

**A New Penal Populism?  
Rodrigo Duterte, Public Opinion, and the War on Drugs in the Philippines**

**Paul D. Kenny**

**Ronald Holmes**

Australian National University

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## Introduction

Penal populism refers to an understanding of justice in which criminal and anti-social activity should be punished, and punished harshly. It is based on the premise that too often the legal system works to the advantage of criminals and society's already privileged. Penal populism implies that criminal justice should be informed by the views of "ordinary individuals rather than... elite opinion" (Pratt 2007: 5). Motivated more by outcome than by process, penal populism promises order, if not the law. This understanding of justice goes along with a preference for strong leadership. Penal populists are charismatic leaders who rely more on plebiscitary norms of legitimacy than on rules, institutions, and regularized procedures. Although research has demonstrated links between crime levels, public opinion, and penal policy (Newburn 2007, Jennings, Farrall et al. 2017), many aspects of the penal populism paradigm remain undertheorized and untested.

Recent research from a wide variety of contexts has demonstrated that populism, in the sense of a pro-people and anti-elite ideology (Mudde 2004), is measurable in public opinion (Akkerman, Mudde et al. 2013, Elchardus and Spruyt 2014, Bakker, Rooduijn et al. 2016, Spruyt, Keppens et al. 2016, Stavrakakis, Andreadis et al. 2016, Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel 2018). Those holding populist attitudes are distrustful of elites, believe in plebiscitary notions of legitimacy, and have a polarized, even Manichean, view of the world. We theorize that these attitudes should be associated with support for summary justice over legal procedure. A somewhat different notion of populism as a distinctly charismatic form of mass politics (Mouzelis 1985, Kenny 2017), though less established empirically as a set of attitudes (Davies 1954, Antonakis, Avolio et al. 2003, Merolla, Ramos et al. 2007), leads to similar predictions. Charismatic authority, by its nature is unbounded by tradition or the law (Weber 1978). We thus also theorize that those who view a leader as having the gift of charisma should share a dim view of the legal system, in turn favouring immediate and rough justice over procedure.

The Philippines would seem to be an ideal venue in which to interrogate the penal populism thesis. In late 2016, Rodrigo Duterte rode to the presidency of the Philippines as a populist, anti-establishment candidate, promising to scale up the "strongman" rule that he honed during his years as mayor of Davao City on the southern island of Mindanao. In power he has waged a violent campaign against drug-related criminality, with estimates of the number of those killed in the first 18 months of his presidency running as high as 12,000.<sup>1</sup> Randy David has termed his brand of "tough guy" rule *Dutertismo*, while the president himself welcomes the nickname "Duterte Harry" after Clint Eastwood's quasi-vigilante character in the Dirty Harry series of movies.<sup>2</sup>

Yet in spite of widespread condemnation by international and domestic human rights activists, support for Duterte and for the anti-drug campaign within the Philippines remains resilient across class, geographic, and ethnoreligious groups. According to our recent data (described below), only three percent of Filipinos oppose the war on drug related criminality. Support for Duterte

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/18/philippines-dutertes-drug-war-claims-12000-lives>; the number of deaths already far exceeds that experienced under the authoritarian rule of Ferdinand Marcos.

<sup>2</sup> <http://opinion.inquirer.net/94530/dutertismo>

and the war on illegal drugs has thus been explained in terms of a new penal populism, with the people's will taking precedence over the law (Curato 2017b, Pepinsky 2017).

Using evidence from surveys conducted in the Philippines in 2016 and 2017,<sup>3</sup> we estimate the extent of populist attitudes and belief in Duterte's charisma among Filipinos, and then test their relationships with attitudes toward penal policy. We find only weak support for a relationship between populist attitudes and support for the campaign against illegal drugs in general. However, we find support for a relationship between populist attitudes and support for its harshest components, in particular the extra-judicial killing (EJKs) of suspected drug users and dealers. Conversely, we find robust support for a relationship between belief in the charisma of Duterte and support for the campaign against illegal drugs, but not between belief in Duterte's charisma and support for EJKs.

This paper advances both the penal populism and populism research agendas in two ways. First, while existing empirical research has simply *equated* preferences for harsh penal policies with penal populism (Newburn 2007, Jennings, Farrall et al. 2017), we provide the first demonstration that preferences over criminal justice have a deeper populist attitudinal basis. Second, we provide a novel approach to the measurement of charisma and find that populist attitudes and belief in a leader's charisma are correlated with distinct but related sets of preferences over penal policy. Attitudes towards charismatic leadership are an important set of beliefs in their own right that are distinct from populist attitudes more broadly.

## Penal Populism

Populism remains an elusive concept, literally meaning a practice, system, or doctrine of the people. Scholars have variously conceptualized what this people-centric form of politics might mean, whether a set of redistributive economic policies (Dornbusch and Edwards 1991, Edwards 2010), a charismatic form of political mobilization (Kenny 2017, Weyland 2017), a lowbrow political style (Ostiguy 2009, Moffitt 2016), a plebiscitary or illiberal form of democracy (Urbinati 1998, Pappas 2015, Müller 2016), or a political ideology that places the people's will over that of the elite (Mudde 2004, Crick 2005). No definition is necessarily *true* than another, and as some authors have argued it may be that populism in practice combines elements of both form (e.g. charismatic leadership) and substance (e.g. anti-elite ideology) (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008, Barr 2009, Roberts 2014).

We take from the ideological school the idea that populism can be understood as a set of beliefs about how the political world should be ordered. As one proponent puts it, populism in this sense is a "thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus the 'corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people" (Mudde 2007: 23). People holding such populist attitudes prioritize the folk wisdom of common people over the technocratic capacity of elites, and value the spontaneous judgment of the crowd over abstract procedure (Canovan 1999).

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<sup>3</sup> To preserve the anonymity of the authors for double-blind peer review, we do not provide the identity of the polling organization used in this study.

This ideological conceptualization is particularly relevant in this context as it corresponds to how the term has typically been employed in research in criminology and sociology on penal populism (Pratt 2007). The notion of penal populism is based on the premise that there is a popularly held world view in which regular people have a better sense of justice than elites or politicians; legal procedures and rules work to the benefit of criminals and elites (especially lawyers), who know how to manipulate them, rather than to protect victims. For their part, the “people are less and less prepared to leave questions, including difficult penal questions to their masters” (Ryan 2004: 9). While individual freedoms are important to those holding this world view, criminality and anti-social behaviour are offenses that need to be punished severely. The will of the majority, the *people*, always should take priority over that of the *other*, the minority to which it is opposed. Penal populism reflects what Taggart (2000) has called the politics of the “heartland.”

There is evidence of an association between authoritarian attitudes and tough law and order policies (including capital punishment) (Stack 2003, Stevens, Bishin et al. 2006), but as yet there has been no test of whether a similar relationship exists between populist attitudes and preferences over penal policy. Rather, public support for tough on crime policies is itself taken as *evidence* of penal populist attitudes. The latter formulation is problematic, however, as policy preferences, not least with respect to law and order, move in response to leaders’ rhetoric and policies (Zaller 1992).

Building in part on the idea of the “authoritarian mindset” (Hetherington and Weiler 2009), a growing body of research demonstrates that there exists a set of populist attitudes or personality traits (Akkerman, Mudde et al. 2013, Elchardus and Spruyt 2014, Bakker, Rooduijn et al. 2016, Spruyt, Keppens et al. 2016, Stavrakakis, Andreadis et al. 2016, Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel 2018). While populist attitudes themselves are likely to subject to change, this body of research shows that the proportion of national populations holding these attitudes is relatively constant both across countries and within countries over time.<sup>4</sup> Thus, we ask whether these underlying and relatively constant populist attitudes are associated with tough on crime policies. We expect there to be a positive association between populist attitudes in general – a positive view of the common people as compared to the elite – and so-called penal populist attitudes on crime – weak support for judicial process and strong support for harsh penalties.

In practice, when we speak of populism, we typically also speak of *populists*. That is, while populism as an ideology may refer to a belief that the people’s will should prevail over that of the elite, in practice this ideology often coalesces into the form of a charismatically-led mass movement. Relatively leaderless mass movements in which participants articulate ostensibly populist positions can exist; Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party would seem to be examples on opposing sides of the ideological spectrum. However, to the extent that people holding populist beliefs are suspicious of technocracy and formal institutions in general (Caramani 2017), we would expect them to have a particular sympathy for a plebiscitary forms of legitimacy that endow a leader to channel the popular will directly.

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<sup>4</sup> At present, we lack the data to determine whether populist attitudes are stable at the individual level over time.

A great deal of disagreement and confusion arises with respect to the use of charisma as a political science concept. First, in common language, charisma is often thought of as a personality trait; as some quality that an individual possess. Indeed, even Max Weber, with whom the concept is most closely associated, confusingly stated that charisma refers to “a certain quality of an individual personality by which he is set apart and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or... exceptional powers or qualities.” However, reading Weber more carefully, it becomes clear that charisma describes a relationship. An individual is charismatic only to the extent that his followers *treat him as endowed* as such. A charismatic leader is made so by popular acclaim rather than by rules, tradition, or personal favor. Charisma, in other words, is “an attribute of the belief of the followers and not of the quality of the leader” (Bensman and Givant 1975: 578).

Second, charisma is also often mistakenly conflated with authoritarianism. It is common, for instance, to describe leaders like Hitler or Putin as being charismatic (Rees 2012). It is true that a charismatic leader’s authority is not grounded in tradition or rules. However, at the same time, charismatic leadership is essentially plebiscitary. The “genuinely charismatic ruler” is “responsible to the ruled – responsible, that is, to prove that he himself is indeed the master willed by God... If the people withdraw their recognition, the master becomes a mere private person.” (Weber 1978: 1114-1115). It is worth recalling that Hitler, certainly at the height of his power, was tremendously popular; we could say the same of Putin today. A charismatic leader shares a kind of unstated contract with the people; they support him unconditionally and he rules in their name. At the same time, although charismatic leadership is not reducible to authoritarianism, this does not mean that the leader is merely a vessel for the popular will. As Weber put it, a charismatic leader “does not derive his claims from the will of his followers, in the manner of an election; rather, it is their duty to recognize his charisma” (Weber 1978: 1113). Charismatic leadership, in other words, is a form of leadership in which popular support is crucial, but in which a leader drives, rather than merely responds to, public opinion on specific policies.

For our purposes, what is critical about charismatic authority is that it is distinct from a traditional or bureaucratic rules-based order. People who believe that a leader is endowed with charisma should have less of an attachment to laws and procedures *per se*. Whatever the leader does is legitimate because *He* does it. This attitude reflects, in other words, a deep suspicion of institutions. In this sense, we theorize that belief in a leader’s charisma should be associated with support for order over law.

Our hypotheses are that populist attitudes and the attribution of charismatic leadership to Duterte should be associated with support for the campaign against illegal drugs and support for extra-judicial killings.

### **Duterte and the War on Drugs**

Rodrigo Duterte worked as a public prosecutor in Davao City before becoming vice mayor in 1986 and mayor in 1988. He held the position for more than 20 years, repeatedly rejecting numerous calls for him to run for the presidency before he formally filed as a substitute for a party-mate in late November 2016.

From early 2015 until he formally launched his candidature, Duterte had toured the country pushing a federalist agenda. Once launched, his campaign promoted the slogan “change is coming” although it remained unclear what the content of this change would be. Duterte was promoted as the “man on horseback” who would challenge the establishment, or as he put it, “Imperial Manila”. Duterte’s abstract promises were complemented by the slogan *tapang at malasakit* (courage and compassion), a characterization first put out in a video circulated on social media in late May 2015. His campaign subsequently used the phrase in its other ads, this time directly linking the traits with Duterte through the phrase *Tapang at Malasakit si Duterte* (Duterte is courageous and compassionate). Fusing the first syllable of each trait, the shortened message becomes *Tama si Duterte* (Duterte is right) (Holmes 2016).

It was only in the months before the election that Duterte aggressively campaigned on the issue of drug-related criminality. Duterte drew on his reputation as the strong-man mayor of Davao City, vowing to rid the country of illegal drugs within six months of his confirmation. In early March 2016, he pronounced that if elected president, he would kill thousands of criminals, the funeral parlours would be packed, and he would dump 100,000 of the slain criminals in Manila Bay where the fish would grow fat.<sup>5</sup> He was known for saying: “If you are not prepared to kill and be killed, you have no business being president of this country.”<sup>6</sup> He promised no mercy, saying “God will weep if I become president” (Miller 2018: 14).

Duterte has frequently been described as both a populist (Heydarian 2018, Kenny 2018) and a penal populist (Curato 2017b). By almost any definition he meets the criteria. His sister, Eleanor, said “He is being used as a vehicle of the Holy Spirit” (Miller 2018: 15), while he himself seems to believe that it is his destiny to lead his country. In spite of holding subnational office for more than 20 years, Duterte portrayed himself as an “outsider” to the Manila-based elite. Duterte swore, dissed his political opponents, and derided long-sacrosanct institutions from the Church to the media (Casiple 2016). He relied heavily on campaign rallies, mass media, and social media to deliver his message directly to voters. Most Filipino registered voters (77 percent) say that television was the most influential source of information for them in their vote choice for president. The significant increase in pre-election support for Duterte (from 24 percent in March 2016 to 35 percent in April 2016) could be attributed to his performance in the second presidential debate that was carried live by major television and radio networks. In an April 2016 survey, a plurality (34 percent) of respondents who watched, listened to or read reports about the debate believed that Duterte bested the other contenders. Beyond the debates, Duterte, given his controversial and often crude behaviour, commanded extensive airtime. He also had – and has – an army of online supporters who vigorously defend him on social media, shouting down and even threatening his critics. From his campaign through his early presidency, Duterte has also made a point of making frequent public appearances. Duterte has gone to combat zones, urban poor communities, and areas affected by natural disasters, among others to speak directly with “regular” Filipinos. While his language is often derisive, misogynistic, and vulgar, it is common to hear his audience applaud or laugh at his controversial statements, especially when he ridicules his critics.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/774225/kill-the-criminals-dutertes-vote-winning-vow>

<sup>6</sup> Randy David, “Dutertismo,” *Philippine Daily Enquirer*, 1 May 2016, <http://opinion.inquirer.net/94530/dutertismo#ixzz554QleIXs>

Although relatively unknown outside of Mindanao just months before the 2016 presidential election, Duterte quickly became the most popular candidate and won the election in a landslide, assuming control of the presidency at the end of June 2016. Duterte quickly made good on his promises to aggressively pursue those involved in the illegal drug trade. Between July 2016 and January 2018, an estimated 12,000 people have been killed by state security forces or by non-state groups working with implicit sanction from the authorities. Duterte made no apologies for the deaths, even likening himself to Hitler, saying that he was prepared to exterminate millions in his effort to wipe out drug dealers and users.<sup>7</sup>

Duterte's war on drugs comes under a program known as *Oplan Double Barrel*. In the circular memorandum on the program, the program's main implementer, the Philippine National Police (PNP), cited Duterte's vow to rid the country of illegal drugs within the first six months of his term as its primary rationale. The two barrels refer to the two main components of the program — *Project Tokhang* (a portmanteau of *toktok* [knock] and *hangyo* [plead]) and *Project HVT* (the acronym referring to *High Value Targets*). These two components essentially replicate the anti-illegal drug war waged by Duterte when he was mayor of Davao City.

In some respects, *Oplan Double Barrel* continues the approach of the anti-crime program of the preceding Aquino administration, *Oplan Lambat-Sibat* (Oplan Dagnet-Spear). Its implementation in practice, however, has been radically different. To ensure that his campaign would be zealously pursued, Duterte appointed the former police chief of Davao City, Ronald "Bato" [The Rock] de la Rosa, as head of the PNP. de la Rosa warned criminals "[not only will we] crush [you], we will bury you. I will bury you all."

Within the first month of its implementation, *Tokhang* resulted in around 330,000 suspected drug users and dealers surrendering, over 9,000 arrests, and 664 deaths. In its most recent report, the PNP revealed that there were 4,279 deaths related to the government's war on drugs from July 2, 2016 to May 21, 2018. Other organizations estimate up to 12,000 fatalities have occurred. An earlier report indicated that most of the recorded fatalities were from the National Capital Region, Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog, and Central Visayas, densely populated areas where *Tokhang* operations from the start were more intense, purportedly because these are the regions that have the highest levels of drug addiction.

The massive number of deaths has led members of the political opposition and human rights advocates to criticize Duterte's drug war. For example, Senator Leila de Lima, who had been an outspoken critic of Duterte during his time in Davao City, called for an investigation of the deaths arising from *Oplan Double Barrel*. Duterte responded with verbal attacks of his own and eventually, the Department of Justice (DOJ) filed cases against de Lima, leading to her arrest in late February 2017. After the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Agnes Callamard spoke of the need to investigate alleged extra-judicial killings in the country, Duterte threatened to slap Callamard should she persist with an investigation. The elitist, and even foreign, sources of these challenges have tended to enhance rather than weaken Duterte's support.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-duterte-hitler/philippines-duterte-likens-himself-to-hitler-wants-to-kill-millions-of-drug-users-idUSKCN1200B9>

Public support for Duterte or the war on drugs, although robust, is not immutable. The death in October 2017 of Kian de los Santos, a 17 year-old student, who resided in a poor community in Caloocan, highlighted what critics believed to be an excessive disregard for due process and the right to life in Duterte's anti-drug war. While the police who conducted an operation in Kian's village claimed that the teenager shot at pursuing officers, a video showed that he was in fact manhandled by the police. A subsequent investigation revealed that Kian did not have a gun. The victim's mother publically demanded an answer as to why the "government is killing poor, innocent people". More than a thousand people attended Kian's funeral possession with a call to stop the killings and Duterte's satisfaction ratings dropped in a prominent national survey.

Duterte turned the blame for the incident on the offending officers and suspended operations. He met with the victim's parents, who themselves subsequently called for an end to protests against the government in Kian's name. The parents even posed for a picture with Duterte, their right arms raised with the trademark fist bump of the president. Duterte's support, if it in fact dropped at all, quickly recovered. To the public, Duterte, even if his administration makes mistakes, is a "rare politician who doesn't forget about the people" (Curato 2017a).

## **Data**

We rely primarily on survey modules on populism and penal policy that we embedded in nationally representative surveys conducted by a Filipino polling organization in September 2016 and September 2017. Each survey was based on a national sample of face-to-face interviews with 1,200 adults (over 18). To adequately cover the regional diversity of the Philippines, 300 respondents were selected from four study areas: the National Capital Region (NCR), Luzon (excluding the capital), Visayas, and Mindanao. Multi-stage probability sampling was used to select 60 sample barangays, which is the smallest administrative division in the Philippines, equivalent to a district or ward, from each study areas. We also had access to all additional quarterly survey results from 2011 to 2018. For surveys including and prior to March 2016, the total sample size was 1,800, distributed as follows: the National Capital Region (NCR): 230; Luzon (excluding the capital): 790; Visayas: 350; and Mindanao: 430. The procedure for selecting Barangays is described in the Appendix.

## **Measuring Populist Attitudes**

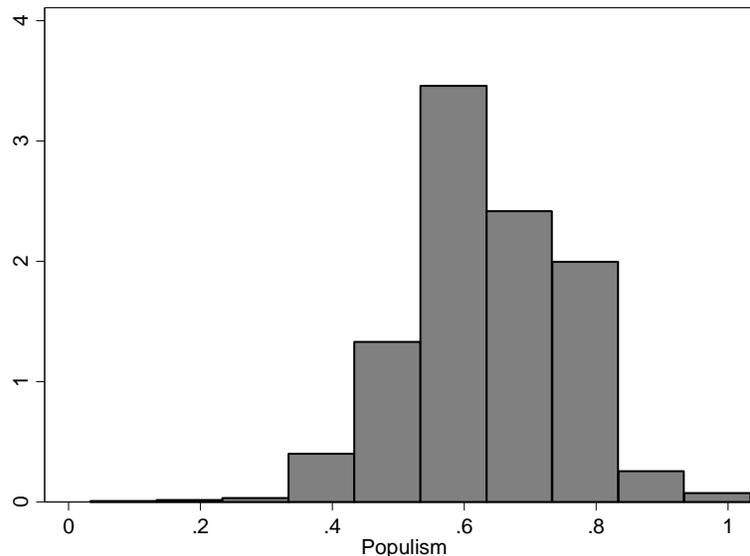
In this section we describe how our measure of populist attitudes is constructed. In recent years, several survey items have been proposed to capture populist attitudes in the sense outlined above (Hawkins, Riding et al. 2012, Akkerman, Mudde et al. 2013, Schulz, Müller et al. 2017, Castanho Silva, Ioannis Andreadis et al. 2018). We implemented the 6-item battery of Akkerman, Mudde et al. (2013), which was the most widely used instrument at the time of our study. The questions were designed to capture the degree to which individuals prioritize the will of the people over the views of the elite. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the

following statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (I very much disagree) to 5 (I very much agree):<sup>8</sup>

1. The politicians in Congress need to follow the will of the people.
2. The people, not the politicians, should make our most important policy decisions.
3. The political differences between the people and the elite are larger than the differences among the people.
4. What people call “compromise” in politics is really just selling out on one’s principles.
5. I’d rather be represented by an ordinary citizen than an experienced politician.
6. Politicians talk too much and take too little action.

We normalize responses between 0 and 1 and construct a populist attitude scale based on the average of individuals’ responses to all 6 items. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of populist attitudes amongst respondents.

**Figure 1 Populist Attitudes in the Philippines**



While most respondents answered positively to at least one item on the scale, we wanted to ensure that the populism scale accurately captured a coherent attitude. Based on their survey of Dutch individuals, Akkerman, Mudde et al. (2013) find that the 6 items are highly correlated with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.82. Andreadis and Ruth (2018) replicate this approach on elite respondents in Greece and Bolivia, finding somewhat lower inter-item correlations (0.75 and 0.47 respectively). The inter-item correlation of responses to these items in the Philippines case is modest but comparable to that observed in other non-European cases (alpha = 0.60). Thus, we also construct a binary variable in which respondents who answered “agree” or “very much

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<sup>8</sup> We also asked, but exclude additional questions relating to pluralism and elitism attitudes: Politics is ultimately a struggle between good and evil; Interest groups have too much influence over political decisions.

agree” to all 6 items were coded as populist, while those who did not were coded as non-populist. 380 of 2,400 respondents across our two surveys are coded as *populist* in this way.

## Charisma

Charisma is notoriously difficult to measure. As Weber argued: “It is recognition on the part of those subject to authority which is decisive for the validity of charisma” (Weber 1978: 242). Any measurement of charisma should thus be based on how people themselves view a given leader. Management studies have typically operationalized charisma as a set of personality traits that respondents believe a leader to have. They include having vision, pride, selflessness, optimism, enthusiasm, confidence, respect, power, morals, values and beliefs, and a sense of purpose or mission (Antonakis, Avolio et al. 2003). Problematically, while these traits are largely positive and while they may correlate into a particular personality type, it is not clear how they distinguish a truly charismatic leader from a regular one.

Weber himself used charisma in a very different sense. He meant it to signify a form of leadership that was wholly distinct from the bureaucratic or traditional. A charismatic leader for Weber was extraordinary, heroic, or even superhuman. While the likes of Barak Obama or Tony Blair may be charismatic in the sense of having many of the personality traits listed above, they are both fundamentally ordinary politicians in the sense that they work within the limits of bureaucratic and legal power structures.

Whether people believe a leader to be charismatic in the alternative sense is of course difficult to measure. In their study of charismatic leadership in American politics, Merolla, Ramos et al. (2007) doubt whether it is possible at all. However, we believe that this latter sense of charisma deserves greater attention from political scientists. We wanted to get at the degree to which respondents view a leader as “charismatic” as opposed to “regular”. Yet the existing literature provides little guidance as to which characteristics mark this kind of distinction. We felt it would be of dubious value to explicitly ask whether respondents thought that Duterte was “superhuman” or “chosen by god.” To measure this sense of charisma, rather than pre-determine a set of charismatic traits (as in the former approach) and then measure the extent to which respondents ascribe these to Duterte, we instead asked respondents to give an open-ended description of him in a word or sentence.

We next sought to code whether respondents were describing Duterte as either a charismatic or regular leader. To do this we wanted as open a procedure as possible. Thus, rather than using an expert or machine coding approach, which would require the elaborate specification of the concept and a set of key words in advance, we instead used crowd-sourced non-expert text analysis through the *Figure-Eight* platform (Benoit, Conway et al. 2016). This approach allowed us to leave the interpretation of a respondent’s description open within the confines of Weber’s broad understanding of what makes a leader charismatic.

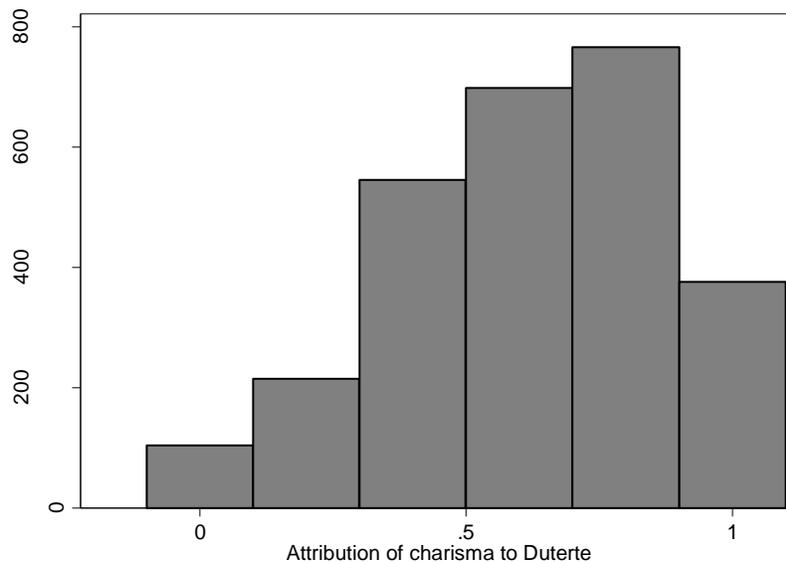
We instructed our coders as follows:

Each of the following words or sentences was used by respondents in a recent survey to describe some political leaders. We would like you to say whether you think the

respondent believes the leader in question to be "charismatic". A charismatic leader is one who people believe to be gifted with extraordinary personal qualities. Respondents who believe that a leader is charismatic may describe him or her as heroic, infallible, or superlative in some other way. This is in contrast to "regular" leaders who people typically describe in terms of professional competences, policies, or achievements. Do these listed words/phases suggest that the leader being described is charismatic?

We obtained five judgments per description, coding as charismatic only those with a minimum of 4 out of 5 judgments in agreement.<sup>9</sup> 1,157 respondents' descriptions were coded to be of *Charismatic leader*, while 1,591 were not.

**Figure 2 Attribution of Charisma to Duterte**



Interestingly, descriptors such as “brave” are coded as charismatic in this sense, even though they do not appear as charismatic traits in the prescriptive approach.

### **Populist Attitudes, Charisma, and Penal Policies**

We now examine the relationship between populist attitudes, charisma, and penal policy. Our main dependent variable is whether respondents support the following statement, with responses ranging from 1 (I truly do not support) to 5 (I truly support). We estimate the association between populist attitudes and charismatic leadership and agreement with the following statement:

Do you support or not support the campaign against illegal drugs of the Duterte administration?

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<sup>9</sup> The performance on test questions... See appendix for test questions and explanations.

Our main approach is an ordered logistic regression model (over the range of support for the campaign); we also carry out a logit model of supporting (1, 2)/not supporting (3, 4, 5) the campaign. Models include the *Populist attitudes* scale, a dichotomous *Charismatic leader* variable, and the respondent’s socioeconomic class.

**Table 1 Ordered logit models of support for anti-drug campaign**

	(1)
Populist attitudes	0.604 (0.351)
Charismatic leader	0.426*** (0.0884)
Socio-economic class	0.0794 (0.152)
2017 dummy	-0.184** (0.0915)
Observations	1990
Standard errors in parentheses	
** $p < 0.05$ , *** $p < 0.01$	

Table 1 shows that respondents who identify Duterte as a charismatic leader support the anti-drug campaign. This result is significant at the 1 percent level. Results remain robust when we re-code support for the war as a dichotomous variable as shown in Table A1 in the Appendix. Populist attitudes are correlated with support for the anti-drug campaign, but are not significant at conventional levels ( $p = 0.085$ ). However, we do find that populist attitudes are associated with the most enthusiastic support for the campaign (model 2) (i.e. “truly support”).

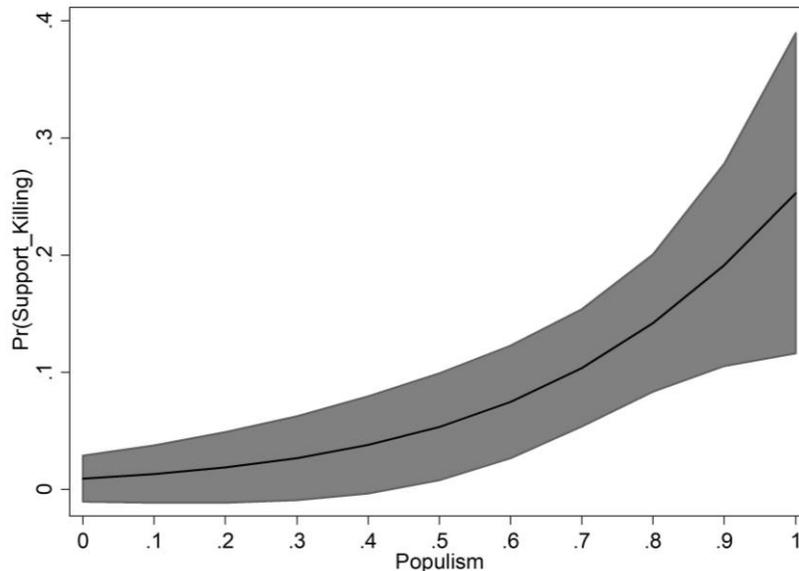
There good evidence to suggest that respondents are not merely expressing approval of the government’s general efforts to tackle drug-related crime but of the harsh, often extra-judicial punishment meted out to drug traffickers and users. 77.9 percent of respondents said that they believe that extra judicial killings were occurring, while 72.6 percent of respondents were at least somewhat concerned that they themselves might be killed as a result of the campaign against illegal drugs. In other words, there is little ambiguity about the kinds of harsh tactics implied in our general question about support for the Duterte government’s anti-illegal drug campaign.

We also attempted to capture more precisely the relationship between populist attitudes and support for the most extreme penal policies, namely EJKs. To get at this, we asked respondents whether they supported a number of strategies deployed by the administration in the campaign against illegal drugs. The strategies were: 1.) Increased police patrols in the community, 2.) house to house inquiry from village officials, 3.) rehabilitation of drug users, 4.) arrest of

suspected drug users or pusher for a period of 36 hours while the formal case is being prepared, and 5.) killing by the police of alleged drug addicts or pushers who resist arrest.

The more highly a respondent scored on the populist attitude scale, the greater the probability that she would support the killing of suspects who resist arrest. We found no evidence for a relationship between the attribution of charismatic leadership to Duterte and support the killing of suspects who resist arrest.

**Figure 3 Support for police killing of suspects who resist arrest**



In sum, we find that support for the campaign against illegal drugs in a broad sense is strongly correlated with the attribution of charismatic leadership traits to Duterte but less clearly with populist attitudes in general. In contrast, we find that support for EJKs is correlated with populist attitudes but not with the attribution of charismatic leadership traits to Duterte. We discuss these findings in the next section.

### **Duterte and Crime**

Overall support for the campaign against illegal drugs is very high among all classes and the campaign itself is very strongly associated with Rodrigo Duterte. This is consistent with an association between the attribution of charismatic leadership traits to Duterte and support for the campaign. It is also consistent with the lack of an association between the attribution of these traits and support for EJKs. Support for EJKs is not common, most likely reflecting the belief that the killing of suspects who resist arrest is an extreme measure that may be illegal and is perhaps immoral. It thus may be unsurprising that those who attribute positive leadership traits to Duterte do not necessarily associate him personally with EJKs. Duterte himself has distanced himself from especially egregious EJKs, such as that of the unarmed young man, Kian, described above. However, those with populist attitudes in general do not display any greater trust in or approval of Duterte. Populist attitudes are not correlated with support for the campaign in

general which is highly associated with Duterte, but they are correlated with some of its most punitive aspects.

In the rest of this section, we assess whether the relationship between populist attitudes and beliefs about crime are in some way mediated, or even generated, by support for Duterte. Research elsewhere shows that populist attitudes are correlated with support for populist parties, even controlling for parties' and voters' issue positions. Thus, it may be that the apparent correlation between populist attitudes and support for tough penal policies is due to support for Duterte as a populist and the associated approval of any policy positions he happens to hold.

In spite of international condemnation, domestic approval of Duterte has remained robust. On coming to office, Duterte registered a trust rating of 91 percent (July 2016); it declined to 76 percent in March 2017 and has relatively remained constant at that level, rising back slightly to 80 percent in March 2018. Similarly, Duterte's performance rating remains positive, with 80 percent of Filipinos approving of his performance in the December 2017 survey, lower than the highest approval he posted in the September 2016 survey at 86 percent. This rate of decline is roughly similar to that experienced by four of five of Duterte's predecessors.<sup>10</sup>

We find no evidence of a relationship between populist attitudes and approval of Duterte or trust in Duterte. Given that Duterte is commonly described as a populist, the lack of any association is noteworthy. We do find support of a relationship between the attribution of charismatic leadership traits and approval of and trust in Duterte. However, as the traits associated with charisma tend to be positive (though not by definition) this is not a surprising result.

We next examine the relationship between attitudes on crime and support for Duterte as a candidate. There is some evidence that Duterte's singular campaign increased the salience of drug-related criminality to Filipinos in the immediate lead up to the 2016 election but it is also clear that concerns over criminality had become an issue well before Duterte launched his campaign. In the first half of 2016, the number of respondents rating "Curbing the widespread sale and use of illegal drugs" as the most important issue facing the nation rose from 36 percent in January to 39 percent in February and 41 percent in April. Similarly, approval of the Ramos government's performance in fighting criminality dropped to an historic low of 3X percent in March 2016. However, while approval had hovered at around 60 percent between January 2011 and January 2014, approval had begun declining in mid-2012, and continued this decline to a level of around 45 percent even before Duterte had declared his candidature for president.

In October 2015, respondents were asked, in an open ended question, to identify the primary problem or issue in their locality that should be immediately addressed by the next president.<sup>11</sup> In this survey, the largest plurality (21.2 percent) of respondents identified illegal drugs as the primary problem or issue in their place that should be addressed immediately by the next

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<sup>10</sup> Can refer to the chapter I wrote in the Duterte Reader, pp. 66-70. Holmes Ronald D., 2017. "Who supports Rodrigo Duterte?", in Curato, Nicole (ed).. A Duterte Reader: Critical Essays on the Early Presidency of Rodrigo Duterte. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press

<sup>11</sup> Paul, the pasted table comes from an article I published here--<https://journals.sub.uni-hamburg.de/giga/jsaa/article/view/1008/1015>. If needed, I can create the table in a different format, showing top of mind, second and third mentioned urgent concerns rather than just the total

president. Illegal drugs was the top concern for a third of the respondents in the National Capital Region (33.5 percent) and the most affluent socio-economic Class ABC (30.7 percent), the region and socio-economic class where Duterte would consistently obtain significant pre-election and election support. The proliferation of illegal drugs was also the most pressing concern for the largest socio-economic Class D<sup>12</sup> (21.1 percent). Illegal drugs eclipsed the second most important problem, the lack of jobs/livelihood that was identified by a little over a fifth of the respondents (20.7 percent) and was the chief concern for those in Mindanao (23.2 percent) and the poorest socio-economic Class E (23.4 percent). The results of the survey partially explain the appeal of Duterte as he zeroed in on the drug problem as an anchor issue during his campaign. Unsurprisingly, indeed, pre-election support for Duterte is positively associated the perception that crime is the most important issue in the Philippines. In short, there is some evidence that Duterte's campaign increased the salience of drug-related criminality for voters, but declining approval of how the previous government was handling crime was already evident before Duterte's campaign had begun.

We can also consider the relationship between support for Duterte and support for the penal policies he has introduced. There was a considerable increase in approval of the government's performance in fighting crime following Duterte's election. This rebound is unsurprising given the widely observed tendency for public opinion to respond thermostatically to changes in public policy (Wlezien 1995). As the prior trend demonstrates, Filipinos had come to sense that crime fighting was "undersupplied"; to the extent that Duterte promised to rectify this trend, approval of his government's performance on fighting crime increased.

Support for the war on illegal drugs has remained robust since Duterte's election. As of March 2018, 85 percent of respondents support the anti-drug campaign. Only 3 percent do not support it. These figures are very similar to those expressed in the survey conducted in September 2016. Surprisingly, this overwhelming support exists in spite of widespread reservations about police conduct. About half of respondents believe that the police disregards the rights of drug suspects in the conduct of its operations (March 2017). Moreover, in a March 2018 survey, 79 percent believe that extra-judicial killings occur and 68 percent were worried that they, a relative or someone they knew may be killed because of the anti-illegal drugs operations.

Determining the degree to which support for the anti-illegal drug war policies is driven by Duterte is a complex matter. To get at this, we embed an endorsement experiment within a survey conducted three months after Duterte's election. We split our survey sample in two, with one group being asked whether they supported the anti-illegal drug campaign, and the other group being asked whether they supported *Duterte's* anti-illegal drug campaign. Results were not statistically significant across the split samples, supporting the notion that there was a pent-up demand for tough on crime policies prior to Duterte's election that would have led to support for these policies irrespective of Duterte's charismatic appeal.

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<sup>12</sup> In our surveys, the largest socio-economic class D comprise around 65% of the population. The poorest socio-economic class E constitutes around 25% of the population, while the remaining 10% are classified in the wealthiest Class ABC.

By itself, however, this evidence is inconclusive. Already by September 2016, the anti-drug campaign was strongly associated with Duterte. He had campaigned almost singularly on the issue through mid-2016. Thus, it may be that the prompt was probably ineffective as an instrument for parsing out support for the anti-drug campaign from support for Duterte. Indeed, there consistent evidence that support for the anti-drug war is correlated with trust in Duterte himself. In each survey conducted after both September 2016 and September 2017, we find that the trust rating of Duterte is positively related to support for the anti-drug war.

## **Conclusion**

The causal linkage between populist attitudes, support for charismatic leaders, and policy preferences remains under-developed. In particular, while several studies have demonstrated a correlation between populist attitudes and support for populist parties, we still cannot be sure of the direction of any causal effect. If a populist leader uses his power to undermine the autonomy of opposition political parties and the effectiveness of the legislature, is popular distrust of parties a cause or effect of support for a populist leader? Similarly, if supporters of populist candidates support some of the policies of a populist leader (e.g., restriction of immigration), is support for the policies or the leader causally primary? The same problem of endogeneity is particularly likely with respect to the belief in the charisma of a leader. The association between attribution of charisma to Duterte and support for a campaign so associated with him personally is thus probably unsurprising. Again, we cannot be fully sure of the direction of the effect, but it does suggest that support for a leader may influence support for that leader's policies.

Our findings, however, do suggest a direct pathway between populist attitudes and policy preferences. In this case, populist attitudes are correlated with support for the most extreme measure taken in the conduct of the campaign – the killing of resisting suspects. While scholars of populism operating within the ideational paradigm have tended to de-link populist attitudes from any particular set of policies or interests, whether of the left or right, our findings instead indicate that populist attitudes may go hand in hand with more specific policy preferences when these are also framed in terms of the interests of “good” or “common” people. Again, although theoretical scholarship has (correctly) sought to parse nativism and populism, the results presented in this paper suggest a way of explaining the affinity between the two. Anti-immigrant policies, unlike say pro-worker policies or protectionism, which have more diverse economic impacts, can be easily framed as being in the interests of the people. Criminals and ‘illegal’ immigrants are especially prone to being excluded from “the people” and so policies that target them, whether tough policing or a beefing up of border security, are an easier sell to those who are sceptical of “politicking” and tend to favour the wisdom of the common man.

## Appendix

Procedure for selecting sample barangays:

For the NCR:

*Stage 1: Selection of Sample Barangays:* 60 barangays were distributed among the 17 cities and municipalities in such a way that each city/municipality was assigned a number of barangays that was roughly proportional to its population size. An additional provision was that each municipality must have one sample barangay. Barangays were selected at random from within each city/municipality.

*Stage 2: Selection of Sample Households:* In each sample barangays map, interval sampling was used to draw 5 sample households. A starting street corner was drawn at random. The first sample household was randomly selected from the households nearest to the starting street corner. Subsequent sample households were chosen using a fixed interval of 5 households in between the sampled ones; i.e., every 6th household was sampled.

*Stage 3: Selection of the Sample Adult:* In each selected household, a respondent was randomly chosen among household members who were 18 years of age and older, using a probability selection table. To ensure that half of the respondents were males and half were females, only male family members were pre-listed in the probability selection table of odd-numbered questionnaires while only female members were pre-listed for even-numbered questionnaires. In cases where there was no qualified respondent of a given gender, the interval sampling of household continued until five sample respondents were identified.

For the rest of the Philippines:

*Stage 1: Allocation of sample barangays to Regions:* Within each major area, 60 barangays were allocated to the regions proportional to household population size.

*Stage 2: Allocation and Selection of Sample Cities/Municipalities to Regions:* Within each study area, 15 cities/municipalities were allocated to the regions proportional to household population size. Sample cities/municipalities were selected without replacement and with probability proportional to household population size.

*Stage 3: Selection of Sample Barangays:* Once the cities/municipalities have been selected, 60 barangays were distributed among the sample cities/municipalities in such a way that each city/municipality was assigned a number of barangays roughly proportional to its household population size. However, each city/municipality must be assigned with at least one sample barangay.

Sample barangays within each sample city/municipality were selected with equal probabilities.

**Table A1 Logit models of support for the anti-drug campaign**

	(2) Support	(1) Truly Support
Populist attitudes	-0.214 (0.558)	0.855** (0.368)
Charismatic leader	0.444*** (0.149)	0.425*** (0.0930)
Socio-economic class	-0.192 (0.226)	0.154 (0.159)
2017 dummy	-0.210 (0.153)	-0.240** (0.0956)
Constant	2.130*** (0.376)	-0.604** (0.241)
Observations	1990	1990

Standard errors in parentheses

\*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

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