

# **BISIG**

2021 Bol. 3



Ang **BISIG** ay bilingual na refereed journal na nagtatampok ng mga artikulo o papel pananaliksik hinggil sa kalagayan ng sektor ng paggawa at mga komunidad sa Pilipinas na taunang inilalabas ng PUP. Pangunahing itinatampok nito ang mga pag-aaral na sumisipat sa mga napapanahong isyu hinggil sa kalagayan ng mga manggagawa, anakpawis at kanilang mga komunidad. Karaniwang nakatuon ang mga paksa sa mga usapin tulad ng unyonismo, globalisasyon, neoliberal na polisiya, kilusang paggawa, karapatan at kalagayan ng anakpawis, relasyon at kalagayan ng mga industriya, at iba pang katulad. Maaaring ang paksa ay tumatawid sa iba pang disiplina tulad ng kasaysayan, politika, ekonomiya, sikolohiya, wika, sining, kultura, kasarian, kababaihan, diaspora, agham, teknolohiya at iba pa tungo sa paglapit na multi/interdisiplinaryo.

Layunin ng Bisig na maipagpatuloy at lalo pang mapaigting ang mga nasimulang adhikain para sa mga manggagawa ng intelektuwal at makabayang edukador na si Dr. Nemesio Prudente, sa pamamagitan ng mga pananaliksik na dumadalumat sa mga penomenang may kaugnayan sa paggawa at ugnayang pang-industriya sa Pilipinas.

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Maaaring sipiin ang alinmang bahagi ng journal para sa ikasusulong ng interes at mithiin ng mga anakpawis at mamamayan. Kailangan lamang ng angkop na pagkilala sa naglathala o sa mga may-akda.

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**Paliwanag sa Pabalat (Cover)**

Pinamagatang “Kalbaryo ng Manggagawang Bukid” ang sining-biswal na ginamit sa isyung ito ng Bisig na mula sa mayamang bukal ng mga likha ng kilalang artista ng bayan at ng uring manggagawa na si Leonilo “Neil” Doloricon (1957-2021). Si Prof. Neil ay edukador, visual artist, printmaker, and social critic at itinuturing na isa sa mga dakilang haligi ng social realism sa Pilipinas at maging sa buong mundo. Ipinagmamalaki namin na mula sa pagsisimula ng Bisig Journal noong dekada 90 hanggang sa huli niyang mga obra, naging bahagi at katunayan ay nagsilbing mukha ng Bisig ang mga obra ni Ka Neil Doloricon bilang artista ng mga anakpawis. Ipinagpapasalamat namin na naambunan ni Ka Neil hindi lamang ng kanyang mga obra kundi mga aral at mungkahi kung paano higit na ilalapit at pagsisilbihin ang Bisig sa mga anakpawis at mamamayan. Para kay Neil, ang akademya at ang mga produkto nito ay laging kaagapay at nagsisilbi sa anakpawis at produktibong pwersa ng lipunan. Salamat at nagpapatuloy kami, Prof. Neil!

## Paunang Salita

Kakaiba ang panahong ito. Ito ay isang panahong ang katotohanan ay tila ba kailangan laging patunayan, igiit at ipaglaban. Sa lawak ng makinarya ng disinpormasyon, mas tumindi ang pangangailangan at hamon para sa mga makabuluhang pananaliksik hindi lamang upang ilarawan ang kalagayan kundi higit pa rito, basagin ang mga maling pananaw at impormasyon na sistematikong ipinalalaganap ngayon. Dito higit naming nakikita ang kabuluhan at pangangailangan sa mga babasahin at dyornal ng pananaliksik na katulad ng Bisig.

Tatlong dekada na ang Bisig (na may ilang panahon na tinawag na Braso) at patuloy ang ebolusyon nito mula sa pagiging dyornal ng panitikan ng obrero hanggang sa kasalukuyan nitong anyo bilang akademikong dyornal ng mga pananaliksik hindi na lamang sa relasyong industriyal at paggawa kundi sa mga samu't saring paksa, konsepto, usapin, dokumentasyon at pakikibaka ng mga anakpawis at mamamayan para sa pagbabago sa kanilang pamayanan at maging sa panlipunang transpormasyon. Patuloy mang nagbabagong-anyo, subalit pirmi at lalaging matibay, malinaw ang kiling at silbi ng akademikong dyornal na ito: ang maging Bisig ng mga anakpawis at mga sektor na nasa laylayan ng lipunan.

Sa isyung ito, mababasa ang mga akda na hindi lamang dumaan sa masusing pagkilatis ng mga rebyuwer kundi higit pa rito ay naglalaman ng mga napapanahon at napakamakabuluhang mga pagsusuri, obserbasyon at pananaliksik sa yugtong ito ng mga mayor na kaganapan sa ating lipunan.

Masinop na sinuri at mistulang sinuma ng akdang *A Critical Discourse Analysis of Rodrigo Duterte's Language on Endo and Labor Unionism* ang pabaling-baling na tindig ng administrasyong Duterte mula sa mismong bibig ng pangulo sa mga pangunahing usapin sa paggawa tulad ng pangakong napako sa pagwawakas ng sistemang Endo (end of contract) o kontraktwalisasyon.

Sa akdang *Ang Industriya ng Niyog sa Pilipinas Pagkalipas ng EDSA at ang Kalagayan ng mga Magniniyog sa Kanilang Panitikan*, inilatag ng may-akda ang ilang halimbawa ng panitikan hango sa mga magniniyog at sa proseso nailalatag ang pait ng katotohanang sa kabila ng mga boladas at programa ng mga gubyrno matapos ang pag-aalsa sa EDSA, nananatiling naghihirap ang magniniyog at nagpapatuloy ang monopolyo at iilang may kontrol sa industriya ng niyog sa ating bansa.

Mistulang rebyu sa pelikula pero ang totoo'y higit na masaklaw na diskurso ang tinuturol ng akdang *Representasyon ng Kababaihang Manggagawang Pilipino sa Europa Batay sa Pelikulang Pag-ibig na Milan (2004) at Barcelona (2015)* na sabihin pa ay nagsasalabid sa kwentong pag-ibig ng mga karakter ang tunay na kalagayan, hinaing at aspirasyon ng mga migranteng manggagawa.

Pagdalamat sa resulta ng pakikipagkwentuhan sa mga katrabaho at pakikipanayam sa mga kalakhan ng kontraktwal na estudyanteng manggagawa ang inihaharap ng akdang *Ang Fast food Crew sa Mabilis na Globalisasyon: Naratibo ng mga Manggagawang "Hindi Laging Bida ang Saya"* na lalo pang nagsakongkreto ng kalagayan ng mga student crew sa mga fastfood chains.

Pokus naman ng akdang *Ang Pagdalumat ng Bentahan sa Navotas Fish Port Complex Upang Masipat ang Kalagayan ng Pangangisda sa Pilipinas* at sinipat ng pag-aaral ang mga suliranin ng Fish Port sa Navotas at nagharap ng ilang rekomendasyon upang malubos nito ang potensyalidad sa pag-aambag sa ekonomiya hindi lamang sa lunsod ng Navotas kundi maging sa sektor ng pangisdaan ng bansa.

Ngayong taon habang patuloy na nagsisikap umahon ang bayan sa lipunang ibayo pang nilugmok ng iba't ibang tipo ng pandemya, palit-mukha naman ang titimon sa gobyerno ng ating bayan.

Bago ang mga mukha, at panibagong mga pangako. Gayunman, tila hindi nagbabago ang kalagayan, hinaing at aspirasyon ng nakararaming sektor sa ating lipunan. Sila itong nagpapatuloy ang pagsisikap na mabuhay sinupaman ang nasa pamahalaan. Patuloy na naghahanap ng pag-asa at kumakapit sa pagbabakasakali ng pagbabago. Sila ang patuloy na pinapangakuan ng pagbabago subalit mas madalas na kinakapos at laging pinagbabayad ng mahal. Sila ang manggagawa, ang magsasaka, ang mangingisda, ang mga karaniwang empleyado at mga nagpipilit na maghanap ng ikabubuhay sa iba't ibang paraan sa mga looban, sa lansangan, sa mga komunidad, sa mga baryo, sa malalayong lupang tiwangwang o mandarayuhan maging sa ibang bayan.

Sila ang mga mukhang mababanaag sa mga akdang mababasa sa isyung ito. Sa kanila ang mga salita na inyong mababasa. Sa kanila ang mga tinig na inyong mauulinig.

Sapagkat ang Bisig ay hindi lamang nagkakanlong sa kanilang mga hinaing at mithiin, sa Bisig din pinag-iisa ang kanilang lakas na isulong at isakatuparan ang mga ito. Noon hanggang ngayon Ito ang Bisig ng mga nakararami sa lipunan dahil para saan nga ba ang kaalaman at karunungan? Para ito sa pagsulong ng lipunan. Para ito sa mga pangunahing nagtutulak sa granahe ng produksyon at pagbabagong panlipunan

Sa partikular na panahong ito ng mabilis na galaw ng impormasyon, tanging hangad ng Bisig na makapag-ambag ng mga matitibay na pananaliksik na naglililaw at gumagapi sa mga disinpormasyon at sinasadyang pagtatakip sa katotohanan ng mga paulit-ulit na kasinungalingan. Para kina Doc Prudente, Ka Roger Ordonez, Ka Ave Perez Jacob at sa iba pang nagtimon ng Bisig-Braso, nagpupunyagi po kaming magpatuloy at hindi tayo mabibigo.

**Rimando E. Felicia, MCD**  
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Jervy C. Briones  
University of the Philippines Los Baños

# **A Critical Discourse Analysis of Rodrigo Duterte's Language on Endo and Labor Unionism**

## **Abstract**

Rodrigo Duterte, back in his presidential campaign in 2016, promised to end endo or contractualization. It is a labor practice in the Philippines where companies temporarily employ workers not exceeding six months otherwise regularization comes that obligates employers to pay workers' benefits. With less than a year remaining in his term as president, endo continues affecting millions of Filipino workers as ending it is no longer a priority of his government. Since taking power, Duterte gave numerous speeches and interviews on some labor issues, such as endo and unionism. Interestingly, his perspective had shifted significantly from being a working class hero to a status quo defender characterized by his red-tagging of labor unions that he sees as communist 'fronts' and his refusal to end endo to seek a so-called balance between labor and capital. In this study, I considered the spoken and written discourse of Duterte on contractualization and unionism which can be found online in the websites of different news agencies and the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO). The text and talk then were analyzed through the lenses of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), specifically the socio-cognitive approach by Teun van Dijk. The results show that Duterte's discourse on labor issues exemplifies power and ideology and reinforces social representations against labor unionism.

**Keywords:** critical discourse analysis, labor unionism, power, Rodrigo Duterte

### **Abstrak**

Noong kasagsagan ng kanyang kampanya sa pagkapangulo noong 2016, nangako si Rodrigo Duterte na kanyang wawakasan ang endo o kontraktwalisasyon. Ito ay isang praktis sa Pilipinas kung saan ang mga kumpanya ay pansamantalang nagbibigay ng trabaho nang hindi hihigit sa anim na buwan kung hindi ay maoobliga ang mga ito na i-regularisa ang mga manggagawa na may kaakibat na mga benepisyo. Sa kanyang huling taon sa termino bilang pangulo, nagpapatuloy ang endo sa pagpapahirap sa mily-un-milyong manggagawang Pilipino sa kadahilanang ang pagwawakas nito ay hindi na prayoridad ng kanyang pamahalaan. Simula nang maupo, si Duterte ay nagbigay ng mga talumpati at panayam hinggil sa ilang isyu sa paggawa, gaya ng endo at unyonismo. Interesante na ang kanyang tindig ay lubos na pumihit mula sa pagiging bayani ng sektor ng paggawa tungo sa pagiging tagapagtanggol ng naghaharing sistema na kinatangian ng kanyang red-tagging sa mga unyon bilang “prente” ng mga komunista, at ang kanyang pagtanggì na wakasan ang endo para di-umano’y balansehin ang kapital at paggawa. Sa pag-aaral na ito, kinunsidera ko ang pasalita at pasulat na diskurso ni Duterte sa kontraktwalisasyon at unyonismo na makikita online sa mga website ng iba’t ibang pahayagan at ng Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO). Ang mga teksto at talumpati, sa puntong ito, ay sinuri sa lente ng kritikal na pagsusuri ng diskurso (critical discourse analysis) partikular ang lapit na socio-cognitive ni Teun van Dijk. Ipinakikita ng pag-aaral na ang diskurso ni Duterte sa mga isyu sa paggawa ay manipestasyon ng kapangyarihan at ideolohiya, at pinagtitibay ang mga umiiral na representasyong panlipunan laban sa unyonismo.

**Mga Susing Salita:** kritikal na pagsusuri ng diskurso, unyonismo, kapangyarihan, Rodrigo Duterte

### **Introduction**

“Like oil to a machine, Duterte’s words kicked the government bureaucracy into gear” (Gloria, 2018, p. 13). Indeed, in the past six years, former president Rodrigo Duterte has been using language to a greater effect than his predecessors albeit against the established norms of the traditionally elite democracy in the Philippines. Not only on drugs, criminality,

and corruption, but he also earned the ire of many Filipinos because of his foul language against different sectors, such as women, the Church, human rights advocates, and others. This unorthodox language of the former president, in turn, became the subject of several studies through the lenses of discourse analysis (Lanuza, 2020; Lemana & Gatcho, 2019; Rubic-Remorosa, 2018; Tamano et al., 2021). These largely focused on the analysis of Duterte's discourse ranging from his views on religion to his addresses about the effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in the country. While it is true that these are new, promising, and very interesting, none so far has ever tackled the written and spoken language of Duterte and his government on labor issues and the Filipino working class.

In the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), discourse, that is the use of language in speech and writing, is a form of social practice. Discourse is also dialectical where "a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s) which frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them." Given that it is socially constitutive and socially conditioned, discourses raise important questions about power (Wodak, 2014, p. 303). It is imperative to explore Rodrigo Duterte's discourse on labor since this sector was once promised by the then-presidential candidate that he would end 'endo' (end-of-contract) or the practice of contractualization in the country (Caduaya, 2015). Also known as '5-5-5', it is said that this labor practice started to become widespread in the Philippines in the early 1990s where "workers can only work for five months at a time, renewable for another two 5-month contracts, after which they can work as open contract workers." Employers limit their employment to five months because the sixth month would already mean regularization which entails workers' rights and benefits. The worst effect of contractualization, however, is the decline of unionism for regular workers who are the only ones who can be union members, leaving millions of Filipino workers out of the coverage of collective bargaining agreements or CBA (Cristobal & Resurreccion, 2014, pp. 343-344).

Given these premises, this study aims to answer the following: (1) How do power and ideology manifest in Rodrigo Duterte's discourse on labor issues? (2) How does such discourse reinforce the prevailing social representations of labor unionism?

### **Social cognition and critical discourse analysis**

It must be settled that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is not a single, all-encompassing theoretical framework. Like other social theories, it

has several tendencies and proponents who have given additional attention to, but not to necessarily advance, a particular field like politics, history, and psychology. As stressed by Gilbert Weiss and Ruth Wodak (2003), "...CDA has never been and has never attempted to be or to provide one single or specific theory, and one specific methodology is not characteristic of research in CDA." They even suggested that critics/criticisms of CDA should identify which study/proponent they refer to because CDA in the first place is not a holistic or fixed paradigm (p.12). Moreover, Teun van Dijk (1993), one of CDA's leading thinkers asserted that CDA "does not primarily aim to contribute to a specific discipline, paradigm, school or discourse theory. It is primarily interested and motivated by pressing social issues, which it hopes to better understand through discourse analysis" (p. 252). Interestingly, it can be said that CDA is still an evolving perspective with Norman Fairclough (2013), for instance, stating that the version of the CDA in his recent work is different in some aspects from the versions in his earlier publications since the late 1980s (p. 10).

While there are obvious similarities in notions, such as 'power,' 'dominance,' 'hegemony,' and others, Encarnacion Hidalgo Tenorio (2011) noted that the proponents of 'different schools' of CDA differ according to their theoretical foundations of methodology (p. 189). In this regard, to have a coherent framework to critically analyze Duterte's discourse on labor, I adopted Teun van Dijk's (1993) socio-cognitive approach in CDA which includes the relation not only between society and discourse but also social cognition. For him, there is a gap between discourse and society, and thus, between discourse and the reproduction of dominance and inequality. To mitigate these, there is a need to explore the role of social representations in the minds of social actors. It means that "social cognition is the necessary theoretical (and empirical) 'interface', if not the 'missing link', between discourse and dominance." It is also the assertion of van Dijk that the jettisoning of social cognition is a major theoretical shortcoming in the field of critical discourse analysis (p. 251).

This led Wodak (2014) to acknowledge van Dijk's contribution to the field since the 1980s where the previous focus of discourse comprehension in individuals eventually evolved into cognitive models for the study of meaning construction in the social level (p. 308). She also emphasized the role of the theory of social representations in van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach:

Social actors involved in discourse do not exclusively make use of their individual experiences and strategies; they mainly rely upon

collective frames of perceptions, called social representations. These socially shared perceptions form the link between social system and the individual cognitive system and perform the translation, homogenization and co-ordination between external requirements and subjective experience (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p.21).

Teun van Dijk (1995a), on his part, distinguished his model of critical discourse analysis which deals with “an oppositional study of the structures and strategies of elite discourse and their cognitive and social conditions and consequences, as well as with the discourses of resistance against such domination.” He also mentioned that his socio-cognitive CDA surpasses the standard methodology of observation, description, and explanation. More importantly, van Dijk argued that it has a sociopolitical position and its entirety is explicitly political (p. 19). With the diversity and existence of many types of CDA, van Dijk (2001) focused on some basic concepts and formulated his theoretical framework that connects discourse, cognition, and society:

**Macro and micro.** Language use and discourse belong to the micro-level of social analysis while power and dominance belong to the macro-level. The CDA, then, must theoretically link the existing gap between the two levels. To realize the linking of these levels and the unification of critical analysis, van Dijk presented four ways:

1. Members–groups: Language users engage in discourse as members of (several) social groups, organizations, or institutions; and conversely, groups thus, may act “by” their members.
2. Actions–process: Social acts of individual actors are thus, constituent parts of group actions and social processes.
3. Context–social structure: Situations of discursive interaction are similarly part or constitutive of social structure.
4. Personal and social cognition: Language users as social actors have both personal and social cognition: personal memories, knowledge, and opinions, as well as those shared with members of the group or culture as a whole. Both types of cognition influence interaction and discourse of individual members, whereas shared “social representations” govern the collective actions of a group (van Dijk, 2001, p. 354).

**Power as control.** In discourse studies, power, or particularly social power, is a central concept that can be defined concerning control. As van Dijk pointed out, we can learn that groups have power if they can control the

acts and minds of other groups. This power is a prerequisite for the building of a 'power base' that will enable greater access to contested social resources, like force, money, knowledge, information, and so on. The analysis of the discourse-power relations shows that "access to specific forms of discourse is itself a power resource" and that "action is controlled by our minds" (p. 355). Hence, the ability to influence people's minds may indirectly control their actions through persuasion and manipulation. Moreover, power here comes in two forms, namely the **control of public discourse** and **mind control**. As an important 'symbolic' resource, this means that "those who have more control over more - and more influential - discourse are by that definition also more powerful." In other words, the dominant and powerful elites have exclusive access and control over public discourse (p. 356). Meanwhile, mind control is another way to reinforce power and dominance. "If dominant groups, and especially their elites, largely control public discourse and its structures," van Dijk explains, "they thus, also have more control over the minds of the public at large" (p. 358). In the perspective of socio-cognitive CDA, the two forms of power are integrated and inseparable because they existentially rely on each other.

### **Methods**

This study utilized and analyzed Rodrigo Duterte's discourse on labor unionism and other issues, through his speeches and interviews from the start of his presidential campaign in November 2015 up to May 2019. I decided not to include Duterte's discourse since 2020 for I believe that the pandemic brought a new and different period for the Filipino working class and the Philippine society. I also believe that Duterte's language on labor in the time of pandemic deserves a separate study. Nonetheless, Duterte's text and talk were sourced from different news websites, primarily Rappler because of its extensive coverage of the president's regular activities. Sources available from the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) were also used. These then were analyzed using van Dijk's framework on socio-cognitive CDA to expose the power and ideology behind Duterte's discourse.

### **Duterte's discourse on endo and labor unionism (2015-2019)**

The data presented here is mainly about Rodrigo Duterte's discourse on different labor issues although by saying this, it also extends to the leading labor organizations in the Philippines. *Kilusang Mayo Uno* (KMU), founded on May 1, 1980, is a militant alliance of established labor federations that

suffered repression during the early years of the Marcos dictatorship. KMU's advocacy of militant and anti-imperialist unionism was explained by Rob Lambert: "The long colonial experience and the transparent intent of Martial Law, has meant that the issue of foreign control of corporations remains highly charged politically and is understandably a key element in the political agenda of the KMU" (1990, p. 265). Its radical orientation of militantly fighting for worker's rights and genuine independence from what it sees as imperialist domination of the United States in the country continues today. Meanwhile, Piston (*Pinagkaisang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Opereytor Nationwide*) is a transport group fighting mainly for lower oil prices and also job security of drivers amidst the planned phaseout of traditional jeepneys in the country. Both were the main targets of Duterte's deception and repression of labor groups as shown below.

The initial idea on how to present Rodrigo Duterte's discourse in this section was thematic. I thought that it would be more organized to arrange the presentation of texts according to respective labor issues, such as endo/contractualization, jeepney modernization, red-tagging, and union-busting. However, after some reflections, I decided to proceed with the chronological order or to present the data from 2015 to 2019 so that everyone can see how Duterte's perspective on the labor sector significantly changed over time.

## **2015**

One of the earliest recorded pro-labor stances of then-candidate Rodrigo Duterte was on November 28, 2015, a day after he filed his certificate of candidacy (COC). Sympathizing with millions of Filipino contractual workers, he confronted the economic plight of Filipino families who are suffering because of the lack of job security under labor contractualization. Duterte asked, "How can they sustain the needs of their family, fend for their children if you employ them for 3 months only? They do not have security which results to [sic] unrest and instability back home" (Caduaya, 2015, para. 2). Duterte also argued that it was not only Filipino families who suffered but also the entire labor force and the national economy. He continued, "It is difficult because the long-term effect is [that] you destroy the workforce. If you do that here, you destroy the economy" (Caduaya, 2015, para. 5). Here it can be said that Duterte had an implied functionalist notion of situating the Filipino working class in the entire structure of the Philippine economy. He understood how the workers are vital and serve as

a catalyst for economic development. Duterte further detailed why he was against contractualization:

In 6 months, the employee cannot develop his or her skills. It is not good because you don't hire them as permanent. But if they are hired, enhance their skills, make them more productive. Because they have the skills and you place them in a regular position, they enjoy benefits not just for themselves but also for their family. The economy back home is stabilized (Caduaya, 2015, para. 8).

With this 'lecture', Duterte then assured everyone, including the influential business sector, that he will end *endo* once he gets elected as president. He said, "I will not run a country that way. If those who have money won't accept this, then you campaign against me. Make sure *tatalunin ninyo ako* (Make sure you will beat me). I will not go for it; it is not a policy. It is not good" (Caduaya, 2015, para. 10). Giving a prospect should contractualization continue to exist, Duterte, on December 9, said, "You will kill the Filipino skill" (Corrales, 2015, para. 1). One can see here his seeming resoluteness not only to stop *endo* but also his concern on the productivity and competency of Filipino workers. Indeed, in the next subsection, we will see how Duterte was consistent in his stance against contractualization the following year. At the same time, there were already signs from his language about potential political conflicts with the labor sector while he seemed to be pro-labor.

## **2016**

After the hero-like talk of Rodrigo Duterte on *endo* when he declared his presidential candidacy, a pivotal moment seemed to reflect the impending attacks against unionism and the labor movement. In his proclamation rally on February 9, 2016, Duterte warned the labor unions, especially those under the leadership of the *Kilusang Mayo Uno* or KMU (May First Labor Movement), to refrain from conducting actions that he deemed would be detrimental to business interests. Ironically, he brought up his claimed adherence to the leftist ideology, yet he threatened to have the unionists killed should they dared to defy his pro-business orders:

*Tapos kayong mga KMU, medyo pigilan ang mga labor union. Ako na ang nakikiusap sa inyo. Magkasama tayo sa ideolohiya. 'Wag ninyong gawain yan kasi sisirain mo ang administrasyon ko. Pag ginawa ninyo 'yan, patayin ko kayong lahat. Ang solusyon nito, patayan na lang. Pag- uusapan mo, ayaw eh.* (You KMU,

stop it with the labor unions. I am appealing to you. We are one in ideology. Do not do that because you will ruin my administration. When you do that, I will kill you all. The solution here is just killing because when you try to talk to them, they don't want to.). So let us come to terms with each other. Do not do it now in [sic] active labor front. Kasi pag ginawa mo, sisira.). Because if you do that, things will be ruined. Do not do it. Give the Philippines a respite of about 10 years (Rañada, 2016a, para. 5).

After threatening to harm the labor movement, Duterte then outlined where he is coming from about his sudden anti-labor position. He explained, "*Kung merong negosyo diyan, magbubukas ako ng economic zones, huwag ninyo patayin ang negosyo, hayaan mo muna* (If there is business there, I will be putting up economic zones, do not kill business. Let it grow first.). *Do not kill it because you will die with it*" (Rañada, 2016a, para. 11). In turn, Ka Leody de Guzman (2016), chairman of the *Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino* or BMP (Solidarity of Filipino Workers), hit Duterte calling him as an 'anti-labor, fascist thug.' The labor leader exposed how Duterte infamously carried the abolishment of contractualization as a mere political gimmick to gain the vote of the nearly two-million strong vote of the labor movement and to neutralize the possible ire of the capitalists against his candidacy. Explicitly, de Guzman raised that the threat is a slip of the tongue or, in psychoanalytic theory, a Freudian slip where the real intention on the labor sector unintentionally exposed no other than Duterte himself.

During his stint as mayor of Davao City, Duterte was known for having friendly relations with the Philippine Left, particularly with the revolutionary movement in the region under the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA). During the campaign period, he notably declared that he will be the country's first leftist president for being a 'socialist' without giving any elaborations on his track record or his would-be socialist policies that will benefit the working class. Even so, he said, "Ako, sosyalista. Hindi ako komunista. Kaming mga sosyalista, para kami sa tao (I am a socialist, not a communist. We socialists are for the people)" (Cinco, 2016).

During the televised presidential debate, on April 24, 2016, Rodrigo Duterte once again reassured the voters that he will stop endo saying that it prevents the skills development and experience of Filipino workers. Roughly two weeks before the election day, in a seemingly progressive fashion, he endorsed the idea that once he got elected, he would at once meet the heads of the upper and lower chambers of the legislature and push them to pass a

law banning contractualization. Duterte bragged, “We will immediately stop it. Call the Speaker and Senate President and...call mostly majority...you pass this bill immediately.... I need it [sic] first week of my admin...ganun lang” (Elemia, 2016, para. 9).

After winning the presidential election, Duterte assured everyone that his incoming government will be a pro-people one. Acting like a statesman, he said, “I want to protect the Filipino. I worry about how much you earn. My worry is how to protect the Filipino. There is no compromise” (Romero, 2016, para. 3). Aware that he might get the ire of business interests, he added, “I don’t care if you will get angry with me, but I am not open to a compromise. Contractualization must go. It is anti-people” (Romero, 2016, para. 4). With these pronouncements, which were previously unheard of especially from a national official, labor leaders and workers could not be blamed for their throwing of support to Duterte given the decades of continuous contractualization, virtually untouched since its inception. In a detailed manner, Duterte explained, “The workers of this country must take the credit. If the difference is P1 million, P2 million or P3 million, let go. If you are earning P20 billion here, then let go of the P2-3 billion” (Romero, 2016, para. 6).

A month after taking power, President Duterte warned businesses that continue to practice contractualization. In a tough manner, he exclaimed, “*Huwag na ninyo akong hintayin na mahuli ko kayo because I will be unforgiving* (Don’t wait for me to catch you because I will be unforgiving). *You will not only lose your money; you will lose your pants. No tolerance ako dito* (I have no tolerance for this.)” (Rañada, 2016b, para. 2). Convincing the private enterprises about his seriousness to stop contractualization, Duterte added, “*Kapag nalaman ko* (Once I find out), *I will just simply close your plant and you would always find a thousand reasons to do it, believe me*” (Rañada, 2016b, para. 8) and reiterated, “I would like to tell you now: *Magsunod kayo o ikakansela ko ‘yung permit ninyo. Mamili kayo* (Follow or I will cancel your permits. You choose.)” (Rañada, 2016b, para. 12). From Duterte’s words, it can be concurred that he sounded that he could not care less about any violent reactions from the business sector. Not only businesses, but he also tried to please everyone, particularly the workers, that he was a working-class hero who is ready to defend their class interests against the exploitative bourgeoisie. Duterte then urged the employers to compensate their workers correctly and avoid unjustly enriching themselves through the workers’ sweat:

Pay all the benefits. *Iyong mga outsource, ikaw 'yung ahensiya*, the agency (All those who are outsourced, if you're the agency), you take over as the employer, then pay, *lahat kayo* (all of you.). *Huwag kayong yumaman diyan ng pawis ng kapwa ninyo tao. Kalokohan iyan* (Don't get rich from the sweat of your fellow man. That's nonsense.) (Rañada, 2016b, para. 14).

*So bayaran ninyo lahat, SSS, at saka wala iyang paikot-ikot. Huwag ninyong paikutin* (Pay for everything, SSS, and no beating around the bush, don't make them go in circles.) (Rañada, 2016, para. 17).

After a year of 'honeymoon' with the labor movement and the entire Philippine Left, everything fell apart after Duterte reneged on his campaign promises, particularly ending *endo*. In the next subsection, the year would be characterized by the deterioration of relations between the two where he turned against the Left, unleashing the sword of war not only against the communist rebels in the countryside but even on labor unionists.

## 2017

They're still in the process of doing it. But I said and I say now: I stand firm in my convictions to end *endo*. The Labor Code guarantees all workers on the rights to security of tenure" ("President Duterte leads," 2017, para. 4).

This has to be strictly enforced. *Panahon lang* (Time is just needed). To this end, I will issue an executive order directing the strict implementation of existing provisions of laws against *endo* and labor-only contracting" ("President Duterte leads," 2017, para. 5).

During the observance of the 2017 Labor Day in Davao City, President Duterte spoke in front of labor leaders and workers to appease them on his claimed pro-worker stance. Noticing the growing frustrations of the labor sector due to his failure to immediately address contractualization after ten months in office, Duterte appealed to give him more time about the issue. He also assured everyone with his decision to ratify the ILO (International Labour Organization) Convention 151 which protects the worker's right to organize and collective bargain ("C151"). He stated, "I will do the same for the Senate for its concurrence. May this serve as a symbol

of [sic] government's commitment to continuously uphold the aspiration of a corrupt-free civil service" ("President Duterte leads," 2017, para. 10).

Later that year, however, Duterte started his word war against jeepney drivers who are members of the militant transport group PISTON (*Pinagkaisang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operators Nationwide*). "January 1, if you don't modernize, get out" (Rañada, 2017a, para. 2), warned the president, on October 17, 2017, if the drivers would fail to comply with his government's public utility vehicle (PUV) modernization program. Far from his generally pro-labor pronouncements in the previous year, he gave them an ultimatum and threatened with a consequence:

I will give you until the end of the month or until the end of the year. *Sumunod kayo kasi, January 1, 'pag may makita akong jeep diyan na hindi nakarehistro, guguyurin ko 'yan sa harap ninyo* (You follow because by January 1, if I still see an unregistered jeep, I will have it dragged away in front of you) (Rañada, 2017a, para. 3).

Not only did Duterte show indifference, but he did not also let the moment slip away without cursing the drivers, as he is known. In an elitist fashion, he responded to a criticism that the modernization program was anti-poor by exclaiming, "*Mahirap kayo? Putang ina, magtiis kayo sa hirap at gutom, wala akong pakialam* (You're poor? Son of a bitch, suffer hardship and hunger, I don't care). It's the majority of the Filipino people. *Huwag ninyo ipasubo ang tao* (Don't endanger the public)" (Rañada, 2017a, para. 5). Here, Duterte did not attempt to engage the group diplomatically. Moreover, he even accused PISTON, along with KMU and other groups, as 'legal fronts' of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) without giving any substantial evidence. The transport strike thus, according to Duterte's logic, is a form of rebellion. He said, "It's one big conspiracy but they are at the same time, all of them, are committing right now, rebellion" (Rañada, 2017a, para. 11).

It can be remembered that the relationship between President Duterte and the Left, particularly the national democratic (ND) movement, turned into a hostile one after the collapse of the five-month-long ceasefire between the two sides. On February 1, 2017, New People's Army (NPA) spokesperson Ka Oris, in a statement, announced the termination of its unilateral ceasefire citing "the military's presence in their areas of operation and the delayed release of political prisoners" as the main reasons (Mangosing, 2017). Two days later, Duterte then answered by ordering the Armed Forces of the

Philippines (AFP) to terminate the government's ceasefire because of the government troops killed in encounters with the rebels (Corrales, 2017).

Ten months later, the president signed a proclamation labeling the CPP-NPA as a terrorist organization due to the alleged continuing violence being perpetrated by the communist rebels. Aside from the armed fighters in the countryside, the proclamation also considered arresting the members of what the government calls as 'fronts' of the communist movement who would be found financing terrorism, a crime under the Republic Act. 10168 (Rañada, 2017b). As a perpetuation of his previous salvo, Duterte again threatened PISTON, which he named as one of the 'communist fronts', with military and police deployments to thwart their transport strikes. The president explicitly expressed his willingness to engage the group in a violent confrontation:

*Itong Piston, hindi raw sila magsunod. Sige, subukan natin.* (This is Piston, they said they wouldn't follow. Okay, let's see.) I'm preparing the Armed Forces and police to buy rubber bullets, prepare for truncheons (Rañada, 2017c, para. 3).

That is what I like, we go best in turmoil. *Talagang guguyurin ko mga sasakyan ninyo* (I will really drag away your jeeps) (Rañada, 2017c, para. 5).

If 2017 was the year of the deterioration of relations between Duterte and the labor movement, the succeeding year was characterized by the loss of confidence among labor leaders because of the unfulfilled campaign promise of the president who now also shifted his tone in favor of business interests. This left many workers disillusioned with his previous pro-labor language.

## **2018**

From the seemingly non-negotiable pro-labor stance of the self-proclaimed first socialist president in 2016, Duterte during this time preferred a so-called compromise to balance the interests of the labor and business sectors. In a remark, on February 26, 2018, the president straightforwardly admitted that he could not force capitalists to change their employment terms, far from his April 2016 bragging of stamping out *endo* at the first week of his administration. The problem with this compromise, however, was that it raises a question about who will benefit the most from the postponement of ending *endo*. He declared,

I don't think that I can really give them all *kasi hindi naman natin mapilit 'yung mga kapitalista na — kung walang pera o ayaw nila o tamad* [because we cannot force the capitalists if there's no money, if they don't want to, or if the (workers) are lazy] (Siytangco, 2018, para. 8).

Don't make it hard for them to run the business the way they like it because that's their money. So something of a compromise must be — maybe acceptable to everybody (Siytangco, 2018, para. 9).

*Langis at tubig* (oil and water) — this was how columnist Tonyo Cruz (2018) described the relationship between the militant KMU and the *Nagkaisa* (United) Labor Coalition, led by the conservative ALU-TUCP (Associated Labor Unions - Trade Union Congress of the Philippines), the two largest labor federations in the country. Despite the historical rivalry and irreconcilable differences in ideology, the two labor formations decided to march together on 2018 Labor Day where Cruz gave credit to none other than Duterte whose “refusal or inability to deliver his campaign promise of ending ‘Endo’ and his trashing of a labor-drafted executive order proclaiming regularization as the norm in employment.” This essentially united, at least tactically, the fragmented Philippine labor movement as they shared a common cause in the name of contractualization.

To present his gift to the Filipino workers on Labor Day, Duterte signed an executive order (EO) prohibiting the illegal contracting and sub-contracting of workers. In front of thousands of workers, the president gave a speech acknowledging the continuing struggle of the labor sector and, at the same time, reassured everyone that his government's obligation to them was non-stop:

More than a century has passed since the very first Labor Day was celebrated and yet the struggle for a better life for our beloved workers continues (“President Duterte signs,” 2018, para. 3).

I assure you that this government will never cease in its efforts to provide every Filipino worker with full, dignified, and meaningful employment. They deserve no less than decent and comfortable lives (“President Duterte signs,” 2018, para. 4).

Yet, the president ironically admitted that the signed executive order was not enough to end endo. Despite invoking the pro-labor provisions of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, Duterte emphasized the role of the

Congress, which has been dominated by his allies since 2016, to pass a law amending the Labor Code that will offer a long-term solution to the issue of contractualization. He said, "I think Congress should come up with a new Labor Code to keep it attuned to the realities of our time" ("President Duterte signs," 2018a, para. 11). And for the nth time, Duterte, in his old-fashioned way, warned businesses who continue doing endo:

To all non-compliant and abusive employers, and their so-called 'cabos,' who are engaged in [labor-only] contracting, your days are numbered ("President Duterte signs," 2018, para. 15).

I have warned you before and I warn you again: stop endo and illegal contractualization. I will see to it that our laws are strictly enforced. The government will not rest until we end this shameful labor practice ("President Duterte signs," 2018, para. 16).

Like in February and May, Duterte's discourse on contractualization did not change even during his third State of the Nation Address on July 23, 2018. There, the president simply justified his inability to curb endo due to his power's limitation as chief executive. Still, Duterte brought up the executive order that he signed back in May. As an admission of the EO's ineffectiveness, he appealed, "Read my lips, I understand that this does not satisfy all sectors. I share their sentiment. I truly do" (Rey, 2018, para. 7). Speaking in front of the members of the Congress, the president maintained,

Much as I would like to do the impossible, that power is not vested upon me by the Constitution. And neither will I make both ends meet even if I violate the laws to achieve that purpose. Simply, it is not part of my territory (Rey, 2018, para. 3).

That is why I add mine to their voices in asking Congress to pass legislation ending the practice of contractualization once and for all (Rey, 2018, para. 4).

For the remainder of the year, however, Duterte focused his series of speeches attacking militant unionism and once again linking labor leaders to the communist movement. Almost two months after appeasing the labor sector for his inability to implement his campaign promise, he lambasted labor strikes, particularly those under the leadership of the KMU, and simplistically blamed them not only for the lack of foreign investors and factories but also on the closure of these in the Philippines. The president uttered,

*Pagka-ganun na may sweldo tayo at ang factory marami, mayaman tayo* (If we all have wages and many factories, we will prosper.) (CNN Philippines Staff, 2018, para. 3).

*Andyan ang KMU. Sige'ng strike. Di sa strike strike nila, ay magsara* (There's the KMU. Always going on strike. Because of the strikes, factories are shut down.) (CNN Philippines Staff, 2018, para. 6).

President Duterte, in the middle of his televised conversation with his chief legal counsel Salvador Panelo on September 11, also claimed that workers in China do not go on strike. His claim is contrary to Beverly Silver and Lu Zhang's study (2009) on labor unrest in China in which they cited official government figures where "mass protest increased from ten thousand incidents involving 730,000 protestors in 1993 to sixty thousand incidents involving more than three million protestors in 2003. They correctly summarized that "where capital goes, labor-capital conflict shortly follows" (p. 175). Nonetheless, Duterte, before ending his union-busting speech, reminded the workers, "Hindi ako Diyos. Kailangan ito hirap ng lahat" (I am not a god. This is everyone's hardship.) (CNN Philippines Staff, 2018, para. 9).

In October 2018, a significant part of the president's offensive against the labor movement was made with the removal of leftist Joel Maglunsod as undersecretary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). It can be remembered that even before Duterte took office, he offered cabinet posts to known personalities from the Left as a gesture to the then-expected resumption of peace negotiations with the communist-led National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) in 2016 ("Duterte to Left: 4 departments yours"). In a speech on October 2 in Catarman, Samar province, he narrated,

*[Si] Joel Maglunsod pinaalis ko. Pinagbigyan ko sila noong bago ako kasi gusto ko na – nandoon sila sa opisina, Joel Maglunsod, sila lahat.... Sama-sama pa kami sa Davao.* (I made Joel Maglunsod get out. I gave them a chance when I was new because I wanted to – they were there in the office, Joel Maglunsod, all of them....

*We were all together in Davao.)* (Rañada, 2018, para. 2) *Makipag-away ka sa akin, makipag-barilan ka tapos ngayon sabihin mo kasama tayo sa gobyerno, itong mga powers na 'to. Kalokohan*

*'yan.* (You fight against me, shoot it out, then you say we are together in government, with these powers. That's ridiculous.) (Rañada, 2018, para. 7)

Maglunsod's close ties with the Left, particularly with the KMU in Mindanao, were identified as Duterte's reason for his removal that further aggravated the president's soured relationship with the labor movement. In the same venue, the president also threatened the arrest of Maglunsod along with the labor unionists under KMU. He said, "*Iyong mga labor-labor, 'yang kasama ninyo and sa white area, 'yung agitation ng ano, 'yan paghuhulihin ko talaga 'yan* (Those labor groups, I will really arrest them all)" (Geducos, 2018, para. 9). Like his remark from the previous month, Duterte speculated the role of labor strikes on economic troubles:

*Kasi kung mag-strike sila nang mag-strike, sabihin mo sa kanila strike sila nang strike, they will paralyze the economy. 'Pag wala nang pera ang mga trabahante tapos magkagulo, mapipilitan ako* (Because they keep on doing strikes, tell them that they paralyze the economy. If workers are left with no money which will lead to disorder, I will be forced to arrest you) (Geducos, 2018, para. 10).

President Duterte's last speeches on the labor movement centered on his perceived links of the KMU with the armed struggle of the communists. In his speech in Malacañang on December 3, Duterte once again accused the KMU and other leftist organizations as "mere fronts" of the CPP-NPA. While he is talking about the alleged exploitation of the NPA of the Lumads, or indigenous peoples, in the hinterlands of Mindanao, he charged, "Satur Ocampo is fronting Bayan. Bayan is a front of the Communist Party of the Philippines. *Bakit pa tayo mag-drama? Alam natin that KMU, 'yan Gabriela,* (Why do we need to do drama? We all know that KMU, Gabriela), they are all communist fronts or being used by the communists. *Alam ninyo lahat 'yan.* (You all know that) ("Media Interview," 2018, para. 38). Before moving to the next topic, Duterte re-asserted, "They are all communists, Communist Party of the Philippines, it's a — raging a war and eventually you can connect them with the conspiracy to topple down [sic] government" ("Media Interview," 2018a, para. 40).

Ten days later, the president still did not stop his red-tagging of the KMU. Speaking at the Philippine Army Headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, Duterte asked, "*Tanungin ko kayo, anong ginawa ng KMU, itong mga PISTON sa buhay ninyo sa taga-Maynila? Kayong mga deprensipyo na*

*estudyante, anong ibinigay ni Sison?”* (Let me ask you, what did KMU, PISTON do to your life there in Manila? You principled students, what did [Jose Maria] Sison give to you?) (“Media Interview, 2018b, para. 106). This question was made by the president when he was answering questions of the media on the issue with the NPA. In the entirety of his December 13 speech, two things can be observed from Duterte’s discourse in relation to red-tagging: (1) he did not differentiate terrorists and NPA rebels, denying the latter as revolutionaries; and (2) he as well did not differentiate NPA rebels and legal activists of the KMU and others. The same observation can also be said for his speeches and interviews red-tagging the labor sector.

### **2019**

On his third Labor Day as the chief executive, Duterte was still unable to deliver his old promise of ending contractualization. It would later turn out that, since 2015, his repeated boasting was only empty talk and his appeals to the Congress, despite its majority composition of his allies, would not bear fruit to improve the working conditions of Filipino workers. After three years of bailing out his “end endo” promise, forcing jeepney phaseout in favor of modernization, peddling union-busting, and red-tagging labor unions, he ironically declared in his 2019 Labor Day message, “Today, we celebrate the working class not as a tool of employers and capitalists, but as an essential catalyst for our nation’s progress” (Rañada, 2019, para. 11). Yes, Filipino workers are not mere tools for the accumulation and expansion of capital. However, it is Duterte himself who enables and connives with the bourgeoisie to perpetuate labor exploitation through his inability to deliver his promised labor reform and his reactionary attitude towards the labor movement.

### **Power, ideology, and social representations in Duterte’s discourse**

After discussing Rodrigo Duterte’s discourse on Filipino workers and labor issues that spans from 2015 to 2019, it can be said that the president is coherent on two things—his refusal to fulfill his campaign promise of ending contractualization and his reactionary attitude against workers’ demand for better working conditions. While Duterte, in 2015 and 2016, expressed some pro-labor statements, these were all drowned out in the succeeding years with the dominance of his discourse which revolved around red-tagging, union-busting, and other threats against the labor movement. The significant yet unsurprising shift in Duterte’s discourse was made possible by his assumption of powers as president. A year after consolidating his hold, the changes in his labor discourse could be noticed and it can be

inferred here that at this time he could openly expose himself as actually anti-worker.

Labor leader Ka Leody de Guzman, in February 2016, was correct in criticizing Duterte for his Freudian slip of repressing labor strikes where it also exposed his previous pro-labor stance as a mere spectacle to gain the significant electoral support of the labor movement. Duterte's political deception during the electoral campaign also manifested when he countlessly invoked his supposed leftist orientation. It can be remembered that during his time in Davao City as mayor, he enjoyed a friendly relationship with the communist movement in Mindanao; sometimes even visiting guerrilla bases in the hinterlands. He was also exposed as a political science student of Prof. Jose Maria Sison in Lyceum where he accordingly joined the radical youth organization *Kabataang Makabayan* (Teehankee 2016). This personal bond, thus, was exploited by Duterte in his discourse to project himself as a hero of the Filipino working class.

As the political scientist Mark Thompson correctly argued, "Duterte's strongest support did not come from the poorest voters but rather from the elite and the middle class" (2016, p. 41). It is only normal for the president to promote the interests of the elite, particularly of the personalities or groups which financially backed his presidential campaign. Despite his populist and anti-oligarch rhetoric, Duterte is no different from the presidents in that he succeeded in terms of implementing neoliberal economic policies of liberalization, privatization, and deregulation. Only days after he won the election, Duterte's camp already released its eight-point economic agenda which is neoliberal. Progressive economist Sonny Africa detailed,

The neoliberal emphasis on promoting private profit—even in public utilities and social services — and unqualifiedly welcoming foreign investment is largely intact. Government resources and regulatory authority will be geared to supporting corporate profits rather than ensuring national development and attending to the people's welfare. Real asset reforms and redistributive measures that challenge elite power are avoided (2016).

To bridge the macro and micro levels in understanding President Duterte's discourse, van Dijk's (2001) unified critical analysis has four ways, as explained above. First, we should not forget that Duterte engages in discourse both as the Philippine head of state and government. His take on different labor issues comes from his perspective as the top official of the bureaucracy. This leads us to the second point where Duterte, as the head

of state, mobilizes what French philosopher Louis Althusser (1971) called the repressive state apparatus (RSA) and the ideological state apparatuses (ISA). Whereas the RSA functions 'by violence,' the ISA function 'by ideology' (p. 21). In his discourse, the president repeatedly threatened to repress the labor unions who conducted strikes and protests by deploying the state apparatus, particularly the military and the police. Duterte also utilized the political ISA (political system) when he invoked the separation of powers of the executive and legislative branches on his inability to end contractualization, and the communications ISA, particularly the press and television, in delivering discourse itself. In other words, the president, who is also the head of state, in his discourse, mobilizes both violence and ideology as an exercise of power against those he perceived as enemies of the state.

One of the unwritten rules of being a national leader is to communicate with the public as part of one's mandate vested by the constitution. That is why the third point stands that Duterte's discourse, through interviews, speeches, messages, and so on, is part of his function as the president. The Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) serves as "the premier arm of the Executive Branch in engaging and involving the citizenry and the mass media in order to enrich the quality of public discourse on all matters of governance." Moreover, when it comes to the context of the president's discourse, we can say that his anti-communist stance (e.g. red-tagging and union-busting), is a part of his institutionalization of the whole-of-nation approach in fighting the communist movement. This was made possible through Executive Order (EO) No. 70 which created the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) ("Executive Order No. 70").

Fourth, Duterte, as a social actor, uses his personal and social cognition, hence, reinforcing the pervasive Philippine 'social representation' of the labor movement as 'reds' or 'communists.' As we saw, President Duterte's discourse on the labor movement centered on red-tagging and union-busting. From van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach (2006), his anti-labor discourse constitutes not only the cognitive processes of his subjectively interpreted personal experiences but, moreover, the "more stable, more permanent, general and socially shared beliefs" that influenced his discourse are called 'social representations.' "Our sociocultural knowledge forms the core of these beliefs and allows us to meaningfully act, interact, and communicate with other members of the same culture" (p. 369).

In the context of Duterte's discourse, his red-tagging is not only because of his cognition as an anti-communist president but due to the

pervasive social representation of labor unions in the Philippines as ‘reds’ or ‘communists.’ This representation has a long history, according to Michael Tan (2021), and it is rooted in American domestic and foreign policies where the US government used ‘red scare’; first, against the Bolshevik victory in Russia in 1917, and second, during the Cold War period when the government tracked down suspected communists in the United States. To fight not only the local communist insurgency but also the parliamentary struggle of workers, peasants, and students, presidents of the third Philippine Republic up to the martial law regime of Ferdinand Marcos adopted and drummed the policy of anti-communism. More than fifty years since the founding of the Communist Party and its army, Duterte continues this policy not only to fight communist rebels but also to quell dissent given that he does not differentiate rebels and activists.

As we have contended, power is a central notion in critical discourse analysis. Essentially, in this study, Duterte’s discourse is the very manifestation of his power, before and after he assumed the presidency. As part of exercising his power as president, Duterte has been controlling public discourse and people’s minds since he took power in 2016. These tendencies can be associated with his brand of populism in which his authoritarian values are “characterized by a disregard for liberal political institutions, norms, and practices like human rights” (Pernia, 2019, pp. 58-59). As an authoritarian-populist, which is also synonymous with a tyrant, Duterte possesses some of the seven signs of tyranny, as identified by Robert Reich (2017), particularly his repeated lies to the public and his attacks on the motives of anyone who opposes him.

Based on the president’s discourse and van Dijk’s perspective (2005) on the relationships of power and discursive interaction (2005, p. 31), Rodrigo Duterte’s ability to have spatial-temporal access for his discourse on labor issues, to curse and threaten labor unionists, and to persuade and manipulate his audience through his cognition and social representation, are all manifestations and exemplification of his power both as the head of the state and the government.

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