Chapter 3

The Performativity of Terror-Tagging and the Prospects for a Marcos Presidency

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Introduction

The Philippine government has been relentless in its counterinsurgency campaigns. From the colonial wars that vilified as insurgents and bandits the honored heroes of today, up to the anti-communist and anti-secessionist civil and military efforts of the postcolonial regimes, these campaigns have not only rolled out large state resources but also cost lives of innocent civilians. Patterned after the United States (US) of America's principle of low-intensity conflict aimed at countering Marxist and anti-imperialist movements (Reed 1986), counterinsurgency campaigns have unleashed a warfare that indiscriminately target its supposed opponents, including unarmed activists. In 2007, the United Nations Special Rapporteur Philip Alston examined the horrible political situation of the Philippines – characterized by political killings, abductions, and tortures – and identified how state elements, under the blanket protection of waging a counterinsurgency campaign, were responsible for the political repressions then (Sales 2009). Today, under the murderous Duterte regime, the counterinsurgency campaign has reached an unprecedented level of ferocity as it is waged through a militarist whole-of-nation approach composed by multi-level government and multi-agency responses.

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Being greatly influenced by the US, counterinsurgency campaigns in the Philippines follow the paranoiac and hysterical communist witch-hunt of McCarthyism (Hutchins-Viroux 2008). The hysteria's contemporary and local expression is the phenomenon called red- or terror-tagging.[1] Terror-tagging is the systematic process of maliciously naming or identifying an individual or group as a communist and/or terrorist by its association with a supposed communist and/or terrorist group. Being a systematic process, it is initiated and sustained by state elements with the view of maligning or defaming political activists. Terror-tagging is aimed against activists, dissenters, and even the political opposition. The social activist Rhoda Dalang (2014) has noted how terror-tagging has been deployed by the Philippine state in its counterinsurgency efforts, from the Marcos up to the then Aquino regime. And until the previous Duterte regime, yet with increased intensity and fatality, terror-tagging continued to defame and liquidate activists.

As terror-tagging has not received enough academic attention, this chapter aims to fill this gap by providing a preliminary analysis of it. The chapter will be doing a critical discourse analysis. It will take off from a revealing study done by Don Kevin Hapal and Raisa Serafica of *Rappler*, a media outlet in the Philippines. Through a separate discourse analysis of Facebook posts of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC),[2] the chapter will also identify aspects of terror-tagging. The discussion will further be theorized using the Marxist analysis of the State and informed by interviews of Atty. Maria Sol Taule and Cristina Palabay. They are both human rights workers who have worked with terror-tagged activists and are themselves subjected to terror-tagging.

State-Centricity, Historicity, and Performativity as Aspects of Terror-Tagging

A study conducted by Hapal and Serafica (2021) is revealing of what we will call as terror-tagging's three important aspects: state-centricity, historicity, and performativity. First, the study was able to identify how the NTF-ELCAC

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[1] While red-tagging and terror-tagging may have various recipients given the variance between the communist movement spread across the archipelago on the one hand, and the fundamentalist groups mostly operating in Mindanao in southern Philippines on the other, I will subsume the former to the latter since today, the red has also been terror-tagged.

[2] The NTF-ELCAC's posts from January 2020 to June 2021 were manually mined and subjected to digital reading through the software *AntConc*.

to be at the "center of the network of Facebook pages and groups pushing out red-tagging content."[3] The study illustrated the sophisticated operations of this networked propaganda. It revealed how specific clusters composed by Facebook pages and groups distribute terror-tagging-charged Facebook contents either to the general public or to niche but engaged communities. These clusters compose what we will call as the amplifying layer and they distribute contents generated by and fed to them from another layer.

This other layer is what we will call as the central layer that generates the main discursive contents. As the study charged, "at the center of the [terror-tagging] campaign is the official Facebook page of the NTF-ELCAC," along with other state-owned media (like the Philippine News Agency and the Philippine Television Network) and official military channels (Hapal 2021). These state-funded institutions comprise the central layer and together with the amplifying layer constitute a counterinsurgency discourse in which terror-tagging takes place. The study further elaborated the relationship between the central and amplifying layers by indicating how content from the former is shared in hundreds of Facebook pages and groups of the latter thereby distributing in an exponential manner the content generated from the central layer. The relationship between the central and amplifying layers illustrates what we call as terror-tagging's aspect of state-centricity: it is a phenomenon that, while entangled within a sophisticated network of discursive layers, is primarily organized and supported by the state as part of its counterinsurgency campaign.[4]

Second, the study of Hapal and Serafica was also able to trace the surge of terror-tagging posts starting from 2018 which peaked in 2020. While there were incidents of terror-tagging in the past, this was intensified in 2018 when the peace negotiations between the communist insurgents and the Duterte regime collapsed and the latter started "implementing a militarist approach to crush the guerrillas and their supposed front organizations" (Hapal and Serafica 2021). Hapal and Serafica (2021) found out how the "government's campaign against insurgents was complemented by increased activity online."

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[3] The NTF-ELCAC was established by the Duterte regime last 2018 to supposedly roll out a whole-of-nation approach to end the more than half a century communist insurgency waged by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) through its armed wing the New People's Army (NPA). In this study, *Rappler* traced red-tagging activities in Facebook from January 2016 to August 2021.

[4] State-centricity has already been earlier affirmed by Philippine Supreme Court Associate Justice Marvic Leonen when, in his definition of red-baiting, he underscored it as a "strategy… by State agents, particularly law enforcement agencies and the military, against those perceived to be 'threats' or enemies of the State." See Vera Files (2018).

They observed that the highest surge of red-tagging posts took place in 2020 when the regime, in the middle of a health crisis, pushed for the enactment of the detested Anti-Terrorism Bill.

Terror-tagging is as intense as the very counterinsurgency campaign in which it is an element of. Certain socio-political conjunctures intensify this campaign thereby equally intensifying terror-tagging itself. In the case of the Philippines, the conjuncture has reached a point where the state, in response to the economic and socio-political crises that beleaguered it, has developed into what Nicos Poulantzas (2018) described as an exceptional and fascist one. Duterte's fascist regime developed in specific periods (Imbong 2020). Specifically, 2018-2020 marked in the Philippines what Poulantzas called as the period of fascism's "development" – this is preceded by the first period of its "rise" (which took place in 2017) and followed by the period of its "stabilization" (which took place from 2020 onwards).

While the period of fascism's rise was conditioned by "the severance of ties and all-out antagonism against the radical left, be it the armed or the unarmed movement," the period of its development was characterized by the "institution of mechanisms that narrowly target the radical left" (Imbong 2020, 44). The conjuncture has reached a point where the state has seen the necessity to institute a machinery that could effectively target the Left. In the case of the Duterte regime, this machinery was the NTF-ELCAC, established through Executive Order 70 in 2018 and tasked to ensure a whole-of-nation approach to communist insurgency. What needs to be emphasized here is how, on the one hand, the intensity of a counterinsurgency campaign, including its terror-tagging element, escalates (or deteriorates) along with the socio-political conjunctures and, on the other, the NTF-ELCAC was a specific historical response to a socio-political conjuncture.

Terror-tagging, along with fascism, escalated when the Duterte regime started projecting to the "radical left not only its failures but also its manufactured enemy image: the terrorist" (Imbong 2020, 44). This was perfected through the establishment of the NTF-ELCAC. The regime was placed in a conjuncture where it required an intensified construction and vilification of an enemy image through terror-tagging. The determination of the historical conjunctures upon the intensity of terror-tagging refers to what we will call as its aspect of historicity: it is a phenomenon whose origin and development are determined by specific historical conjunctures.

Third, the study was able to show how the central and amplifying layers focused on constructing a discourse that created "an enabling environment for violence" (Hapal and Serafica 2021). This discursive construction of an

enabling environment for violence doubly portrayed a situation where activists are terrorists, on the one hand, and the communist insurgency is a "problem bigger than what it is" (Hapal and Serafica). How violence is enabled is through what we will call as the associatory function of terror-tagging.

The portrayal of the activist as a terrorist by the NTF-ELCAC is constituted by two interdependent discursive layers of associations: first, the association of the activist (e.g., the *Makabayan* bloc) with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), New People's Army (NPA), and National Democratic Front (NDF) and, second, the association of the latter with terrorism. This double-layered association is what we call as the associatory function of terror-tagging. An analysis of NTF-ELCAC's Facebook posts from January 2020 to June 2021 reveals that, among the topmost twenty terms that it frequently posted, *Makabayan* ranks the 16th (with 213 mentions). The term *Makabayan* refers to the political bloc of Left and progressive party-list groups (with 187 mentions) which oftentimes is mocked by the NTF-ELCAC as *kamatayan* or death bloc (with 26 mentions).[5]

Table 1. Top twenty most-used terms in NTF-ELCAC's Facebook posts from January 2020 to June 2021

	Term	Number of mentions		Term	Number of mentions
1	NTFELCAC/ELCAC/NTF	1,330	11	National	272
2	NPA	977	12	Army	261
3	CPP	782	13	Armed	233
4	EO	655	14	Law	222
5	People	602	15	Children	217
6	Terrorist/s/ic	482	16	Makabayan	213
7	Government	450	17	Indigenous	195
8	NDF	449	18	Filipino	178
9	Communist	387	19	Country	175
10	Philippines	283	20	Party	171

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[5] Aside from *Makabayan*, several other groups and personalities from the Left were terror-tagged. In NTF-ELCAC's Facebook posts, the most terror-tagged names that follow *Makabayan* are Jose Maria Sison, *Gabriela* Party-list, *Bayan Muna* Party-list, *Anakbayan* organization, Carlos Zarate of *Bayan Muna*, *Karapatan*, *Kabataan* Party-list, Eufemia Cullamat of *Bayan Muna*, and the National Union of People's Lawyers.

Table 2. How the NTF-ELCAC portrays *Makabayan* bloc's
association with the CPP-NPA-NDF

Date of Facebook post	The portrayal	The statement/phrase
September 16, 2020[1]	Supporter of the armed struggle of the CPP-NPA-NDF	All acts undertaken by the Makabayan bloc, for sure, are in support for the advancement of the armed struggle!
September 17, 2020[2]	CPP-led	Kabataan and other Makabayan bloc… partylist [sic] are all CPP-led.
November 26, 2020[3]	Representative of the CPP-NPA-NDF	…the Filipino people have expressed so clearly their disgust and outrage of this violent ideology being forced on us by CPP NPA NDF represented by the Makabayan bloc…
November 26, 2020[4]	Enemies of the state	The ball has now been passed to the House of Representatives who harbor, within their walls, enemies of the state – the Makabayan bloc…
November 30, 2020[5]	Representative of front organizations of the CPP-NPA-NDF	President Rodrigo Roa Duterte backs claims of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in identifying the party-lists and organizations represented by the Makabayan bloc… as fronts of the terrorist [CPP-NPA-NDF].
September 5, 2020[6]	High-ranking party members	Makabayan bloc representatives must strip themselves of all their pretenses and take away their masks of 'legislator'… they are high ranking party members of the [CPP] that directly guides and gives explicit and implicit instructions to its armed component, the [NPA], and to its legal fronts under the umbrella of the [NDF] to destroy government and kill democracy…
December 1, 2020[7]		We are grateful for the clarity that the Makabayan bloc has… given us because it bolsters and proves the accuracy of our claims that Carlos Zarate, Eufemia Cullamat, Sarah Elago, Arlene Brosas, Ferdinand Gaite, and France Castro of the Makabayan bloc are all high ranking party members of the [CPP] and have a direct hand in the actions of the [NDF].
December 8, 2020[8]	Legal front of the CPP-NPA-NDF	…are all members of the sarcastically named Makabayan bloc, a legal front of the CPP NPA NDF…

[1]https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=325576055547452&id=113896963382030.
[2]https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=326230318815359&id=113896963382030.
[3]https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=386924422745948&id=113896963382030.
[4]https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=386924422745948&id=113896963382030.
[5]https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=389918602446530&id=113896963382030.
[6]https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=317081796396878&id=113896963382030.
[7]https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=390275569077500&id=113896963382030.
[8]https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=395685368536520&id=113896963382030.

Although part of the government bureaucracy being composed of parliamentarians empowered by grassroots and emancipatory politics, *Makabayan*, by its mere "association" with terrorism, is considered as among the enemies. The first association, or the association of the activists with the communists, comes in many forms. The table above illustrates how the major forms of portrayal of the *Makabayan* bloc take place in NTF-ELCAC's posts to associate them with the armed communists.

In the case of the *Makabayan* bloc, the portrayal erratically shifts from one to another. From being a mere supporter to a representative of those waging the armed struggle, or from being led by the CPP to ultimately being composed of high-ranking members of the CPP itself. The NTF-ELCAC's inconsistent association of the *Makabayan* bloc with the CPP-NPA-NDF, aside from being unfounded,[6] is also malicious in a dual sense. It is malicious in the sense that charges were hurled against parliamentarians and activists to discredit their views. This position was corroborated by Taule and Palabay who claimed that terror-tagging essentially discredits activists and their advocacies.[7] And it is also malicious in the more fundamental sense in that their entire discourse works only under the premise that the CPP-NPA-NDF are considered terrorists. This is the second layer, the association of the communist insurgents with terrorism.

How the NTF-ELCAC associates the CPP-NPA-NDF with terrorism follows from a simplistic and reductionist logic. Here, it discredits the ongoing civil war between the armed communist insurgents and government forces and reduces this to mere terroristic violence of the former – devoid of any noble if not revolutionary goals – that demands for appropriate liquidationist responses from the latter. The communist insurgents are portrayed simplistically as extortionists, recruiters and exploiters of "child warriors," murderers, arsonists, destabilizers of the government, and destroyers of democracy. This simplistic portrayal obscures the systemic issues that set the theater for what the communists describe as a people's war for national liberation and democracy (Guerrero 2005).

Despite the civil war being primarily driven by socio-economic and political issues (Imbong 2019), the NTF-ELCAC merely mentions the Comprehensive Agreement for Socio-Economic Reforms (CASER) twice in the span of eighteen months of its Facebook posts. First was its post on January

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[6] As of this writing, no case has been filed by the accusers against the *Makabayan* bloc and the other terror-tagged groups concerning their "association" with the CPP-NPA-NDF.
[7] Email correspondence with Atty. Maria Sol Taule, February 4, 2022 and Zoom interview with Cristina Palabay, January 17, 2022.

7, 2020, which only shared the statement of the National Security Adviser retired Gen. Germogenes Esperon "detailing provisions contentious to the interests of the Filipino people."[8] Second was NTF-ELCAC spokesperson Gen. Antonio Paralade's response to Gloria Glenda of *Rappler* last June 15, 2020. Other than these two mentions, the NTF-ELCAC is silent about how socio-economic reforms ought to gradually arrest the root-causes of the armed conflict and pave the way towards a just and lasting peace.[9]

Why the NTF-ELCAC's deafening silence on the CASER and an all-out rampage against the Left through terror-tagging? What needs to be clarified here is that the CASER and terror-tagging proceed from two opposing discursive frameworks: the framework for reforms and the framework for liquidation, respectively. The latter framework is captured in NTF-ELCAC's post last March 29, 2021, when it charged that "organizations that promote violence will never have a place in this world. We will never celebrate Terrorist Organizations."[10] What this post *says* is how terrorist organizations or, through the associatory function of terror-tagging, the *Makabayan* bloc and the entire Left, are not only prohibited from having a place in the world but also to be liquidated and eradicated should they insist their place in the world. However, what this post *does not say*, as part of the overall deafening silence of the NTF-ELCAC, is the complexities of a war that, while indeed violent, is fundamentally driven by socio-economic and political issues that, therefore, could be addressed only through appropriate reforms. In fact, not only is the NTF-ELCAC silent of the CASER, but it is also silent of the concept of reform itself, mentioned only thrice. What NTF-ELCAC *says* reflects its preferential option for a liquidationist rather than a reformist counterinsurgency discourse that effectively enables an environment for violence. Terror-tagging, as it takes place in this discourse, could only assume a performative function where it does not only say but in saying something simultaneous does something – or enables the liquidation and repression of something. John Austin (1962) and Giorgio Agamben (2019) elaborated the performative function of language, as opposed to the traditional understanding of it merely as that which indicates the truth or falsity of being. In the case of Austin (1962, 12),

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[8] https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=144616713643388&id=113896963382030.

[9] https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=256555005782891&id=113896963382030&__cft__[0]=AZUsidFb9UMKdfQk0_n_n6YPUlLtLiRCOSMeirqADjBpch9ylNM8ZzN551XPuHKeli2dT4-CU_r41JBONh-EfOHnJthPPH3GCVMoS2HnPXAHgoknTBK-kPFz3SxOmRq4JcfT2ai0p0osoZGrTnfrBcat&__tn__=%2CO%2CP-R.

[10] https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=466767604761629&id=113896963382030.

to say something is not "always and simply to *state* something." There are specific instances where saying is already *doing* something, as in the case of imperatives – like an order to arrest or kill an individual. For Austin (1962, 8), in a performative, the uttering of words become the "leading incident in the performance of the act… the performance of which is also the object of the utterance." In the case of Agamben (2019, 47), the performative represents the "survival in language of an epoch when the relation between words and things was not apophantic, but instead had the form of the command."[11] It is a residue of an earlier stage where the relation between language and the world is not "semantico-denotative" since the "verbal act brings being into truth" (Agamben 2017, 342). This is what we will call as terror-tagging's aspect of performativity: the performance of repressive action enabled through liquidationist discourse.

The Constructivist Turn in Terrorism Studies and the Associatory Function of Terror-Tagging

The constructivist turn of the post-9/11 terrorism studies sheds light to the nature of terror-tagging as an instance in discourse. As against the actor-centered approach of conventional and critical terrorism studies, Rainer Hülsse and Alexander Spencer (2008, 575) developed a constructivist approach to terrorism studies which focusses not on the actor but on the "discursive processes by which terrorism is constituted in the first place." The discourse-centered terrorism studies reject claims that assume terrorism's objectivity and forwards an assertion that "terrorism is a social construction" (Hülsse and Spencer 2008). By social construction, the constructivist turn in terrorism studies does not deny the reality of terrorism as such but argues that the knowledge about the latter is often produced in discourse.

An earlier intervention by Richard Jackson (2005) has similarly argued how discourse was constitutive of the very meaning of the post-9/11 war on

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[11] Acknowledging that only in the twentieth century did logicians begin to be interested in the prescriptive function of language, that is, language in the imperative form, Agamben (2019) opened another path into the understanding of the relation between being and language as opposed to the one inaugurated by Aristotle. Agamben examined what takes place in a non-apophantic discourse such as a command. The latter is always in the imperative form, as opposed to Aristotelian apophantic statement that is always in the indicative form. Agamben gave as an example the injunction "walk!" The latter can be contrasted with the apophantic statement "Carlo walks" in the sense that the latter could either be true (if Carlo is indeed walking) or false (if Carlo is sitting).

terrorism. As he asserted, the "*practice* of counter-terrorism is predicated on and determined by the *language* of counterterrorism" (Jackson 2005, 8). Jackson (2005, 16) pointed out how this counter-terrorism project hinges on a "significant degree of social and political consensus" and a clear belief and knowledge of "what caused terrorism and how best to fight it." However, consensual and epistemological requirements necessitate the "deployment and manipulation of language" in discourse. If the people have to be united in terms of consent and knowledge of a supposed common enemy, they must not only be speaking the same language with those who commanded the war in the first place but also be thinking through the linguistic framework generated in the latter's discourse.

What the constructivist turn in terrorism studies provides is a framework in understanding the associatory function of terror-tagging. The state does not merely associate for the sake of doing so. It associates to construct knowledge and from such a knowledge justify their actions. In the case of the Philippines, knowledge construction takes the form of what Hapal and Serafica (2021) described as "insurgency and military propaganda against the Left" or the state's "information operations" which it intensified in 2018. The associatory function of terror-tagging is the generic formula from which the construction of the terrorist enemy in the state's counterinsurgency discourse takes place. Its immediate effect, as elaborated by Taule, is the demonization and discrediting of the "work of activists and human rights workers whom the government consider as the enemies of the state,"[12] as a result of the state's maliciously constructed knowledge of what an activist is. The knowledge-generating activity of the state, especially in relation to its supposed enemies, is part of its ideological function. What this function is and its relation to repression will be elaborated in more detail in the next section.

The Ideological Dimension of the NTF-ELCAC and Anti-Terror as the Dominant Ideology

Poulantzas[13] and Louis Althusser[14] worked on and further developed the Marxist understanding of the state as constituted both by the repressive state

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[12] Email correspondence with Atty. Maria Sol Taule, February 4, 2022.

[13] See Poulantzas (2018, 299-309) for a detailed discussion on his theorization of the repressive and ideological state apparatuses.

[14] See Althusser (2008, 14) for his elaboration and development of the Marxist theory of the state and how through such a development he was able to go beyond the "descriptive" stage of

apparatus (RSA) and the ideological state apparatuses (ISAs). For both Poulantzas (2018) and Althusser (2008), each apparatus performs a principal or predominant function: repression (and secondarily ideology) for the RSA and ideology (and secondarily repression) for the ISAs.

The RSA, also called as the state apparatus "in the strict sense" (Poulantzas 2018, 301), includes all the institutions directly attached to or controlled by the state: military, police, administration, courts, prisons, among others. While composed of branches, the RSA assumes a singular form as it does not possess any degree of autonomy from the state itself. As Poulantzas (2018, 305) remarked, the RSA, being the "*central nucleus* of the State system and State power, has a much stronger and more vigorous internal unity" compared to the ISAs. This apparatus functions, at least ultimately, by violence (Althusser 2008). The RSAs are the instruments by which the ruling class, or the alliance of classes in power, ensure/s and consolidate/s state power and reproduce/s the relations of production ultimately through violent means.

The ISAs include institutions grouped together under several apparatuses like the religious, political, legal, trade union, educational, communications or media, cultural, and the family, among others. They assume a plural form as these normally are constituted by "private" institutions which enjoy "*relative autonomy* both from each other and from the State apparatus" (Poulantzas 2018, 305). As those holding state power wield for themselves the RSA, it can also be said that the same class/es in power is/are active in the ISAs to ensure that its/their ideology becomes the ruling ideology realized in the ISAs in their contradictions (Althusser 2008). Through the ISAs, it is not pure violence that ensures and consolidates state power but ideology or ideological control, realized in the most material and concrete practices of a social formation (Poulantzas 2018).

Ideology does not simply refer to a system of ideas and representations but to the representation of the "imaginary relations of individuals to their real conditions of existence" which assumes a material existence (Althusser 2018, 38). Althusser argued that "it is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that 'men' 'represent to themselves' in ideology, but above all it is their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there." What ideology represents are not the real conditions of existence of

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the Marxist theory and develop it into "theory as such, i.e., in order to understand further the mechanisms of the State in its functioning." This development provided the conceptual tools from which Althusser theorized the repressive and ideological state apparatuses.

individuals but their supposed *relation* to the real conditions of existence. Ideology represents the *relation* itself, what Althusser (2018, 38) considered as the cause for the "imaginary distortion of the ideological representation of the real world" and this representation materializes in the most concrete practices realized in the apparatuses, like the family as will be shown later.

The two state apparatuses function to secure by force and through ideology the reproduction of the relations of production which, as Althusser (2018) claimed, in the last resort are relations of exploitation. For Althusser, the economy, especially under a capitalist system of production, is fundamentally structured by exploitation and that the apparatuses function by repressing all resistance against the said exploitation – as in the case of the RSA, or ideologically controlling the exploited to normalize such an exploitation, as in the case of the ISAs. It is already beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate how exploitation takes various forms in the different classes and sectors of Philippine society and how through the functions of the state this is secured. But what will be discussed is how the ideological and repressive functions of the state are rather expressed and served by the NTF-ELCAC.

As composed by heads of governmental agencies including those from the military and the police, it can be said that the NTF-ELCAC is part of the RSA. Principally or primarily, it functions by violence or repression. However, both Poulantzas and Althusser argued how the RSA and the ISAs could function ideologically and repressively, respectively, although secondarily. As Althusser (2008, 19) would say, "there is no such thing as a purely repressive apparatus." In one way or another, the military and the police will also function by ideology especially in ensuring "their own cohesion and reproduction, and in the 'values' they propound externally" (Althusser 2008, 19). What is at stake here is to distinguish the ideological dimension of the NTF-ELCAC as part of the RSA and identify the ideologies from which it attempts to impose control on subjects.

The NTF-ELCAC has *specifically* worked on three ideologies deployed throughout its Facebook posts: the anti-terror, family, and democracy.[15] These

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[15] I use the term *specifically* to emphasize how the state prefers the most effective ideological categories to propagate their ideas. The (anti-terror) law, family (or *pamilya*), and democracy (or *demokrasya*) were mentioned 56, 59, and 30 times, respectively. While the state certainly worked on all ISAs, at a certain point in time, it heightens its ideological work in one or more ideological apparatuses. In the case for example of Adolf Hitler's fascism, the fascist party ensured the subjection of the ISAs to the RSA. Meanwhile, some ISAs, like the communications or media and the family, assumed essential roles.

are respectively realized in the legal ideological state apparatus (LISA), family ideological state apparatus (FISA), and political ideological state apparatus (PISA).

First, even before it was enacted into a law, the anti-terror was already an operating ideology that provided unity to the counterinsurgency discourse of the state and the NTF-ELCAC later. Anti-terror became an effective ideological category from which to distinguish supposed state enemies. It must be noted that the Department of Justice released the supposed list of "terrorist" individuals years before the enactment of the Anti-Terror Law (ATL) (Fonbuena, 2018). The state was already working its way to making the anti-terror the dominant state ideology out from which a counterinsurgency discourse is weaved and ideological control secured. This explains why the NTF-ELCAC's counterinsurgency discourse is overloaded with anti-terror sentiments. Legalizing the said ideology in the form of a law only provided the ideology a legal basis but not really a necessary condition for it becoming a dominant ideology.

Upon its legalization in 2020, the anti-terror ideology was said to have perfected the whole-of-nation counterinsurgency approach of the state. Echoing a statement of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the NTF-ELCAC, in its July 4, 2020 post, recognized how the law, through the passing of the ATL, was a significant

> …step in the whole-of-nation approach against terrorism because it will give [the NTF-ELCAC] the upper hand against communist terrorists and violent extremists who have sought legal cover under the obsolete provisions of the Human Security Act [HSA]… With this law, the government and our law enforcers… are better equipped to protect our people…[16]

The statement above is ideologically charged. By distinguishing itself (i.e., law, in the form of the ATL) from itself (i.e., law, in the form of HSA), it appears to have perfected itself as *the* law that could provide unity to the whole-of-nation counterinsurgency efforts of the regime. In this way, state elements could better "protect" the people through the perfected law. Inversely, the people are supposed to feel protected because of it. While the anti-terror ideology's realization in the LISA only came later, it however has

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[16]   https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=269893697782355&id=113896963382030&__cft__[0]=AZVD8K4BjUWL1Ps8nghIhbdQPiCuMvqyiKNTCdlOwZwcMe8Cfnozl-wzciQiw3C-8bKK9H-g2a1FyrnU9g9D03Ra6wXTt3Qtsm5IsZFnYSA1Umo7S0wyJkt0ro0ib1SVM-VMlQlZPPlWrRcjMfcwV3q3&__tn__=%2CO%2CP-R.

been established as the dominant ideology out from which the state ensured control. The anti-terror ideology was eventually institutionalized/legalized and realized through the LISA and as will be shown later, forced its way to several other state ideological apparatuses but with varied degrees of contradictions

Second, in its various posts, the NTF-ELCAC deployed the family as an ideological category from which it appealed to the Filipinos to save their children and distance them away from supposed terrorists. Mentioned earlier was how the term "children" was the top 15th most used term by the NTF-ELCAC posts.

These posts portrayed the supposed vulnerability of children and the youth against communist/terrorist recruitment. The NTF-ELCAC claimed that this usually takes place in some schools and universities where supposed recruitment is strong through its alleged front organizations, like the youth group *Anakbayan*.[17]

It was the NTF-ELCAC that popularized the hashtag *#HandsOff OurChildren* and backed the League of Parents to campaign against the supposed communist/terrorist recruitment of the Filipino youth. According to the NTF-ELCAC, communist/terrorist recruitment among the youth has only resulted to broken families if not to their deaths. Alluding to how the communist insurgents are not the genuine defenders of the people as they supposedly destroy families, the NTF-ELCAC, in its July 10, 2020 post, expressed that,

> The true defender of the people and the Filipino families shapes the youth to become good sons and daughters, does not separate them from their respective families, and does not object the youth to have a dream but rather regards value for education, does not separate them from the path of education."[18]

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[17] In its May 8, 2020 post, the NTF-ELCAC alleged that the youth group *Anakbayan* is among the communist recruiters. https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=2298471 38453678&id=113896963382030&__cft__[0]=AZXpj7V6z24Yv9fU1ROxf0IzljtKkEdB XBJ2vUehQaly8OPDMeBSePN_OLCN5LtY30Na03Eq9IXxAzvBuis4hErhKGG-v60M WSHL_NjPW_TsmZp8767ad5gCoTdryZ8ndny5-7oQmUnlmdY7VLuZOzSb&__tn__ =%2CO%2CP-R.

[18] Originally in Filipino. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=322389469158895.

The family ideology takes the form of an imperative and is expressed in the NTF-ELCAC's post last March 25, 2021: "*let us protect our children!*"[19] The family ideology is realized through the FISA.

Third, the NTF-ELCAC deployed the democracy ideology and regarded it to be endangered by the communist/terrorist insurgents. For example, in its September 5, 2020 post, the NTF-ELCAC charged that the insurgents aim to destroy or topple democracy and supplant it with communism.[20] It is supposed that democracy is as similarly vulnerable as the children in terms of the Left's violence and ideology. And in the same way that the Left supposedly destroys the family, it likewise and equally destroys democracy. The democracy ideology takes the form of an imperative and can be seen in the NTF-ELCAC's post last July 8, 2020:

> Let us all protect our democracy by abandoning those fake advocates of press freedom, of human rights; those duplicitous protectors of the oppressed, murderers of our children, and those plunderous opportunists, all belonging to the underground and aboveground organisations [sic] of the [CPP].[21]

The democracy ideology is realized through the PISA.

Both the family and democracy ideologies take the form of imperatives that locate their unity under the anti-terror ideology. It can be said that the state's ideological line, expressed in the NTF-ELCAC's counterinsurgency discourse, equally takes the form of the imperative: *let us protect our family and democracy from the terrorists!* The anti-terror ideology dominates over the family and democracy ideologies. Two brief examples from the FISA and PISA are worth noting in this regard. First, the case of Alicia Lucena of *Anakbayan*, who the NTF-ELCAC accused to have been kidnapped/recruited and have joined the armed struggle of the communists. This is the most visible instance of, on the one hand, how the family ideology was used by the state against a subject associated with the communists/terrorists, and, on the other, how the FISA functioned to control the said subject by way of confinement. Interestingly, the said apparatus assumed a repressive character, similar to the prison apparatus, when it confined Alicia in her home away from supposed

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19 https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=464246141680442&id=11389696338 2030.

20 https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=317081796396878&id=11389696338 2030.

21 https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=272476957524029&id=11389696338 2030.

terrorist recruiters. Crucial here was how the anti-terror ideology was deployed to operate the ideological and repressive functions of the FISA. Ultimately, Alicia was able to assert her legitimacy as a legal activist and prove the accusations of the NTF-ELCAC and her family wrong.[22]

Second, the democracy ideology aimed at isolating both that which is supposed to destroy democracy itself, the Left, and the alternative and progressive politics associated with the latter. Politics was reduced to the war against terror the condition of which was the portrayal of the communist insurgency as a "problem bigger than what it is" (Hapal and Serafica 2021). Noticeable here was how virtually all government agencies and local government units (LGUs) were placed under the control of the NTF-ELCAC in relation to its supposed war against terror. Observing the mandate of the NTF-ELCAC, the DILG (2019), headed by retired Gen. Eduardo Año, warned local government officials against "directly or indirectly giving financial, material, and political support to communist terrorist rebels as well as other non-State actors." The associatory function of terror-tagging effectively constrains government officials from engaging the Left to build an alternative politics built on social justice and reforms. The case of Escalante City Councilor Bernardino Patigdas is enlightening in this regard. While being a local government official, he was also a coordinator of the terror-tagged party-list *Bayan Muna*. He was assassinated last April 22, 2019.

Differences in party lines among traditional political parties, if there were any, were supposedly transcended in their effort to curb terrorism and protect democracy. This was stated by the NTF-ELCAC when, in its July 4, 2020 post, it lauded lawmakers who "crossed party lines and placed the interest of the nation first" by supporting the passage of the ATL.[23] Through the anti-terror ideology's realization in the PISA, the different traditional political parties were united in defending the "interest of the nation" from those who supposedly aim at destroying its democratic ideals and institutions. But this also means marginalizing if not obscuring a progressive politics informed by the need to implement structural reforms to address the root causes of the communist insurgency.

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[22] For several times, Alicia would narrate how she does not feel safe in her very home causing her to leave several times. See Lavarro (2021).

[23] https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=269893697782355&id=113896963 382030&__cft__[0]=AZVD8K4BjUWL1Ps8nghIhbdQPiCuMvqyiKNTCdlOwZwcMe8 Cfnozl-wzciQiw3C-8bKK9H-g2a1FyrnU9g9D03Ra6wXTt3Qtsm5IsZFnYSA1Um o7S0wyJkt0ro0ib1SVM-VMlQlZPPlWrRcjMfcwV3q3&__tn__=%2CO%2CP-R.

The anti-terror ideology provided unity to the LISA, FISA, and PISA. The three apparatuses became the most important ISAs of the previous Duterte regime in its effort to control subjects. And given how such apparatuses have been so entrenched, it would not be easy to reverse the situation under a Marcos Jr. regime, granting the latter has any intentions to do so. While the state attempted at realizing the anti-terror ideology in the other ISAs, like the communications, educational, and church, it is in the LISA, PISA, and FISA that the state relatively succeeded in realizing the anti-terror as the dominant ideology as more sharpened contradictions are present in the other ISAs. For example, as journalists, educators, and church leaders outrightly criticized if not rejected the said ideology because of its repressive and undemocratic character, its realization in the ISAs was met with sharpened resistance. This is not to say that contradictions did not take place within the LISA, PISA, and FISA but that in and through the contradictions that took place within these apparatuses, contradictions that were dominated by state elements advancing the anti-terror ideology, the latter relatively succeed in making itself the dominant ideology in the aforementioned ISAs.

The Operation of an Imperative through Terror-Tagging as a Discursive Apparatus

In a work that traced the relation between ideology and discourse, Teun Van Dijk explained how ideology is largely expressed and reproduced in discourse. He further noted that ideological discourse often exhibits polarized structures that "typically emphasizes positive properties of Us, the ingroup, and negative properties of Them, the outgroup" (Van Dijk 2013, 180). This polarizing structure is embedded in the state's imperative ideological line mentioned earlier: *let us protect our family and democracy from the terrorists!* The anti-terror ideology expresses itself in a counterinsurgency discursive apparatus that captures this ideological line. As the previous Duterte regime, through the NTF-ELCAC, preferentially opted for a liquidationist rather than a reformist counterinsurgency discourse, it necessarily has to deploy a discursive apparatus that not only captures the dominant anti-terror ideology but also enables the environment for repressive violence: terror-tagging. Terror-tagging is the counterinsurgency discursive apparatus proper to the anti-terror ideology and it is through which the LISA, FISA, and PISA relatively succeeded in imposing ideological control over subjects.

As mentioned earlier, the anti-terror ideological line of the state expressed by the NTF-ELCAC assumes the imperative form: *let us protect our family and democracy from the terrorists!* Being the discursive apparatus proper to the anti-terror ideology, terror tagging is the operation of the state imperative to protect the family and democracy against the terrorists. The imperative form of the state's ideological line operated by terror-tagging leads us back to its aspect of performativity. Being the operation of an imperative, terror-tagging is not and will never simply be a "truth-tagging." The state, through its Office of the Solicitor General (CNN Philippines Staff, 2021), justifies its act of terror-tagging as "truth-tagging." On the one hand, the rhetoric of "truth-tagging" simply obscures how ideology is at play in terror-tagging. Since "ideology is not something 'neutral' in society" (Poulantzas 2018, 302), and since terror-tagging is the discursive apparatus that realizes this ideology, then terror-tagging could never be a neutral enterprise of "truthfully" naming terrorists. It is an ideological exercise of the state to generate knowledge, impose control and, through such a control, ensure the reproduction of exploitative relations.

On the other hand, the rhetoric of "truth-tagging" denies the very performativity of terror-tagging. It comes from a narrow understanding of language the function of which is reduced to the indication of the truth or falsity of being. This narrow understanding of language disregards what Agamben (2017) called as the non-apophantic, prescriptive, or imperative dimension of language where language does not anymore indicate but already enjoins or commands. Agambem (2019, 45) explained that the imperative is a "simple semanteme" that "expresses the pure ontological relation between language and the world." If for Aristotle the apophantic statement indicates something other than itself (that is, something in the world), the imperative intimates "nothing but itself" (that is, does not denote something in the world) and realizes the pure semantic connection between language and world. In the imperative, the relation between language and the world is not described but enjoined and commanded (Agamben 2019, 46).

While terror-tagging is an ideological discursive apparatus of the state, its performative aspect locates its relation to the repressive function of the state. Terror-tagging not only functions ideologically but also repressively. It must be remembered that it is the NTF-ELCAC, an element of the RSA, that propagates terror-tagging. It functions primarily or principally through violent repression although it secondarily works on ideology to ensure control and *justify repression*. What Hapal and Serafica (2021) claimed as terror-tagging enabling an environment of violence is precisely the condition of this

repression. Palabay revealed how terror-tagging has provided a condition for the harassment and even assassination of legal activists.[24] She explained how terror-tagging places targets at a disadvantageous and riskier position, as through it, incitements to violence are crowdsourced.

Emanating from a liquidationist discourse, terror-tagging is usually a prequel towards the liquidation of activists, critics, and dissenters. Hundreds of activists have been reportedly assassinated after being terror-tagged (Human Rights Watch 2022). The case of Zara Alvarez is an example of how the repressive function of terror-tagging worked. She was a human rights worker consistently terror-tagged by state agents, jailed for trumped-up charges that would be dismissed by the court, and killed last April 17, 2020. In his response to Palabay posted in its Facebook page last August 30, 2020, NTF-ELCAC spokesperson Gen. Antonio Parlade denied Alvarez as an activist and insisted on terror-tagging her even after her death. He alleged: "you claim that Zara Alvarez is an activist? She is NOT. She joined the NPA for 2 years until 2015 when she was arrested."[25] What is evident here is not only how Parlade twisted the story of an arrest the basis of which was already dismissed but also how terror-tagging provided the conditions for Zara's repression and justify such an action. As a counterinsurgency discursive apparatus, terror-tagging's aspect of performativity expresses and serves the ideological and repressive functions of the state.

Conclusion: Prospects for a Marcos Presidency

Terror-tagging proliferates with impunity because the previous Duterte regime has perfected the domination of the anti-terror ideology. Its perfection is expressed in the regime's counterinsurgency policies. First, it has established and overfunded the NTF-ELCAC and accorded it with exceptional powers that overwhelm government agencies and LGUs. Through these exceptional powers, it has reduced politics for government agencies and LGUs to a war against terror, excluding if not vilifying alternative visions reflective of grassroots and emancipatory politics. Second, the said counterinsurgency efforts, through the NTF-ELCAC, has preferentially opted for a liquidationist discourse that obscures not only the systemic issues that cause the communist

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[24] Zoom interview with Cristina Palabay, January 17, 2022.
[25] https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=311906653581059&id=11389696338 2030.

insurgency but also the need to address these issues through appropriate reforms. Third, terror-tagging's performative aspect has resulted to what could be the worst human rights situation of the country. Because it sees red and terror in all forms of dissent and critical inquiry, the regime has targeted virtually all the opposition which endangered not only lives but also the principle of human rights itself.

Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s electoral victory was a horrifying news for all the victims of the Marcos Sr.'s martial law in the 1970s and for all defenders of human rights. This unprecedented victory of what could be considered as the first majority president of the country is terrifyingly coupled with the electoral conquest of Rodridgo Duterte's daughter Sara Duterte as Marcos Jr.'s Vice-President. What are the prospects under a Marcos presidency?

Given Marcos Jr.'s all-out support for the NTF-ELCAC (Buan and Bolledo, 2022), it would hardly be expected that his regime will correct the counterinsurgency policies rooted in the domination of the anti-terror ideology of which terror-tagging is its discursive apparatus. In fact, Marcos Jr. has already echoed a recycled yet fundamental assertion of the Duterte and the previous regimes: that the armed communist insurgents are enemies of the state (Pedrajas 2022). Given how terror-tagging effectively associates legal activists with armed communist insurgents, this assertion not only dangerously puts the lives of dissenters and activists at risk but also effectively obscures alternatives derived from the often terror-tagged visions of progressive groups and individuals. And with the NTF-ELCAC still at the forefront of what could be Marcos Jr.'s counterinsurgency campaign, not so much can be expected except the intensification of terror-tagging and its horrible consequences to politics and human rights.

Politics would be dominated by the Marcos-Duterte tandem, with a supermajority of their allies in the senate and congress and beholden supporters in the local government units and the bureaucracy. Given how the anti-terror ideology has rooted itself as a state ideology, which in fact has reduced politics (in the national and local levels) to the war against terror, terror-tagging would continue to be weaponized by the Marcos Jr. regime against its perceived enemies. Through the NTF-ELCAC, the anti-terror ideology will continue to constrain politics to not only close itself from entertaining the most progressive and emancipatory alternatives but also detest these as propaganda of communist terrorists. With the apparatuses and support already laid before him by the previous regime, Marcos Jr. will not waste time in unleashing a bloody crackdown against the political opposition, especially the left. Without any honeymoon period to be expected, the deteriorating

human rights situation under a Marcos regime would simply worsen given the notorious combination of a Marcos Jr. and a Sara Duterte as Vice-President. Marcos Jr. can exploit what he has already taken advantage of during the electoral race: the social media and the mobilization of micro influencers (Salazar 2022) to boost disinformation. While the NTF-ELCAC and other state agencies could continue with their terror-tagging spree, such a nefarious initiative can be received and amplified by the Marcos Jr. regime's army of micro influencers who, while having less followers, rather work en masse (Salazar 2022). Terror-tagging will expectedly worsen under a Marcos Jr. presidency.

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