza et al. 2016).

Poor governance and rent-seeking create conditions for political violence through the exclusion of a wider public from government services. People who are excluded from government benefits may resort to alternative and illegitimate forms of communication channels often in the form of violence (Barkan and Snowden 2000). Evidence abroad shows that political inequality increases the likelihood for rebellion across countries (Regan and Norton 2005). As explained by the relative deprivation theory, a mismatch between a group's expected welfare from supposed 'public' goods and their actual welfare received from the government generates discontent and fuels acts of political violence (Gurr 1968). This has been demonstrated by a study in the Philippines that revealed an increase in conflict casualties in municipalities are barely eligible for a poverty alleviation program called Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan-Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (KALAHI-CIDSS) (Crost, Felter, and Jonston 2014). Insurgents sabotaged the government-sponsored aid program because they fear that the program, if successful, will lessen citizen support for insurgency. In the Bangsamoro, injustice has also been recognized as a key driver of perpetuated violent conflict (Fernandez 2017), with hostilities often spreading from one affected municipality to its neighbors (Capuno 2020).

Ethnic fractionalization is often used as a proxy for exclusion (Böhmelt and Bove 2020; Gassebner and Luechinger 2011; Piazza 2006; Regan and Norton 2005). Østby (2008), however, argued that it is not entirely ethnic difference that provokes conflict but the systematic social inequalities that are anchored to their ethnic identities. We argue that, in the Philippines, those excluded from clientelistic ties with incumbent dynasties are given the incentive to participate in political violence against the government. Østby also added that it is even possible that leaders use shared identity and grievances to achieve personal political and financial goals. Most studies abroad focus on political violence instigated by

people on the ground who are excluded from the state's benefits. The Philippine experience, however, also consists of violence cultivated by members of the ruling elite themselves as a way to maintain power.

Linking Dynasties and Political Violence: Political Warlordism

Clan feuds—sometimes referred to as *rido* in the Philippines—are commonly observed in Mindanao. Rido is characterized by sporadic outbursts of retaliatory local violence between families that occasionally triggered or were prompted by separatist conflict and armed confrontations between insurgent groups and the military (Torres 2014). Locals are pushed to rely on political families for security while members of the insurgent group Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) negotiate with or confront the government through political clans (Lara and Champain 2014). This offers an alternative view of the link between political dynasties and political violence. It can be argued that, more than patrons in an unequal symbiotic relation with their constituents, political dynasties also act as *bosses*. Sidel (1999, 19) describes bosses as "predatory power brokers who achieve monopolistic control over both coercive and economic resources within given territorial jurisdictions or bailiwicks."

Bossism in the Philippines is the "interlocking, multi-tiered directorate of bosses who use their control over the state apparatus to exploit the archipelago's human and natural resources" (ibid.,19). Political bosses, over time, establish dynasties to consolidate their rule while the accumulated wealth and power of dynasties provide them the necessary instruments for prolonged boss rule (Sidel 2018). Notable cases are the *Osmeña* family whose monopoly over local industries allowed the passing down of the role of political bosses across generations in Cebu, and the violent long-term rivalry between the *Crisologo* family and the *Singson* family in Ilocos Sur (Torres-Meija 2000).

The weak presence of the national government in rural areas allowed political dynasties to monopolize resources and subordinate democratic institutions to further their power. Dynasties then instigate violence against each other and legitimize this under their discretionary rule. The absence of accountability in these areas increases the risks of political violence. To illustrate this further, the following section evaluates existing evidence for bossism and social exclusion fueling political violence in Maguindanao.

Dynasties and Violence in Maguindanao

The Philippines is divided into eighty-one provinces. While dynasties exist in most of them, political power concentration in the province of Maguindanao appears to stand out due to its intensity and size.[1] In that province, political families occupy more than half of the local government positions. From 2000 to 2010,

Maguindanao was also reported to have the highest exposure to political violence and the highest number of displacements among families (Symaco 2014). Mainland Bangsamoro—Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao—features strong political dynasties in positions ranging from governor to mayor (Kreuzer 2005). Most conflict incidents occur in relation to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) splinter of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in the second district of Maguindanao, and, to a lesser extent, remnants of the Maute Group in scattered areas of Lanao del Sur. Although in recent years, Lanao del Sur is relatively much more peaceful compared to Maguindanao.

There are common elements in the political order across the Bangsamoro, namely a political culture dominated by dynasties, the abundance of firearms, and sporadic armed confrontations involving families and armed groups (International Crisis Group 2020; Lara 2014). There is evidence of bossism as political clans compete or ally with each other and use kinship ties to armed groups for their own means. Despite the still incomplete disbandment of private armed groups, these groups still exert considerable political influence through alliances with local leaders thus remaining as a key challenge for the peace process in the Philippines (International Crisis Group 2021). This can be attributed to the hybrid nature of these groups with informal and unofficial forces co-existing with the prerogatives of the chief local executive to have a legitimate protection force. As a result, local leaders exploit the military resources of both the government and rebel forces, and easily escalate local conflicts into large-scale armed confrontations (Canuday 2014).

Maguindanao, in particular, has been known for kinship politics, clan power, and complex relationships between family coalitions, insurgents and the government (McCoy 1994). The political culture in the Bangsamoro, particularly the *datu* system in Maguindanao, relies on each political clan's command over their constituency. This is especially significant during election season as clan leaders gather votes for national politicians. In exchange, political clans are granted extralegal means to maintain power.

The Ampatuans, reportedly like any other wealthy political family in Mindanao, were local bosses in that they were known to have a large private army (Human Rights Watch 2010). They played a central role in the Arroyo administration's campaign against Moro separatist movements and, in the 2004 elections, secured electoral victory for President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and her senatorial lineup in the province (Lingao 2013). During the years of Ampatuan rule under the Arroyo administration, Central Mindanao became one of the main conflict clusters due to tensions between the Ampatuan clan and elements of the MILF which later splintered into BIFF (Engelbrecht 2021). In addition, the Ampatuans and their private army have been implicated in numerous incidents of human rights abuses which peaked in 2009 when fifty-seven supporters and family members of their rival Mangudadatu clan were

killed in what has come to be known as the Maguindanao massacre. The trial for the Maguindanao massacre lasted for almost ten years (Gutierrez 2019).

Following the demise of Ampatuan rule in 2009, Maguindanao has been heavily contested by political clans and MILF commanders (International Crisis Group 2011b). At the same time, insurgent commanders have taken over increasingly important roles. The BIFF has been mostly active in areas of weak governance, including portions of the former Ampatuan clan strongholds. Those towns have been linked to a lower-than-average governance performance, something that seems to fuel militant violence until now (Franco 2020), and contribute to social exclusion as another driving force for political violence.

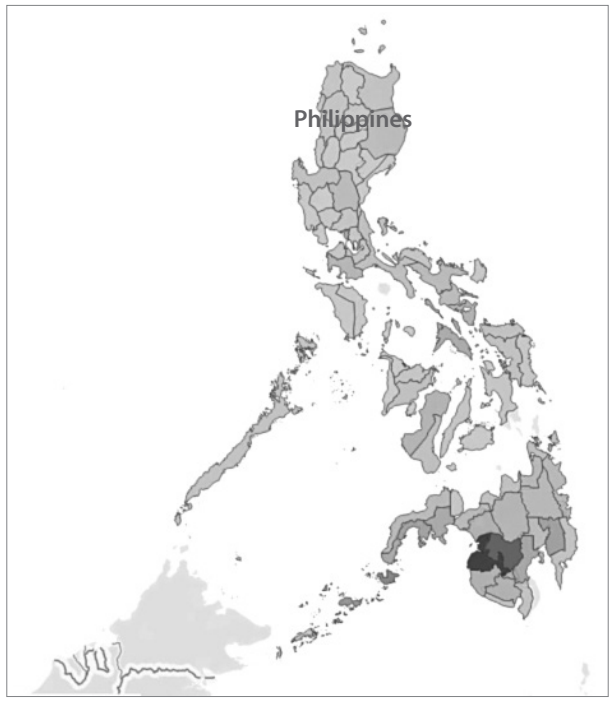
Despite the large budget received during the Arroyo administration, a significant segment of the province remained excluded from economic gains and even public goods. This leads Symaco (2014) to conclude that Maguindanao still belongs to one of the country's geographies of social exclusion as a result of power concentration among warring political clans and financial dependence on the central Philippine government. Underdeveloped municipalities are characterized by interior areas where local governments neither exert full control nor invest sufficient resources to develop them. On many occasions, BIFF has exerted violence as a result of frustrations with governance, and insurgent commanders step in as enforcers of local politicians (Engelbrecht 2021). The case of Maguindanao shows explicitly how political dynasties, through warlordism and social exclusion, cultivate an environment ripe for instances of political violence even though the choice to exert violence often rests with the political power brokers. To empirically examine this linkage, this study turns to a unique Philippine dataset on political dynasties, and political violence.

Data and Methodology

In order to undertake the empirical analysis, we turn to the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) of the University of Maryland (2020) to measure political violence. The GTD defines terrorist incidents as the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation. It includes various events such as assassinations, bombings, hostage takings, and attacks on persons and premises. Figure 1 shows the heatmap of these events per province from 2004 to 2018. Most are concentrated in Mindanao—and in particular the provinces of Cotabato and Maguindanao. Figure 2 shows that the number of incidents has increased over the past five election terms, especially in Mindanao.

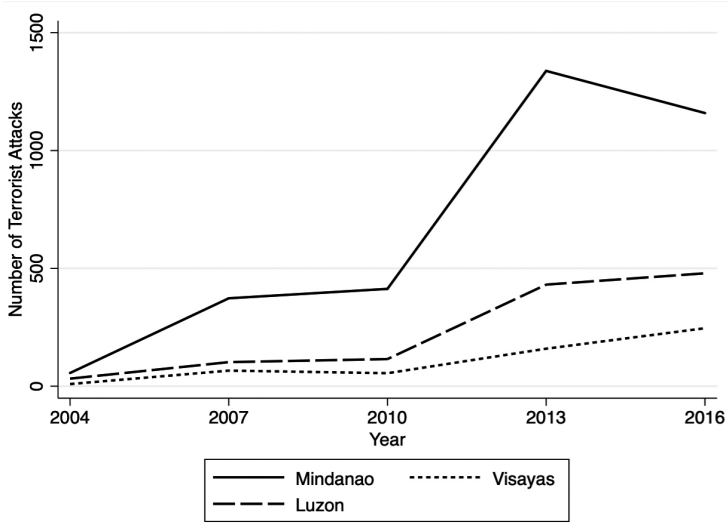
We organize a panel data set of development indicators and control variables for each province (which excludes the National Capital region) and election term from 2004 to 2018. A cross-national dataset is likely to be much more affected by

Figure 1. Number of Terrorist Attacks from 2004 to 2018 Heatmap (darker= higher incidences of terrorist attacks)



Source: University of Maryland (2020).

Figure 2. Number of Political Violence per Election Term per Major Island Group



Source: University of Maryland (2020).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Variables Averaged across Philippine Provinces (2004-2018)

Variables	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Number of Incidents (GTD)	385	13.073	27.556	0	255
Number of Incidents (ACLED)	77	71.260	98.484	0	650
Number of Incidents (UPSALA)	385	5.519	11.478	0	127
Poverty	385	0.341	0.152	0.018	0.738
IRA	384	0.814	0.133	0.010	0.996
Political Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI)	385	34.046	20.356	3.246	139.198
Size of Largest Dynasty	385	4.683	2.799	2	32
GCM Link	385	0.140	0.348	0	1
Urban Population %	385	0.288	0.203	0.000	0.936
Elevation	385	506.130	488.709	39	2,162
Area	385	4,135.252	2,867.738	237.950	17,030.75
Distance from Manila	385	0	754.3	502.56	1700.00
Number of Electoral Positions	385	217.086	111.470	51	570

Source: Authors

omitted variables bias, compared to a cross-provincial (within country) dataset so our contribution to focus on the Philippines helps improve the prospects for robust results. The time frame, however, is limited by the availability of data on the level of Philippine provinces for controls like poverty and IRA. Thus, we have five observations per variable and province, one for each of the five three-year electoral terms for local government officials. To estimate the effect of political concentration on political violence, we use the following empirical specification as our base model:

$$\begin{aligned} \textit{Number of Incidents}_{p,t} = {} & \beta_0 + \beta_1\, \textit{Dynastic Indicator}_{p,t-1} + \beta_2\, \textit{Poverty Incidence}_{p,t-1} \\ & + \beta_3\, \textit{IRA dependency ratio}_{p,t-1} + \beta_4\, \textit{Urbanization}_{p,t-1}) \\ & + \beta_5\, \text{Distance to Manila}_{p,t-1} + \beta_6\, \textit{Land Area}_{p,t-1} \\ & + \beta_7\, \textit{Elevation}_{p,t-1} + \beta_8\, \textit{Government Size}_{p,t-1} + \epsilon \quad \text{[A]} \end{aligned}$$

Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics of our variables. The number of incidents refers to the number of unique cases listed in the online databases used in the study. These online cases follow a specific definition of terrorism and/or political violence but most commonly identify incidences from the most active insurgent groups in the Philippines, namely the Abu Sayyaf Group, Bangsamoro Islamist Freedom Movement (BIFM), Maute Group, Moro Islamist Liberation

Front (MILF), Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), and the New People's Army (NPA). Instances of political violence also include instances of electoral violence and violence as a result of warring local clans.

Despite the unique context from which each type of movement stems from and the different goals they aim to achieve, these movements are potentially influenced by an environment plagued with political exclusion, bad governance, and impunity brought by dynastic rule. By using a dataset with an encompassing scope for acts of political violence, we are able to pursue a novel approach in the study of political violence. Through this approach, we hope to illustrate how the tendency for dynastic persistence to cultivate political violence is not simply due to context-specific conflict between local groups but due to the systemic political exclusion of citizens and warlordism among elites.

Dynastic Indicator refers to political concentration in the form of dynastic rule over provinces. We employ three measures: (1) Political HHI, (2) size of the largest dynasty, and (3) Governor-Congressman-Mayor link (GCM Link). To identify political dynasties, we use the name identification approach which links local politicians with each other based on surnames (Mendoza et al. 2016; Mendoza and Banaag 2020; Querubin 2016). We note that this approach cannot include relatives by affinity, and is at risk of linking strangers sharing similar last names (Mendoza et al. 2013). Yet this approach is appropriately applied in the Philippines because unlike in other countries where a surname can be adopted by totally unrelated people (e.g. Smith, Thatcher, and etc), in the Spanish colonial times, all Filipinos were required to adopt a last name based on a book that produced last name assignments across the country. This method of last name assignment likely minimizes the likelihood that a common last name is selected by any two Filipinos from different parts of the country. Moreover, local dynasts are unlikely to tolerate any unrelated candidates attempting to win elections simply by similarity in their last name. Thus, the estimates can still be used as a proxy measure for prevalence of dynasties in the Philippines (Mendoza et al. 2016; Querubin 2016).

The indicator on political HHI is inspired by the Herfindahl-Hirschman index which measures market share by different firms. In this case, we consider each elected position in a province as part of the overall market share. Hence it is possible to measure political clans' political market share relative to the total number of positions in the province using this formula:

$$Political\ HHI = f_1^2 + f_2^2 + ... + f_n^2$$

where i = 1, 2, …, n, and f is the market share of each surname in the province expressed as a whole number. The range of political HHI is [0, 10,000].[2] The political HHI has been widely used to measure mass capture of electoral seats or the concentration of political power in a family (Cruz, Labonne and Querubin

2018; Dulay and Go 2021; Mendoza et al. 2013). For example, one large family that takes 50% of the available positions contributes more to political HHI than 10 families taking 10% of the positions each.[3] The second dynastic indicator is the size of the largest political dynasty, which is simply the number of electoral seats taken in a certain term captured by the most common surname in the province. Finally, the Governor-Congressman-Mayor link (abbreviated as GCM link hereafter) is a dummy variable equal to 1 when the elected governor is related to the mayor and congressperson in the same province. This captures political concentration in the most influential positions in a province.[4]

The vector of control variables is represented by the empirical model. To account for socio-economic conditions, we include poverty incidence, a triennial measure by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) of the proportion of the population earning below the poverty line in a province, and the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) dependency ratio from the Department of Finance which measures the ratio of local government income to the national government, and is conventionally used to gauge decentralization and local government autonomy (Canare 2016; Uchimura and Suzuki 2009). We also include the level of urbanization (urban population percentage from PSA) to account for demographics as well as the land area (logged in sq. km) and average elevation (logged in meters) for geography. Since Manila, the Philippines' administrative capital, is the center of economic development and governance institutions which spillover to neighboring provinces, we add distance from Manila (in km) as a control. Finally, to account for government size, we control for the number of electoral positions (logged) available per term for each province.[5] This is because the number of seats up for elections can shape electoral competition among political clans.

Results

Given the nature of the dependent variable, which is a count variable of incidents of political violence per province over an election term, we use the negative binomial using maximum likelihood estimation to circumvent issues that can arise from over dispersed count data (Cameron and Trivedi 1998). Table 2 shows the negative binomial regression with the number of terrorist incidents from the Maryland GTD as the dependent variable. To check for robustness, we also use an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression with a time-dummy variable to account for differences over time.

We find that a higher degree of political concentration, measured as political HHI and the size of the largest dynasty, is significantly linked to a higher number of incidents of political violence. This supports our hypothesis that political dynasty persistence is linked with political violence. Holding all else constant,

Table 2. Empirical Results Using the University of Maryland's Number of Political Violence Incidents

	Political HHI		Size of Largest Dynasty		GCM Link	
	(1) NBReg	(2) OLS	(3) NBReg	(4) OLS	(5) NBReg	(6) OLS
Political HHI	0.010** (0.004)	0.382*** (0.066)				
Size of Largest Dynasty			0.068** (0.028)	4.126*** (0.463)		
GCM link					0.166 (0.215)	2.660 (3.730)
Poverty Incidence	-0.945 (0.658)	24.473** (11.466)	-1.108* (0.663)	14.722 (10.955)	-0.476 (0.672)	30.493** (11.972)
IRA	2.029*** (0.635)	17.700* (10.347)	2.131*** (0.633)	18.735* (9.785)	2.208*** (0.644)	21.371** (10.769)
Number of Positions (logged)	0.979*** (0.180)	11.095*** (2.984)	0.707*** (0.193)	-4.168 (3.054)	1.024*** (0.179)	7.323** (3.047)
Year = 2007 (vs base = 2004)[#]		7.260* (3.740)		6.045* (3.546)		7.668* (3.900)
Year = 2010 (vs base = 2004)		7.496** (3.769)		8.937** (3.564)		8.611** (3.925)
Year = 2013 (vs base = 2004)		23.729*** (3.790)		23.552*** (3.578)		26.004*** (3.947)
Year = 2016 (vs base = 2004)		21.976*** (3.936)		23.092*** (3.683)		25.600*** (4.078)
Urban Population %	2.027*** (0.410)	26.210*** (6.747)	2.092*** (0.410)	25.809*** (6.390)	2.273*** (0.417)	27.777*** (7.047)
Elevation (logged)	-0.111 (0.083)	2.135 (1.380)	-0.146* (0.084)	0.425 (1.315)	-0.088 (0.084)	1.768 (1.439)
Land Area (logged)	0.340*** (0.129)	3.535* (2.142)	0.299** (0.126)	2.126 (1.984)	0.228* (0.130)	1.129 (2.230)
Distance from Manila (logged)	0.801*** (0.103)	7.616*** (1.727)	0.806*** (0.103)	7.945*** (1.633)	0.788*** (0.105)	6.313*** (1.804)
Constant	-12.366*** (1.327)	-189.674*** (22.091)	-10.478*** (1.231)	-94.251*** (19.230)	-11.809*** (1.223)	-134.422*** (20.706)
Observations	384	384	384	384	384	384
R^2		0.331		0.400		0.272
Adjusted R^2		0.309		0.380		0.249
Log Likelihood	-1,223.078		-1,222.153		-1,226.416	
Theta	0.571*** (0.046)		0.574*** (0.046)		0.559*** (0.044)	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2,464.156		2,462.305		2,470.832	
Residual Std. Error (df = 371)		22.925		21.712		23.907
F Statistic (df = 12; 371)		15.295***		20.600***		11.576***

Source: Authors

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01; [#]This and the following three variables represent the described election year (e.g. 2007) vs. the base year, which is 2004.

a unit increase in political HHI increases incidents of political violence in the province by 0.382%. An additional elected official from the largest incumbent political dynasty also increases incidents of political violence by 4.126%. For the GCM link, no significant correlation was found across all databases. This can probably be explained by the nature of dynastic concentration measured by the three variables. While the HHI and the size of the largest dynasty both capture grassroots popular support for a political family, the GCM link captures the hold of political families over key positions that influence the policy direction of a province. Clientelism and bossism, our proposed channels of political violence, are primarily observed at the relationship between politicians and citizens rather than the political family's connections within government.

Nevertheless, we find that political dynasties contribute to violence even as we control for socioeconomic inequality through poverty incidence and the IRA dependency ratio. Both socioeconomic and political inequality should therefore be considered as factors of political violence. The dynasty effect on political violence is not just through weak governance that leads to poverty, a recognized determinant of political violence in the literature. It is also possibly manifested in the systemic political and social exclusion of certain sectors.

Weak provision of public goods and highly personalistic policies, a direct outcome of dynastic rule in Philippine provinces (Mendoza et al. 2016; Querubin 2011; Ravanilla 2017; Tusalem and Pe-Aguirre 2013), compromise large sectors in exchange for a particular network of supporters. This likely cultivates grievances among the many that have been excluded, and can increase support for political violence. This also creates a network of supporters indebted and reliant on the personalistic policies of local dynasties which grants local clans the legitimacy and authority to rule as they see fit. Thus, the rest of the citizens excluded from the clientelistic networks of ruling political dynasties do not just lose out on material gains but are also often vulnerable to the repercussions resulting from the local clan's impunity. As reported by Feridun and Sezgin (2008), these circumstances may make the mental rewards and potential economic benefits of terrorism more appealing to citizens since their status quo already lacks peace, access to goods and services, and even opportunities for improving their quality of life.

Beyond clientelism, some political dynasties can act as local bosses especially in areas with ineffectual government presence. Indeed, Sidel (1999) pointed out that the persistence of dynastic rule cannot solely be attributed to patronage and charisma. Instead, political families are able to maintain and exercise power most effectively through the use and threat of violence and the centralization of state resources. In some cases, political dynasties can also be the main proponent of political violence as they work with militants or armed groups and even establish their own private armies to achieve their ends.

For government size, we find that a high number of seats for elections is positively correlated with political violence. There is also evidence that the

demographic and geographic characteristics of a province can determine the risk of political violence in Philippine provinces. There is greater electoral competition among rival political clans as more seats can be filled through elections, encouraging political violence. While there are significant albeit inconsistent links with violence for elevation and land area, we find consistent and significant positive correlations with violence for urban population percentage and distance from Manila. Urban populations experience higher rates of violence since it attracts public attention easily but instances of violence are lower for provinces near the capital where national security and oversight are concentrated.

We find consistent evidence that the risk for political violence increases as more people in a province live below the national poverty line. Provinces with governments reliant on IRA are also more vulnerable to higher incidents of political violence. Since there are few economic opportunities accessible to citizens in impoverished areas, they become easy targets for recruitment into insurgency movements. For these citizens, the perceived mental and economic gains from armed conflict override the (very low) opportunity costs of their current lifestyle. Thus, both political and economic exclusion matters in political violence. Indeed, an empirical link between poverty and dynastic persistence has been established in the Philippines (Mendoza et al. 2016). This poverty-dynasty link could also mean that because citizens are reliant on incumbent political clans for economic needs in poverty-stricken provinces, they are also pushed to be complicit parties to, or at the very least to turn a blind eye on, incidents of political violence instigated by politicians.

Robustness checks

To examine the robustness of the results, we proxy political violence by GTD with two alternative datasets. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) is an international database of demonstrations and non-violent political events covering 2016 to 2020. The ACLED defines political violence as the use of force by a group with a political purpose or motivation, and includes various forms of violence as well as non-violent actions such as agreements, arrests, and disrupted weapons use (Raleigh et al. 2010). After filtering out non-violent events, we found 6864 unique events spread across seventy-five provinces in the 2016 election term.[6] We also extracted data from Uppsala University's Conflict Data Program database. The database had fewer entries in the Philippines, but spanned from 1989 to 2019. On the website, each event is defined as an incident where armed force was used by an organized actor against another organized actor, or against civilians, resulting in at least 1 direct death at a specific location and a specific date. Tables A1 and A2 show the results using the ACLED and UPPSALA databases respectively. Results from these databases produced very similar findings to Table 2.

Conclusion

With political violence remaining as a strong hurdle towards development and good governance, it is imperative to study the factors that drive incidents of political violence in the Philippines. Our findings confirm prior anecdotic evidence that links the prevalence of dynastic or "feudal" governance to violence and armed conflict in the Southern Philippines. Using three distinct international conflict databases and several regression models for more robust results, this study uncovered evidence of a strong positive relationship between political violence and two indicators for political power concentration. The presence of large and concentrated political dynasties is linked with higher incidence of terrorism in Philippine provinces.

Past studies have already provided evidence that political dynasties are associated with poor development outcomes in the Philippines. Conventional literature also established a strong link between underdevelopment and political violence. However, the case of the Philippines shows that the dynasty effect on political violence is not simply due to poor economic conditions. Rather, systematic political inequality erodes the people's right to participate through democratic institutions and pushes citizens to alternative routes of voicing their concerns such as insurgencies or terrorism. We also cannot neglect the innate violence of political dynasties in the Philippines. As argued, violence has played a fundamental role in a political clan's success throughout history and will continue to do so as long as they are able to subsume the authority of the state.

Relative progress has been achieved since the significant push for an elevated peace process in Bangsamoro under former president Aquino in 2011. Following the declaration of Martial Law by Rodrigo Duterte, continuous military campaigns in Sulu, Lanao del Sur, and Maguindanao raised the incentives for political strongmen to play by the book (International Alert 2020). Through a combination of good governance and military pressure, Basilan has managed to significantly suppress the numbers of Abu Sayyaf activity and support in the province (Douglas 2018). This shows that arrangements between the state actors and rebel actors are necessary to ensure a peaceful transition in the Bangsamoro.

Nevertheless, the relative spike in violence during the 2022 national and local elections (Inquirer Mindanao 2022) and rising cases of political violence in Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur (Sarmiento 2022) have once again shown that peace and stability simply as a result of the government-MILF peace talks are not a foregone conclusion. Political violence between clans associated with armed groups is likely to continue despite the recent successes of the peace process. Meanwhile, towns where one political family dominated for years may not generate ubiquitous clan feuds but can contribute to a political landscape that motivates disaffected elements of the population to stay in or join the ranks of

active armed groups. The omnipresent conditions of socioeconomic and political exclusion brought by the governance gaps under dynastic rule are traditionally exploited by militant actors in recruitment and building public support for insurgencies. Years after the Marawi siege, the structural conditions that gave rise to the growth of militancy are mostly still in place (Latiph 2022), even if somewhat constrained by military pressure. Meanwhile, Maguindanao province is still facing two BIFF factions and a more violent splinter on the retreat but waiting for opportunities to engage in violence (International Crisis Group 2022). Therefore, the current political transition must consider the relationship between former insurgents turned political leaders, and dynastic local rulers.

This study contributes to a growing nuanced analysis of the political economy of conflict, bad governance, and weak and non-inclusive development. As Lara and Champain (2014, 4) noted: "The [Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao] region's underdevelopment can no longer be ascribed solely to the colonial and post-colonial exploitation of the region and the discrimination towards Muslims and indigenous people, but must also be connected to the shifting balance of economic and political power within Bangsamoro society itself—between those who prospered from the war and the ensuing *peace*, versus those who did not benefit, in particular the many who remain impoverished and vulnerable within the region."

Local political leaders, especially those who successfully concentrate political power in the form of fat political dynasties, are central in this political economy landscape. The continued exploitation of political dynasties contribute to feeble political competition, diminished checks and balances, fragile rule of law, rampant corruption, poor governance, and impunity which all serve as possible channels that exacerbate social exclusion and the culture of warlordism.

The case of the Philippines is an example for other countries that a genuine transition to a peaceful democracy requires the government to look beyond the need to repress local non-state armed groups. Instead, there should be efforts that target the very roots of political violence in the first place. Political inequality, in the form of dynastic persistence, creates an environment ripe for armed movements by requiring local leaders to rely on an unsustainable and exclusionary patronage system, and by diminishing accountability mechanisms that could have restrained the impunity of local leaders. These movements are then not just legitimized in the eyes of the general public. Non-state armed groups are also institutionalized in positions of power as they partner with local leaders to establish dominance. As evident in the findings of this study, the persistence of political dynasties is linked with a higher number of incidents of violence and conflicts, frustrating efforts to consolidate peace and promote sustained and inclusive development. And unsurprisingly, the conflict cycle continues as a result.

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Notes

1. The provinces of Pampanga (49%) and Bulacan (45%) also exhibit a high share of political dynasties among their elected officials. In other provinces in Mindanao, specifically Davao Occidental, Sulu, and Lanao del Sur, around four out of ten government positions are occupied by political families who have at least two relatives currently holding public office (Mendoza, Jaminola, and Yap 2019).
2. Political HHI theoretically approaches 0 when there are infinitely many families with very low market share, while Political HHI is 10,000 for the case of 1 family that captures 100% of the market.
3. Political HHI contribution of 1 family with 50% market share is ($50^2 = 2500$), while the political HHI contribution of 10 families with 10% market share each is ($10^2 + 10^2 + \ldots + 10^2 = 1000$).
4. These positions are key to political dynasties' control over public spending with very little checks and balances in place (Mendoza, Jaminola, and Yap 2019).
5. This covers the following positions: Governor, Vice-governor, Congressperson, Provincial Board Member, Mayor, Vice-Mayor, and Councilor.
6. Because we are only limited to one electoral cycle, we did not control for time in the OLS regression for ACLED.

Appendix

Table A1. Empirical Results Using the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED).

	Political HHI		Size of Largest Dynasty		GCM Link	
	(1) NBReg	(2) OLS	(3) NBReg	(4) OLS	(5) NBReg	(6) OLS
Political HHI	0.007 (0.005)	1.839*** (0.413)				
Size of Largest Dynasty			0.075** (0.035)	15.289*** (3.142)		
GCM link					0.112 (0.218)	9.207 (21.966)
Poverty Incidence	0.666 (0.825)	56.576 (73.494)	0.536 (0.824)	26.730 (72.566)	0.897 (0.842)	74.722 (83.604)
IRA	0.625 (1.032)	69.004 (92.754)	0.911 (1.015)	108.382 (90.249)	0.802 (1.053)	120.993 (105.519)
Urban Population %	3.051*** (0.509)	182.803*** (45.540)	3.040*** (0.504)	174.309*** (44.671)	3.259*** (0.518)	190.262*** (51.691)
Elevation (logged)	0.023 (0.109)	17.622* (9.806)	-0.007 (0.107)	9.338 (9.517)	0.003 (0.110)	11.504 (11.024)
Land Area (logged)	0.197 (0.168)	-1.918 (14.773)	0.168 (0.161)	-11.317 (14.074)	0.115 (0.165)	-18.179 (16.250)
Distance from Manila (logged)	0.136 (0.130)	-7.338 (11.685)	0.149 (0.128)	-7.755 (11.431)	0.109 (0.133)	-11.569 (13.335)
Number of Positions (logged)	1.528*** (0.237)	120.592*** (21.144)	1.219*** (0.253)	45.794** (22.397)	1.483*** (0.234)	94.424*** (23.240)
Constant	-8.691*** (1.896)	-804.308*** (169.023)	-7.040*** (1.693)	-307.909** (149.473)	-7.522*** (1.705)	-453.127*** (169.830)
Observations	77	77	77	77	77	77
Log Likelihood	-368.300		-367.247		-369.340	
Theta	1.705*** (0.288)		1.749*** (0.296)		1.650*** (0.276)	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	754.599		752.494		756.681	
R^2		0.537		0.556		0.403
Adjusted R^2		0.483		0.504		0.333

Source: Authors
Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A2. Empirical Results Using the UPPSALA University's Conflict Data Program Database (UPPSALA).

	Political HHI		Size of Largest Dynasty		GCM Link	
	(1) NBReg	(2) OLS	(3) NBReg	(4) OLS	(5) NBReg	(6) OLS
Political HHI	0.005 (0.004)	0.159*** (0.029)				
Size of Largest Dynasty			0.051* (0.026)	1.258*** (0.214)		
GCM link					-0.121 (0.213)	1.196 (1.636)
Poverty Incidence	2.805*** (0.637)	15.512*** (5.052)	2.670*** (0.642)	13.124*** (5.066)	3.051*** (0.650)	18.048*** (5.253)
IRA	2.014*** (0.637)	9.836** (4.559)	2.070*** (0.635)	10.574** (4.524)	2.280*** (0.653)	11.363** (4.725)
Urban Population %	2.946*** (0.413)	14.483*** (2.973)	2.981*** (0.413)	14.501*** (2.955)	3.057*** (0.419)	15.147*** (3.092)
Elevation (logged)	-0.277*** (0.081)	0.182 (0.608)	-0.298*** (0.081)	-0.376 (0.608)	-0.245*** (0.081)	0.028 (0.631)
Land Area (logged)	0.371*** (0.123)	0.244 (0.944)	0.335*** (0.120)	-0.493 (0.917)	0.301** (0.124)	-0.747 (0.979)
Distance from Manila (logged)	0.625*** (0.101)	3.532*** (0.761)	0.634*** (0.101)	3.505*** (0.755)	0.614*** (0.102)	2.984*** (0.791)
Number of Positions (logged)	0.375** (0.172)	4.315*** (1.315)	0.224 (0.185)	-0.746 (1.412)	0.403** (0.171)	2.738** (1.337)
2007		1.556 (1.648)		1.236 (1.640)		1.725 (1.711)
2010		0.964 (1.661)		1.535 (1.648)		1.427 (1.722)
2013		2.051 (1.670)		2.286 (1.654)		2.990* (1.732)
2016		2.276 (1.735)		3.066* (1.703)		3.773** (1.789)
Constant	-9.720*** (1.277)	-66.726*** (9.734)	-8.647*** (1.210)	-31.297*** (8.892)	-9.553*** (1.200)	-43.736*** (9.085)
Observations	384	384	384	384	384	384
Log Likelihood	-917.431		-916.040		-918.469	
Theta	0.724*** (0.069)		0.730*** (0.070)		0.712*** (0.067)	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,852.862		1,850.080		1,854.937	
R^2		0.252		0.261		0.193
Adjusted R^2		0.227		0.237		0.167

Source: Authors

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

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