

Fault Lines: Manila, Philippines

DEC 2017



Metro Manila, which encompasses 16 component cities, is home to over twelve million inhabitants. There is a disproportionate share of both the economic production and cultural resources of the Philippines located in Manila. As such, conditions that cause friction in Manila have the potential to affect the stability of the Philippines as a whole.

The competing political agendas among the component cities result in a lack of shared accountability and consensus concerning urban challenges. The primary social issues for the urban poor in Metro Manila are homelessness, poverty, crime, and drug abuse. As a result of the high poverty rates throughout the Philippines, Filipinos across the country flock to Manila in the hopes of finding opportunities for a better life. However, Metro Manila's economy does not provide enough for the increasing population. As a result, Manila exports a large labor force in the form of overseas contract workers (OCW) as skilled workers that are forced to look elsewhere for adequate employment. Remittances from Manila OCW alone account for more than 10% of the national GDP. Although OCW is a viable option, many cannot qualify for some of the overseas work. Thus, the lack of economic opportunities for a great many contribute to crime and drug use.

President Duterte was elected on a relentless campaign and promise to reduce criminal activity and drug use. Duterte has maintained a high approval rating while continuing to benefit from a reputation for militancy initially established as the mayor of Davao. The popular belief that he can reduce the drug and crime problems through a security crackdown has bolstered the population's faith in him. The exact number of deaths resulting from Duterte's policies is not known, but most of the people killed are believed to be primarily drug users or small-time dealers in poor communities. Although there has been public criticism for deaths, there is still societal support for the war which suggests a high tolerance for the use of state violence with a limited concern for legal restrictions on the use of state power. Despite these recent measures aimed at improving the quality of life across the entire nation, there is no real indication of an improvement for the urban poor in Metro Manila sowing dissatisfaction and a perception that the Duterte has broken his promises.

The following fault lines, if exploited, have the potential to contribute to instability in the Manila operational environment:

Widespread dissatisfaction with the government's broken promises: Duterte's strongarm tactics regarding his domestic policies have only alienated people and reduced their trust in his ability to solve the problems of the everyday people.

Overwhelming societal desire for drug and crime reduction: The Philippines has long suffered from an endemic drug and crime problem. Their desire to be rid of these problems is so great that they are willing to forego personal liberties and due process of law in exchange for drug and crime eradication.

Threat of change in the political structure to a Duterte-led authoritarian system of rule: Duterte has demonstrated a desire and a willingness to change the government's system of rule to accomplish his administration's goals.

FAULT LINES are "exploitable sources of instability in the human domain; they can be real or perceived."

Source: GCKN Fault Line Methodology, 2017



FAULT LINES

(if exploited)
Assessment of impact



MANILA

1 Dissatisfaction with govt's broken promises

MODERATE
Improbable with moderate consequence

2 Desire for drug and crime reduction

MODERATE
Probable with moderate consequence

3 Threat of change to authoritarian system

MODERATE
Improbable with major consequence

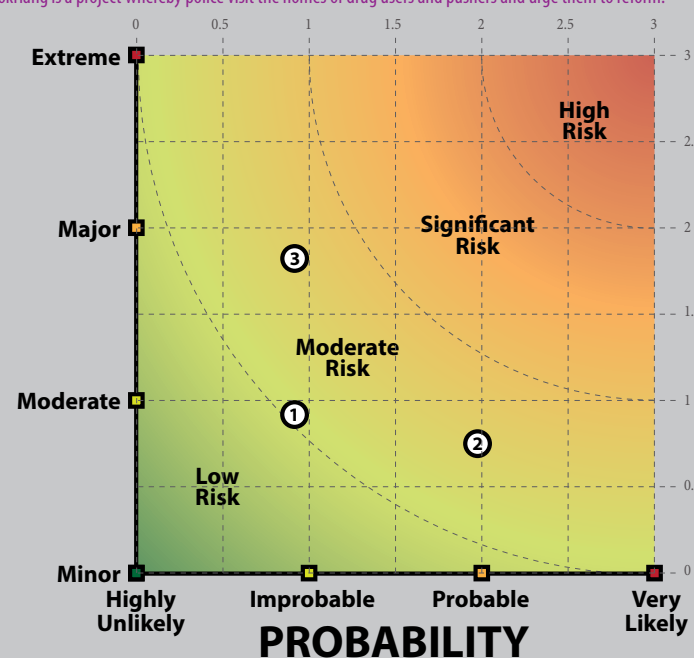
CONSEQUENCE

Duterte's war on drugs

(from 1 July, 2016 to 23 April, 2017)

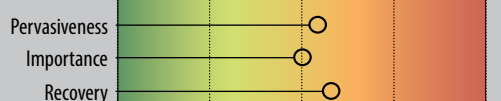
50,428 police operations conducted
64,269 drug personalities arrested
7,886,882 houses visited via project TokHang*
1,275,577 surrenderers

*TokHang is a project whereby police visit the homes of drug users and pushers and urge them to reform.



Pervasiveness, Importance, & Recovery

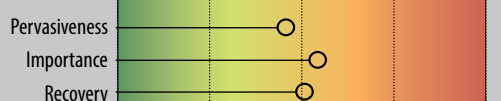
1 Dissatisfaction govt.



2 Desire crime reduction



3 Threat of change



Implications:

Duterte has effectively capitalized on Filipino desires. He presented himself as a strong man capable of creating change and reducing endemic problems. His tactics, although brutish, have not significantly reduced his approval rating. However, there exists a growing opposition to his leadership. It is unclear which direction popular support will turn, but if opposed, Duterte may seek to forcibly control the people through authoritarian measures, which could risk a confrontation with existing political opposition and potentially the Philippine military.