



SCHOOL OF  
GOVERNMENT



# Remnants of the Past in A Changing Terrain of Politics *Explaining Election-Related Violence in Nueva Ecija, Philippines*

Political Democracy and Reform (PODER)  
Ateneo School of Government  
April 2010

Submitted to  
The Asia Foundation

## Introduction

### A. Background and Rationale

Elections have always been an important mechanism for people empowerment, since it allows ordinary citizens to have a voice in political affairs. It is for this reason that elections are seen not only as a minimum requirement, but as the quintessence of democracy. But for elections to legitimate, the said process should be fair, unbiased and reflective of the people's choice.

Violence, however, has a constraining effect on the electoral process, since it prevents voters from exercising their free choice. Confronted by this dilemma, it is not surprising that election-related violence has already become a national issue in the Philippines. Based on statistics, for instance, the government has repeatedly categorized at least 181 areas in the country as election hotspots. Election hotspots are classified into two:

1. Election Areas of Concern (EAC), while EAC are areas where election-related violence are likely to occur or where election-related offenses were committed during the previous elections.
2. Election Areas of Immediate Concern (EIAC), which are towns, cities or municipalities where election-related violence are highly expected to occur.

Interestingly, there seems to be an inverse correlation between a locality's level of development and the degree of electoral violence. For instance, most of the areas considered as election hotspots are among the poorest provinces in the country. In fact, the municipalities that have been repeatedly categorized as hotspots since 2007 are located in the top ten poorest provinces of the Philippines (as per the 2006 NCSB poverty incidence data). An example of which is the province of Abra which has a poverty incidence of 50.1 % and annual per capita poverty threshold of Php 17,900.00.

But there are also certain elections hotspots, such as Nueva Ecija, which are relatively well-off areas of the country that are relatively well-off, compared to the rest of the country. The said province has in fact been a consistent election hotspot for the past three elections from 2001 to 2007. And it was again included in the list of hotspot provinces by the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) in 2010. It was first placed under COMELEC Control during the 2004 elections, and it has retained the same status three years later in the 2007 elections, with 17 out of its 32 towns declared as election hotspots.

Surprisingly, despite these figures, Novo Ecijanos do not see election-related violence as a serious problem in their province; asserting instead the improvement of their situation and declining instances of ERV.

Such perception, however, is not without basis since the degree of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija pale in comparison with the other election hotspots in the Philippines. In Abra, for example, incidences of election-related violence are always in the hundreds, while in Nueva Ecija, the numbers have never gone beyond twenty. There are also reports which show a decline in the number of election-related violence incidences since 2001 in the said province.

This, however, does not discount the fact that ERV incidents continue to occur in certain areas of Nueva Ecija. An in-depth study is therefore necessary in order to explore the possible factors that can account for this situation. In sum, this paper shall attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What are the manifestations of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija?
2. What are its origins?
3. Who are the actors involved in committing these forms of violence? How do they publicly respond to electoral violence?
4. Is there a connection between Nueva Ecija's socio-economic conditions and election-related violence?
5. Are there current efforts from civil society (i.e., non-government organizations, media, the Church, academe) to address this problem?
6. What are the State mechanisms that are supposed to prevent the occurrence of electoral violence? How do these institutional mechanisms contribute to ERV in Nueva Ecija?
7. How do the people of Nueva Ecija view election-related violence? Do they generally perceive an entrenchment of violence in their culture?

Answering these questions would not only help in determining the cause of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija, but would also assist in developing an appropriate response to address the problem.

## **B. Research Framework and Objectives**

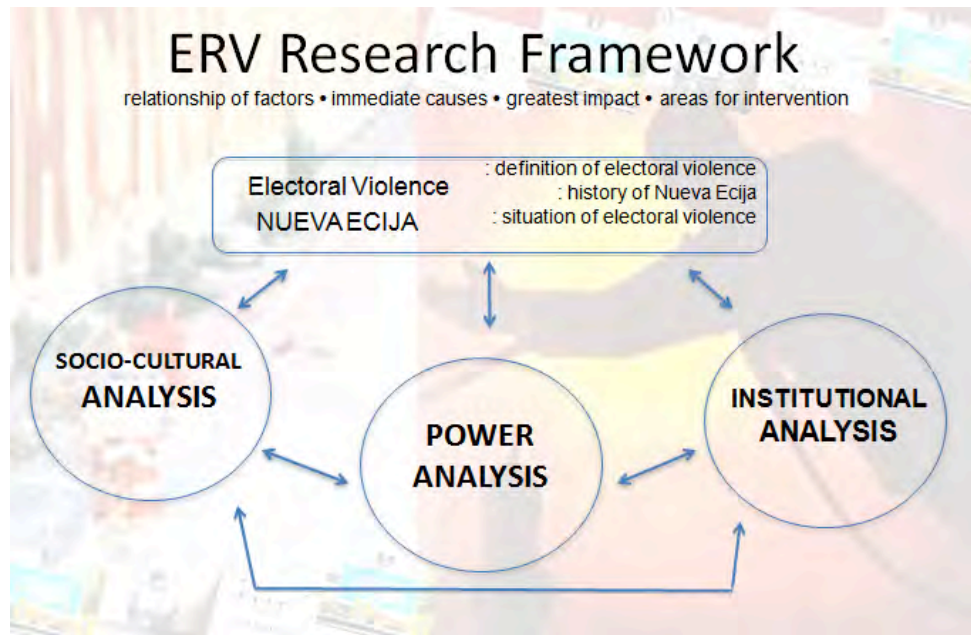
The study is a cause-and-effect analysis on election-related violence in Nueva Ecija. It seeks to explain the situation of election-related violence in the said province by adopting a action research that looks into its causes and implications, as well as the definitions and types of election-related violence that are present in the province.

Action research is the Ateneo School of Government's (ASoG) brand of research that utilizes research to address real-life problems and issues in politics and society. It is akin to Applied Research. The research studies are useful to the practice of politics and governance. Action research also acknowledges the immediate impact of research studies on the situation of the subjects being studied and ASoG takes advantage of this to address the situation by engaging the actors and the situation; and becoming a participant observer that will monitor the actions and decisions of actors that will hopefully serve as positive reinforcement for actions and decisions that are according to rules and norms.

The study, as an action research, recognizes the importance of the opinions and analyses of those directly affected by the object of the study, i.e., election-related violence in Nueva Ecija. While the study aims to provide an objective third-party analysis of the problem, it gives ample consideration to the inputs and recommendations of the stakeholders of the research, especially in developing the methods and tools of the study.

The reason ASoG is conducting this study is to guide action. It is our position that at the end of the day, whoever is affected knows what is best to address the problem that they are confronting. But it is also significant that an objective research is available to the community to somehow inform them of how outsiders understand their situation. This serves as inputs for their reflection and on the measures they want to undertake to mitigate the problem that they are confronting.

Thus, as an action research, this study aims to provide a rapid, outside-looking-in, and evidence-based assessment of the cause-and-effect analysis of electoral violence in Nueva Ecija; and to identify and define the measures and mechanisms that can be supported or introduced to mitigate the problem of electoral violence.



The study employs three analytical perspectives, namely: (1) power analysis, (2) institutional analysis and (3) socio-cultural analysis. By using a cause-and-effect analysis, this research was able to look at the problem from a broader perspective, identifying the different variables and how they are mutually reinforcing. It is however critical to limit the possible causal categories to provide depth to and emphasis of the study.

### I. *Power Analysis*

As a form of influence, power is directly involved in attaining compliance by creating the prospect of severe sanctions for non-compliance. By influence on the other hand, we refer to the relation among actors such that the wants, desires, preferences or intentions of one or more actors affect the actions or predispositions to act of one or more other actors (Dahl, 1991).

Seen as a form of influence, power then is able to shape the relationship among key players, and can even lead to the violence when there is a strict competition for resources or when the different actors are trying to expand their resource base. Thus, the study of power also involves looking at the key power players, their motivations, their means to achieve their specific purposes, and the implications of these actions. With this analysis, interconnectedness is also mapped out to help determine the relationship of the actors and how this relates to the persistence of election-related violence.

In the case of Nueva Ecija, the power-holders were able to create a system of relationship based on patronage, wherein a patron provides his client with employment and security in return for political support. The patron-client framework can also be used to describe more complex kinds of political relationships (that is, when there is more than one patron) and analyze the alliances among the elites (Charney, 1987).

By looking at the power dynamics in Nueva Ecija, this analytical lens of power demands to answer the following research questions:

- Who holds power in Nueva Ecija?
- How is power exercised in Nueva Ecija?
- What is the relationship among the power-holders? How do they relate with the government?
- What is their motivation for staying in power?
- What interests do they protect?
- How do the power-holders obtain, maintain and expand their power?
- What are the outcomes/ results of their exercise of power?
- What are the current and emerging threats to the power-holders?
- How do power-holders confront/ face criticisms, opposition and threats?
- How are they made accountable for their exercise of power?

## II. *Institutional Analysis*

Institutions play a key role in building mechanisms of social order. These are normally attributed to a particular collective purpose of a social nature and they exist not only to enforce governing rules and regulations over a particular body, but also to safeguard certain social values by applying such rules to common customs and behavioral patterns to society and to formal organizations of government and public service. In this manner, institutions help create political structures because of their ability to: 1) define who is able to participate in the particular political arena, 2) shape the various actors' political strategies, and 3) influence what these actors believe to be both possible and desirable (Steinmo, 2001, p1).

By adopting institutional analysis as one of its analytical tools, this research will look into structure and performance of the different institutions in Nueva Ecija responsible for preventing election-related violence. Specifically, this study will review the basic functions of the following state institutions: the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the local courts, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and the Department of Education (DepEd). It will also study the different non-state actors or the civil society organizations including the Church, academe, non-government organizations and media.

In addition, the research will also try to determine the implications of the formal-legal functions of these institutions in shaping the public's understanding of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija, which in turn, also affects the way these institutions address the problem. It will also attempt to establish how the government frames and structures its response to ERV, particularly looking at the laws and policies that have been implemented by its various agencies.

In sum, the study raises the question “Does failure of election institutions instigate election-related violence in Nueva Ecija?” The following questions are also derived from this:

- How do Philippine laws define election-related violence? What are the existing measures and mechanisms to determine its occurrence?
- What are the institutions that directly affect the practice of and pave the way for fair and peaceful elections in Nueva Ecija?
- What are their particular functions and goals? Do these institutions have clear identities and functions which effectively allow them to help in ensuring peaceful and democratic elections?
- Are these institutions able to perform their functions as measured by the accomplishments of performance targets and standards?
- What are the implications of the level of their institutional performance on the persistence of election violence in Nueva Ecija?
- How can their weaknesses/strengths as institutions be explained? Are the institutional performance connected to the political dynamics of the area and the cultural characteristics of the people in Nueva Ecija?
- What are key areas that need to be addressed to strengthen the institutions identified?

### III. *Cultural Analysis*

Sir Edward B. Tylor (1871) defines culture as that “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” Fry, for his part, defines it as “a set of values, attitudes, goals and practices that characterize a group of people, institutions, or organizations, and which are considered to be common to individuals in a particular society because its members share the same belief system” (Fry, 2006).

By identifying a people’s traits or characteristics, we may be able to determine the causes of a particular problem, how culture contributes in its perpetuation and how it can best be addressed while at the same time, recognizing the shared sensibilities of a particular staff.

In the case of election-related violence, culture may also be perceived as one of the key factors as to why it still persists. This means that electoral violence can actually be rooted in the belief system on which a particular culture is founded. Being a social phenomena that occurs in a given society (Vicente, 2009) violence exists in Nueva Ecija as a distinguishing trait that is evidently shared by its people through their shared sentiments and experiences.

By adopting cultural analysis, this research will investigate the interplay of the various elements of Novo Ecijano culture in order to explain the persistence of election-related violence in the province. It aims to do so by:

1. looking at people’s perception of violence and their reactions to such phenomena, and
2. by scrutinizing both their overt expressions (which are evident in their practices and behavior) as well as their covert traits, including attitudes.

Specifically, it raises the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of a society that breeds election violence? What is in that culture that perpetuates violence in general and election violence in particular?
2. What is the cultural make-up of those social actors? What are the people's practices, beliefs, behaviors, attitudes and local constructs (concepts, understanding, and perception) that are relevant in explaining the occurrence of election violence?

This study, in other words, will also attempt to look into the cultural make-up of the Novo Ecijanos and how this affects the perpetuation of ERV in their province. It investigates the relationship of several cultural elements such as the concept of violence, attitudes towards violence, value for life, and macho culture to explain violence as a general occurrence in Nueva Ecija elections.

## C. Methodology

This study uses various research methods in order to analyze all angles of the topic more deeply. Each analytical lens was used with accompanying research strategies that are appropriate for the framework and can be helpful in answering the research questions.

### I. *Research Methods*

This study's power analysis adopts a historical approach so as to outline the political history of Novo Ecijano politicians, as well as the other instances in the past that may have contributed to election-related violence. While using the patron-client framework, other analytical frameworks were also adopted in order to identify the current situation of violence in the Nueva Ecija. To gather the needed data, interviews with key informants were conducted by the research team, while cases of election-related violence were also documented.

For institutional analysis, the research team scanned of the government's institutional framework in responding to ERV and assessed the organizational performance of the various institutions that are supposed to carry this out. In addition, the study takes an in-depth look into the implications of institutional actions on the definition of election-related violence.

In its socio-cultural analysis, the study adopts a conceptual model that was developed earlier to better understand the results of the survey data. This also serves as an organizing framework to demonstrate how the concepts being studied are weaved and understood in relation to election-related violence.

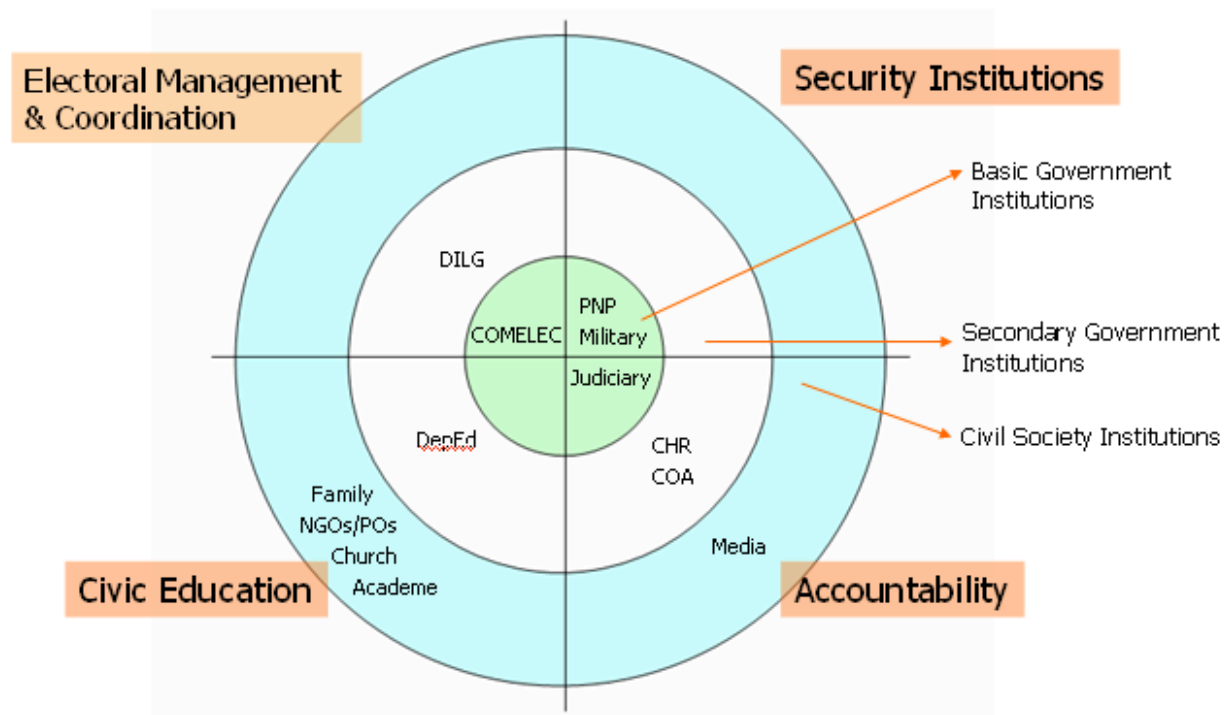
#### 1. Organizational Performance Assessment

The institutional analysis was done with a specific institutional framework in order to determine the institutions that are responsible for the prevention of election-related violence as well as their respective degrees of accountability. These institutions were further classified according to the following categories:

- Immediately accountable for election-related violence in Nueva Ecija (which are composed of basic institutions);

- Indirectly accountable (which means that the level of accountability of these secondary institutions is only based on their institution’s legal mandate); and
- Socially accountable which includes civil society groups which are only involved in this issue on a more social level and are not legally-bound to address election-related violence).

With this, an institutional framework was developed, which is represented in the figure below:



After identifying the institutions and their levels of accountability, their performance was then checked based on their mandate related to election violence. This was also done in aid of official reports and documents acquired from respective offices and agencies, as well as key informant interviews with various stakeholders and representatives of each institution.

## 2. Conceptual Model

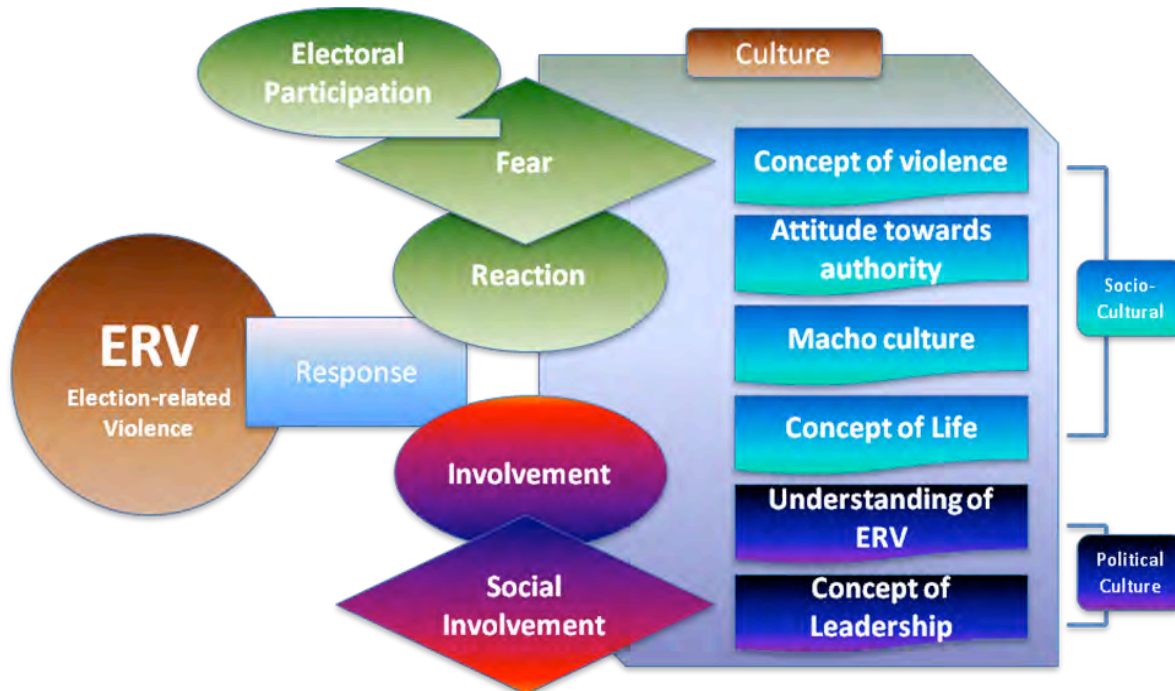
To determine the cultural causes of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija, a conceptual model was developed in order to represent the practices, perceptions, beliefs and attitudes of the Novo Ecijanos and how these factors shape the proliferation of election-related violence. This model exhibits the concepts that can illustrate the cultural dynamics in the said province how they influence people’s perception of electoral violence. The said model can also help visualize the elements of Nueva Ecija culture that can aid in proving or disproving the assumption that violence may be culturally-embedded.



This model aims to determine whether certain cultural practices perpetuate violence. These are primarily identified and assessed in terms of cultural responses and level of involvement by the people, through their shared beliefs and values, and shared attitudes and behavior specifically towards politics and violence.

The model also proved to be useful in data processing. The data that were collected from the attitude survey were clustered and organized according to the parts of the conceptual model. It also guided the construction of the questions used for the survey.

### CONCEPTUAL MODEL



### 3. Historical Analysis

The study seeks to map out the interrelationship of the different key political actors in Nueva Ecija. By doing so, the research will be able to:

1. identify the major power-holders in the province (both past and present);
2. establish the relationships of these actors and how these led to the emergence of election-related violence;
3. trace the developments of Nueva Ecija politics; and
4. pinpoint the trends regarding electoral violence in the said province.

Special attention however was placed on the Joson family which dominated politics in the province for decades.

By utilizing historical analysis alongside the patron-client framework, this study hopes to gain a better understanding of how Nueva Ecija’s power-holders had perpetuated electoral violence. It also cites a few high profile cases, including the death of Eduardo “Tatang” Joson (the clan’s patriarch), and the murder of Honorato Perez and Danding Joson—all of whom were major players in Nueva Ecija politics.

The research also looked into certain historical events which had become turning points in the emergence of election-related violence. Special attention was given since these events occurred outside of the usual timeframe identified with electoral violence—that is, six months before and after the elections.

Lastly, the study also attempts to establish a link between election-related violence and communist insurgency. This was done so as to map out the interconnectedness of both issues that have plagued Nueva Ecija for decades and to determine if the latter actually feeds the former.

This flow of history was used by the study to exhibit the power dynamics in Nueva Ecija, and, in turn, give light on the issue of election-related violence.

## II. *Data Gathering*

The following data gathering methods were used for this study—review of related literature, review of official reports and documents, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, attitude survey and participant observation.

### 1. Review of Related Literature and other Secondary Materials

In order to better understand election-related violence, the research reviewed the various literatures on election-related violence and Philippine politics, as well as reports and other secondary materials. This was done to aid in the subsequent development of the conceptual framework and in the study’s framework of analysis. Apart from providing pertinent information, the materials also enabled the team to look into the various concepts and definition of election-related violence.

Most of the data were found in news articles and the media reports. And because these were only secondary and unconsolidated, there was a need to triangulate data through a review of other materials, such as journals and reports from other non-government organizations.

### 2. Review of Official Reports and Documents

Apart from the secondary sources, official documents and reports from various government agencies were also reviewed for this study. This was critical since it helped establish the facts and figures used for this study. It was also pivotal in outlining Nueva Ecija’s political history (power analysis) and in assessing the performance of the various institutions in the province (institutional analysis).

### 3. Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews with relevant government agencies, non-government organizations civil society organizations were done in order to collect data and allow institutional assessment among the stakeholders. The target informants were those who perform functions or play roles that are related to the subject of the study. They were identified based on the institution that they represent and by referrals from the research team's contacts. To aid the conduct of the interview, a protocol was also developed for all interview sessions, which included:

- General Guide Questions, which aimed to check the informants' understanding of election-related violence;
- Power Analysis Guide Questions, which seeks to uncover the relationship and interplay of the different actors; and
- Institutional Analysis Guide Questions, which delves on institutional performance, as well as people's perception on relevant institutions.

#### 4. Focus Group Discussions

Another method employed by this study was to conduct focus group discussions (FGD). This was done in order to generate data and to cross-validate them. FGDs were conducted with representatives of key institutions in Nueva Ecija, including, state, non-government and civil society organizations. This proved to be useful in determining the pulse of the institutions in terms of the issue and in the organizational performance assessment through the identification of their mandate and functions, their self-assessment and success indicators, and their evaluation of other institutions.

#### 5. Attitude Survey

An attitude survey was conducted in order to have a scientific basis for the cultural analysis of the attitude of Novo Ecijanos on electoral violence. This is a research tool that was devised to assess the general feelings of the target audience towards the subject of the study. The attitude survey was done among Novo Ecijanos using random selection of units in five (5) hotspots and four (4) non-hotspot towns in Nueva Ecija with five to six respondents per barangay.

The instrument used to conduct the attitude surveys included the following:

1. Profiling of respondents, which entails asking basic information about the respondents;
2. Voting information, in order to gather data on the voting history of the respondent;
3. A series of open ended, single and multiple response type of questions aimed at capturing the understanding, awareness and experience of the respondents on election-related violence;
4. A series of institutional assessment questions that asks about the respondents' satisfaction on different government agencies and/or institutions having vital roles particularly in addressing the problem of election-related violence;
5. A series of open ended, single and multiple response type of questions that asks about the respondents' perceived solutions to the problem of election-related violence; and
6. A series of scales that were designed to quantify the majority of items significant in carrying out the cultural analysis, namely: concept of violence, attitude towards authority, macho culture, concept of life, concept of leadership and social involvement.

The data gathered from the attitude surveys were used in all the analytical lenses of this research. However, they were mainly used as the focal point of study for the cultural analysis as a primary instrument in exploring the relation of culture with election-related violence.

Cluster sampling is employed in the selection of respondents based on multiple randomizations. It is a multi-stage sampling where a sample of areas is chosen in the first, second and third stages, and in which a sample of respondents is selected for the fourth stage. The sampling design shall be elaborated in the chapter on cultural analysis. The towns that were randomly selected for the study (which were divided into those that are hotspots and those that are not) are:

1. Gapan
2. Jaen
3. Lupao
4. San Isidro
5. Santo Domingo
6. Bongabon
7. Cabiao
8. Penaranda
9. Talavera

Towns numbered 1-5 above are declared election hotspots by the COMELEC in the 2007 elections.

#### 6. Participant Observation

Ethnography using participant observation as a method was also employed as a method in the cultural analysis. This was conducted to further deepen the understanding of the cultural make-up of Novo Ecijanós and how this shapes the overall perception and attitude towards election-related violence. Through this method, observations were made and empirical data were also gathered by means of field work, in order to get a thorough and holistic description of the nature of Novo Ecijanós and how these possibly contribute to the issue.

#### 7. Validation Workshop

To validate facts and data as well as get feedback on initial findings and conclusions, a series of validation workshops were conducted with key stakeholders before finalizing the conclusions and recommendations. This was done through an oral and visual presentation of the initial draft of the study with some of the key informants and representatives of institutions who helped in improving the study through their comments and suggestions regarding the construction of the research.

### **B. Scope and Limitation**

In conducting the study, three key challenges emerged. First is the availability of data, since there seems to be a lack of documents and reported cases that would help determine the situation of ERV in Nueva Ecija. This posed a big challenge in trying to identify facts for analysis, especially in determining cases that would be considered as incidents of election-related violence.

The definition of election-related violence posed a major challenge in conducting this study, since it entails considering several dimensions so as to fully understand its peculiarities (Reif, 2009). The said phenomenon is multi-faceted in character and cannot simply be captured in a single, exact or aggregated definition. This stems from another challenge which further makes election-related violence a particularly hazy concept—that of establishing the motive for particular acts of violence.

A particular part of the research that was affected by this challenge was the historical study done under the power analysis. This research only covers the historical timeframe beginning from Eduardo “Tatang” Joson’s dominance in the 1960’s up to the present, because it is the focal point of the analysis. Yet the electoral violence cases that were identified were confined only to those that the institutions reported in official documents, which formally began only in the 2004 elections. Thus, specific incidents of election-related violence were only documented and used as data from that point up to the recent elections, which were conducted by state institutions, being the only agencies with the capacity to gather such information. This study, therefore, used data only from these formal sources, which limited the research with government-sourced information, which may be insufficient in themselves.

The second biggest challenge was the ambiguity of available data. The incidents that were identified seemed to revolve around various definitions that go beyond the standard parameters set by the COMELEC or the PNP. Thus, there was a limitation in identifying cases and in the actual counting of these events that would aid in keeping track of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija.

Lastly, the study encountered conflicting information. The processed data seem to exhibit contrasting results, which contributed to the general complexity of the issue. Some facts and figures that were gathered were not consistent with each other and were being contested by some of the stakeholders. These limit the findings of the study and leaves gray areas that need to be explored by future studies.

In presenting the results of this study, it is important to first look into the situation of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija in recent years and what particular instances in the past continue to be evident in the present. After this section, the three analytical perspectives will be presented—Power Analysis, Institutional Analysis, and the Cultural Analysis, which makes up a significant portion of this research. Lastly, a synthesis will be given to make sense out of the three analyses, which will then be followed by recommendations on how to address the issue based on the team’s assessment of this research.

## Situationer

Because this study aims to look into the phenomenon of electoral violence in Nueva Ecija, it is important to determine the ERV situation in the said province. This is an essential part of the research, especially once we begin comparing the situation in Nueva Ecija with other provinces in the country.

Initially, the research team discovered that while election-related violence does occur in Nueva Ecija, the degree is not as severe as in the other hotspots in the Philippines, due to the relatively less number of ERV incidents that were reported.

This does not mean, however, that the situation in Nueva Ecija is simple or benign, since various forms of violence have occurred that sometimes go beyond the traditional definition of ERV. While election-related violence is often understood as the targeting of candidates running for office, non-politicians also fell victim to ERV which makes the overall situation in the province quite complex.

### I. Election-Related Violence in Nueva Ecija

In the case of Nueva Ecija, the occurrence of election-related violence can be established through three factors:

1. that several of its towns have been identified as election hotspots by the COMELEC during the 2001, 2004 and 2007 elections;
2. that based on PNP survey estimates, loose firearms have proliferated in Nueva Ecija; and
3. That competing political dynasties are well-entrenched in Nueva Ecija politics.

For an area to be considered as an election hotspot, several factors would have to be first considered. The PNP, for instance, would have to establish that a specific area has a history of electoral. In addition, the police would also have to take into account political rivalries between two or more people or groups.

Interestingly, Nueva Ecija was declared an election hotspot by the Commission on Elections in 2009, along with nine (9) other provinces in the Philippines. Five years earlier, in 2004, 16 out of the 32 towns of Nueva Ecija were declared as election hotspots.

The succeeding election period was slightly better, but it was essentially no different. There was a decrease in number of towns that were declared as hotspots (only 10 municipalities were included in the watch list); but they were nonetheless included due the relatively high number of killings, including the bloody shooting incident in the town of Jaen.

#### 1. ERV Incidents

The shootout in Jaen happened in April 2007, which involved the camps of then-Mayor Antonio Esquivel and Congressman Rodolfo Antonino who was then running for re-election in the 4th district of Nueva Ecija. It was reported that at least two (2) people died in the incident, while 17 others were wounded. The fatalities were municipal council candidate Rufino Galang (54 years old)

and police escort SPO1 Buddy Ferrer who was assigned to the provincial police headquarters. Among the wounded in the shootout were 12 of Esquivel's police escorts and his two (2) sons—Mark Lawrence and Mark Anthony—who reportedly underwent surgery for bullet wounds in the head.

Another incident transpired in Gabaldon wherein Diosdado dela Cruz (who was then running for Mayor) was allegedly harassed at gunpoint by people from a rival political camp. During the same period, several incidents of killings were also reported involving barangay captains that were reported to have transpired from 2006 to 2007 in different election hotspots in Nueva Ecija. These among many other cases mostly unresolved have tagged Nueva Ecija as an election hotspot.

Yet the violence did not end after the 2007 polls, since ERV incidents were again reported even after the election period, like in Lupao where the newly elected mayor and vice-mayor were murdered.

For the May 2010 elections, the PNP again expected that violence will occur in the province prompting them to declare 13 out of 76 towns as hotspots.

## 2. *Loose Firearms*

Related to the problem of election violence is gun proliferation in Nueva Ecija. In fact, according to PNP estimates, there are at least 6,700 loose firearms in Nueva Ecija, out of the 122,700 loose firearms in the nine provinces declared as election hotspots.<sup>1</sup>

## 3. *Political Clans*

Nueva Ecija is characterized by intense rivalries among the different political clans. The most prominent among these families are the Josons whose patriarch was Eduardo "Tatang" Joson—the staunch political rival Honorato Perez who was, in turn, supported by the Concepcion clan. This rivalry is rooted in the province's long history of personal and electoral competition. This has even resulted in the death of Tatang Joson's son—Danding—as well as the murder of Honorato Perez, which has once and for all ended the two families' political rivalry.

The influence of the Joson family, however, was soon eclipsed by other political clans, thereby changing the political configuration in Nueva Ecija. Among these families are the Umalis, the Violagos, the Vergaras, the Esquivels, the Antoninos and the Vendivils— all of whom have their own private armed groups and were, at one time or another, allegedly involved in ERV incidents.

## II. Level of Severity of Election-Related Violence in Nueva Ecija

Election related violence in various forms and types have been reoccurring in Nueva Ecija. In an interview with P/SSupt Ricardo Marquez, Provincial Director of Nueva Ecija Provincial Police, there were 20 cases or ERV during the 2004 National Elections and 13 cases of ERV during the 2007 Election period. He adds that ERV in the province is caused by the presence of partisan

<sup>1</sup> Manila Bulletin. <http://www.mb.com.ph/node/233006/pnp-li>.

armed groups which are under the control of the different political clans which have a long history of violent political rivalry.

Bishop Mylo Hubert Vergara of the Diocese of San Jose, on the other hand, claims that in addition to violent political rivalry, election-related violence is also caused by the on-going conflict between insurgents and the military, and that the province is still considered by the AFP as an NPA stronghold of the NPA. He adds that while the ERV situation is obvious and intense, the challenge is in identifying the culprits who kill surprisingly not for profit, but out of loyalty for their political bosses.

For its part, the Commission on Election has placed Nueva Ecija under COMELEC Control for three consecutive elections. In 2004, the province was under the control of the COMELEC. In 2007, 16 towns were under COMELEC Control in 2007; while 13 towns were placed under the same category during the 2010 elections.

The most recent and prominent cases of ERV in the province were reported in Jaen, involving a bloody shootout between the camps of Antonino and Esquivel. There was also an incident of harassment involving a candidate in the town of Gabaldon in broad daylight, as well as the murder of the Mayor and Vice Mayor of Lupao.

Based from several accounts and records of ERVIs, Nueva Ecija is no doubt an election hotspot. However, the data that has been gathered indicate that the situation in the province is not severe when compared to the national average. Relatively speaking, Nueva Ecija is in fact better off than other election hotspot provinces in the Philippines.

### 1. Stakeholder's Assessment

During the interviews and FGDs conducted by the research team with some of the institutional representatives, stakeholders have often downplayed the issue of election-related violence in their province.

However their statements can still be classified into four (4) according to those who said that the situation has changed and those who said that there are no empirical data to prove it has worsened:

- In terms of the number of ERV cases, some stakeholders claim that there are no more ERV cases lately, or that these incidents have been declining and do not happen as often as in previous years.
- In terms of the kinds of election-related violence, some of the respondents say that the cases are unclear and cannot be determined for sure if they are indeed election-related. In addition, the incidents no longer involve big political clans.
- In terms of their perception of the severity of election-related violence, the respondents claim that it is only slightly serious since no cases have been filed in court, and that there is actually no basis to say that election-related violence is indeed a pressing problem in Nueva Ecija. They are also of the opinion that these cases are already manageable and are only slightly moderate.
- In terms of their overall assessment of the situation: They claim that the situation is improving and is not intense because it is being contained by the authorities, such as



the police. They also assert that the gravity of the situation is only caused by media hype and is not apparent on the ground.

## 2. *People's Perception*

As if to support these opinions from the stakeholders, results of the attitudinal survey conducted with the residents of Nueva Ecija also reveal the same sentiments and perceptions. Upon cross-checking, the processed data from the said survey reveal that the population does not see electoral violence as a major problem in their province. In similar fashion, Novo Ecijanos believe that the severity of the election-related violence in the province as quite low. The survey further indicates that Novo Ecijanos have a culture that is detached from the whole issue of ERV.

The survey was administered to a randomly selected sample of Nueva Ecija's voting population. One of its questions asked the respondents whether they are aware that there is election-related violence in the province or not. The results of the survey from that question alone revealed that 72.3% of the respondents said YES while 27.7% replied NO. This means that the majority of the Novo Ecijanos recognize that election-related incidents do occur in the province.

However, there was another question in the survey where it asked the respondents to rate or assess the seriousness or severity of ERV in the province by ranking it from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. 47.3% of the respondents answered and the results of this question are as follows:

- a) Only 0.5% of them answered 5 or very severe;
- b) Only 1.1% answered 1 or not severe.
- c) This means that a majority's answer ranges from 2-4.

From this question, it can be deduced that that most of the respondents who answered are not sure of the seriousness or severity of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked if they actually have personal experiences of election-related violence. 84% of the respondents answered NO, while 16% answered YES, thus showing that most Novo Ecijanos have not encountered election-related violence in Nueva Ecija at all.

In a nutshell, while the respondents claim to be aware of the ERV situation in Nueva Ecija, the survey states that it is not that serious as indicated by their low assessment and lack of personal experience of election-related violence.

## 3. *Comparative Information: ERV Killings, Loose Firearms and Cases involving Political Dynasties*

Looking at the comparative, a myriad of information reveal factors that make the situation less violent compared to other election hotspots in the country. These points of comparison indicate that the ERV situation in Nueva Ecija only stands on a less severe ground and violence is not that prevalent, in relative terms. While the fact remains that the province has witnessed serious cases of election-related violence, these events only figure at three percent (3%) of the total recorded election-related killings in the country in 2007. Not only does Nueva Ecija pale in comparison to the national average, there are also no recent incidents directly classified as ERVs in the 2010 elections.

As a basis of comparison, we will look at the province of Abra and compare it with the data from Nueva Ecija. From 2001, 30 politicians from Abra were killed due to election-related violence. This is a far cry from that of Nueva Ecija, which only involved around two (2) high profile cases during the same period.

Based on PNP records, there have been minimal election-related killings involving prominent political figures in Nueva Ecija. This means that ERV incidents have not been rampant in recent years. The last recorded high-profile case was the shooting incident between the Antoninos and the Esquivels, and another shooting incident involving the Vendivils. These shows that in a span of a decade, there have only been very few incidents of election-related killings, thereby further decreasing the severity of the situation.

With respect to the problem of loose firearms, Nueva Ecija figures at six percent (6%) of the total estimated loosed firearms in a report made by the PNP in 2009. The Philippine National Police estimates that there are between 1.5 to two million loose firearms in the country, with 122,700 of them in the nine (9) declared hotspots. Analyzing that estimated amount and creating an average, then comparing the result to the estimated amount of loose firearms deemed to be in Nueva Ecija, the analysis further makes the situation seem better for the Novo Ecijanos. The national average would be 15,000 per province; Nueva Ecija however only has 6,700. This means that in Nueva Ecija, only 4 out of 1,000 Novo Ecijanos have loose firearms. This can be further compared to other hotspot areas in the Philippines, such as Maguindanao with an estimated 33,000 loose firearms (based on intelligence report as of 2009).

All of these factors (i.e., the stakeholder's assessment, the people's perception, and the comparative facts and figures relating to election-related political killings and the problem of loose firearms) show that while electoral violence do occur in Nueva Ecija, the problem is not that prevalent or rampant.

This however should not be an excuse for complacency, for any form of electoral violence, whether petty or not, deserve the attention of the authorities.

### **III. Three Varied Forms of Election-Related Violence in Nueva Ecija**

It has been established that election-related violence is relatively less severe in Nueva Ecija. However, while the situation remains to be such compared to other election hotspots, the ERV problem of election-related violence is made complex because of the forms of violence that are employed during elections. Despite being closely linked with political killings, the idea of election-related violence is actually a broader, more all-encompassing concept that goes far beyond the actual killings of a politician or an official. This variance in definition is made more apparent by the occurrences of violence in Nueva Ecija.

Upon reviewing the processed data, this study found the following three forms of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija:

1. Election-related violence as a results of political rivalries;
2. Election-related violence resulting from the alleged involvement of some elements of the security institutions; and

### 3. Election-related violence cases are brought about by activities of known insurgents.

All three kinds are evident in the various cases of election-related violence that has occurred in Nueva Ecija since 2001.

#### 1. *Political Rivalries*

Nueva Ecija has been declared an election hotspot because of the intense competition among the province's political families. This is similar to other hotspots in the Philippines, where political rivalries play a major role as one of the primary causes of election-related violence.

In fact, PNP reports indicate that out of the twenty (20) cases of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija from 2006 to 2007, three (3) are directly connected to political rivalries—the most high profile of which was the shootout between the Antoninos and the Esquivels in the town of Jaen. This encounter that occurred on April 26, 2007 resulted in the filing of several criminal cases including homicide, attempted homicide, and discharge of firearms. This incident was one of the reasons that prompted the Commission on Elections to place Nueva Ecija under COMELEC control.

Why the dissonance between what official police declares versus valuation of Novo Ecijanos about the ERV situation? While it was stated above the people's perception about the severity of ERV in Nueva Ecija is low it seems to contradict the official standpoint of the state which recently declared several areas of the province as election hotspots. The dissonance between perception and official state position can be attributed to how Novo Ecijanos, the respondents, and the state understand the cases of ERVI as well as how the respondents are detached from the culture of the political elites.

In contrast to other election hotspots most of the cases of ERV in Nueva Ecija involved officials and political actors acting on the basic government units – barangay level as compared to other areas where perpetrators and victims alike work on higher levels/units of government or public office such as mayoral and gubernatorial offices. According to the survey the respondents seem to agree that the province' ERV situation is not severe since most cases of harassment and murder involved low key officials and are concentrated only in particular areas of the province.

Respondents have also shown that the general public of Nueva Ecija show considerable degree of disengagement from the culture of political elites. Disengagement has been observed to result to complacency encourage low evaluation of political related issues like ERV.

Those respondents who answered that situation is not severe are particularly located in areas where ERVI were not reported or were very minimal.

Apart from this incident, there were also other cases that were allegedly election-related:

- the case between involving the Borjas and Ueras in Pantabangan; and
- the harassment case between Dela Cruz and Bue in Gabaldon.

Out of the 20 cases included in the list of incidents by the PNP, three (3) of these were ERV cases that involved major political actors from different municipalities of Nueva Ecija. The motives,

however, remain unclear and cannot therefore be fully classified as incidents of election-related violence. Most of the cases reported include attempted homicide, homicide, yet some of them are not killings and only involve the discharge of firearms, harassment and grave threats.

## 2. *Security Institutions*

Apart from election-related incidents resulting from political rivalries, there have also been ERV cases involving AFP and PNP personnel.

Given the legal mandate of these institutions, the police and the military are required to deal with the communist insurgency as judiciously as possible. However, there are allegations certain elements from both the AFP and the PNP have tried to neutralize above-ground Left-wing militants who have joined the electoral race and are now affiliated with legitimate political parties. In addition, the military campaign against the New People's Army (NPA) has reportedly caused difficulties for above-ground Left-leaning parties since they are often accused of having links with the insurgency.

While the military claims that it respects the right of Left-leaning groups to participate in elections, the media has nonetheless reported several incidents of extrajudicial killings. Such claims were further given credence Phillip Alston of the United Nations Human Rights Council came up with a report indicating at least 30 incidents of extra-judicial killings in Nueva Ecija. The victims were identified as members of party-list groups believed to have links with the underground Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing the NPA, as well as its political arm the National Democratic Front (NDF).<sup>2</sup>

Apart from this anti-insurgency, some police and military personnel were also involved in voter disenfranchisement. In 2004 for example, police and military officers arrived in certain areas of the town of Guimba who then told the community not to vote for particular party-list groups which they have tagged as leftist. The report, however, did not disclose these black-listed party-list groups. The report also claims that the security forces further instructed the community to vote for party-list groups that were being supported by the administration.

## 3. *Insurgent Groups*

Yet, despite the campaign against them by both the AFP and the PNP, the insurgents themselves are also involved in cases of election-related violence, though these are unconventional compared to the typical cases of killings and assault.

The data gathered from 2004 up to the present show that the security institutions of AFP and PNP have been monitoring election-related activities of the NPA. These indicate that the insurgents have been collecting Permit to Campaign (PTC) and Permit to Win (PTW) fees from candidates during elections as a means to collect funds and as a strategy to infiltrate the state. The government, however, has labeled such actions as mere extortion.

PTC is similar to a revolutionary tax collected by the NPA in areas they purportedly control or exercise military authority. PTC is a funding activity by the NPA during the election period. It

---

<sup>2</sup> Alston Report 2008, Phillip Alston. United Nations Human Rights Security Council.

capitalizes on the need of candidates to win votes from areas which are purportedly under the insurgents' control. Similarly, the PTW is also a funding activity that is almost like the PTC. However, this is a rather new but more aggressive approach by the NPA. For this reason, the town of Lupao has been monitored by the AFP and PNP for cases of PTC or PTW.

Aside from collecting campaign fees from political candidates, the NPA in Nueva Ecija has also been allegedly involved in summary killings. Media and anecdotal reports also indicate some of these insurgents are also being hired as private goons.

In addition, the group has also been suspected of orchestrating two murder cases and one harassment case that happened during the 2007 elections. Because of this, criminal charges have been filed against four mainstream Left-wing party-list representatives who have been accused of using the NPA to cajole members of AKBAYAN—a rival Left-leaning party-list group.

Altogether, the rivalry among the different political clans, the involvement of certain security personnel in extra-judicial killings as well as the activities of and the communist insurgents all contribute to the overall ERV situation in Nueva Ecija. Though it is not as severe compared to other election hotspots, the problem still persists and is likely to occur in the succeeding elections.

## Institutional Analysis

Elections would have to be free, fair and peaceful so that its results can be legitimate. For this reason, institutions should be in place to safeguard the sanctity of the vote and ensure that the results are truly reflective of the people's will. In addition, institutions help create norms and standards that promote citizenship, the deepening of democracy and respect for human rights.

The main purpose of institutions, therefore, is to structure politics; and they do so by: (1) defining who is able to participate in the particular political arena; (2) shaping the various actors, political strategies; and more controversially, (3) *influencing what these actors believe to be both possible and desirable*, i.e., their preferences (Clark & Foweraker, 2001).

Craig Charney (1987), for his part, states that institutions are essentially hinged on unbiased principles that do not directly favor any individual or class, thereby allowing wide participation in the political arena.

However, while this may be so, social class biases nonetheless “tend to be present within political institutions and parties that correspond to basic configurations of power blocs, composed of dominant classes, and their alliances.” There are therefore instances wherein institutions actually allow that more spaces be given to the political elites. And once institutions become compromised, no mechanisms are available to check the actions of the elites.

This section aims to identify the different institutions that supposed to prevent and/or control election-related violence and their varying degrees of accountability. By institutions, we do not only refer to state agencies, but can even include non-state actors as well. We also try to argue that institutions are not totally independent but are shaped by historico-political forces and are acted upon by the elites.

### I. Institutional Framework for Institutional Response to Election Violence

In dealing with the problem of election-related violence, it is important to provide a clear definition of ERV and identify the areas where cases like these are quite significant or are likely to occur.

However, there is no common understanding of election-related violence since each institution has its own definition. Furthermore, several factors (such as actors and motives) would have to be considered before an ERV case can be established—and these are often hard to prove or to identify.

#### A. *Definition of Election-Related Violence*

The PNP and COMELEC's definition of election-related violence are time specific, actor specific and tactic specific. This is so as not to confuse ERV incidents with ordinary criminal acts. A more thorough discussion of each of these elements can be found in the succeeding sections.

## 1. Time-Specific

This is a criterion for identifying ERV incidents through a specific timeframe when the act occurred or when the crime was executed. This time-specific definition of election-related violence indicates that the incident should have occurred within the election period that covers 120 days prior election day up to 30 days after that. The phases within which the actions are identified are the pre-election or registration period; the campaign period; the actual day of the elections; the counting and canvassing of ballots; and the proclamation of the winners. Acts of violence that occur during this time are considered election-related, in the same way that violent incidents that happen outside the said period are not classified as election-related.

## 2. Actor-Specific

The PNP and the COMELEC also looks into the kinds of actors that are involved in electoral violence, whether as perpetrators or as victims. The usual perpetrators are classified as partisan armed groups, the local communist movements, or Southern Philippines secessionist groups. The usual victims include politicians, supporters, government officials, uniformed personnel and civilians, among others. This typology presupposes that perpetrators resort to violence in order to gain an advantage over their electoral opponents. It follows that those involved in ERV are also involved in electoral competition.

## 3. Tactic-Specific

This typology is also used by the PNP to identify the kind of action employed by the actors. These activities may include harassments, arson, ballot snatching, gun ban violations, rebel atrocities, abductions, killings, intimidations, and other physical attacks.

### B. *Determining Election Hotspots*

When the level of violence in a particular area increases to alarming levels, that area may be included in the **Election Watchlist of Areas**, or more commonly referred to as **Election Hotspots**. This category this highlights areas where security should be tightened to prevent further ERV incidents.

The PNP and the COMELEC have categorized election hotspots into two:

- Category 1 or areas wherein the probability of politically motivated violent incidents that are relatively high. This is due to the long history of ERV occurrences in that area, intense competition among the candidates, and the presence of partisan armed groups that are under the control of local politicians.
- Category 2 or areas where armed militants are rampant. The groups may involve the guerilla units from the local communist movement or the Southern Philippines secessionist groups.

When an area is identified under the second category or is affected by “serious armed threats,” the said area may be placed “under immediate and direct control” of the COMELEC by “serious armed threats”, we refer to

the presence of paramilitary forces, private armies or identifiable armed bands widely perceived to have committed terrorism, fraud or other election irregularities and threaten or tend to disrupt the holding of free, peaceful, honest, orderly and credible elections in any political division, subdivision, unit or area.<sup>3</sup>

When an area is placed under COMELEC control, the poll body has the power to directly supervise and exercise full control over the elections proceedings through the Commissioner-in-Charge assigned to the area.

However, the Commission on Elections cannot simply place an area under its control at will. Six (6) stages must first be followed before an election hotspot can be identified.

1. The AFP and the PNP provide an assessment of the situation on the ground and their unofficial identification of areas which should be placed under control. They then recommend critical areas that should be placed under COMELEC control.
2. These recommendations are then forwarded as requests to recognize those particular areas as hotspots. The list is sent to the COMELEC Provincial Office through the provincial EO.
3. Afterwards, the said request is then forwarded to the COMELEC Regional Office.
4. Upon approval, the recommendation is placed under the office of the Commissioner-in-Charge (CIC) for his/her deliberation.
5. The CIC then submits the request and list to the Commission en-banc.
6. Finally, upon review and deliberation by the en banc, the request is approved.

When an area is placed under COMELEC control, the national government then pools its resources to secure these provinces. The COMELEC, with the Commissioner-in-Charge acting as the Commission's law enforcement arm, also has the power to oversee LGU functions, augment resources and supervise deployment of personnel of PNP and AFP, as well as revoke exemptions on the gun ban when deemed necessary.

Nueva Ecija was placed under COMELEC Control during the 2007 elections. The province, in addition, is considered as an area of immediate concern by both the COMELEC and the PNP. This label is important because it is also used as a ground in declaring a hotspot area. However, COMELEC has a distinction between areas of concern and areas of immediate concern:

- Election Areas of Concern (EAC) are areas where election-related violence are likely to occur or where election-related offenses were committed during the previous elections.
- Election Areas of Immediate Concern (EAIC) are cities or municipalities where election-related violence is highly expected to occur.

Since the government began its anti-ERV efforts, this classification was used by the PNP and the COMELEC in helping to determine areas where election-related violence is severe or rampant. However, despite the systemic approach on the matter, recent reports by the PNP states that this definitional distinction is no longer being used as they have already merged the two concepts and taken them as one and the same.

---

3 COMELEC.



## II. Identifying Institutions

The institutions involved on the issue of election-related violence can be classified according to three (3) levels of accountability:

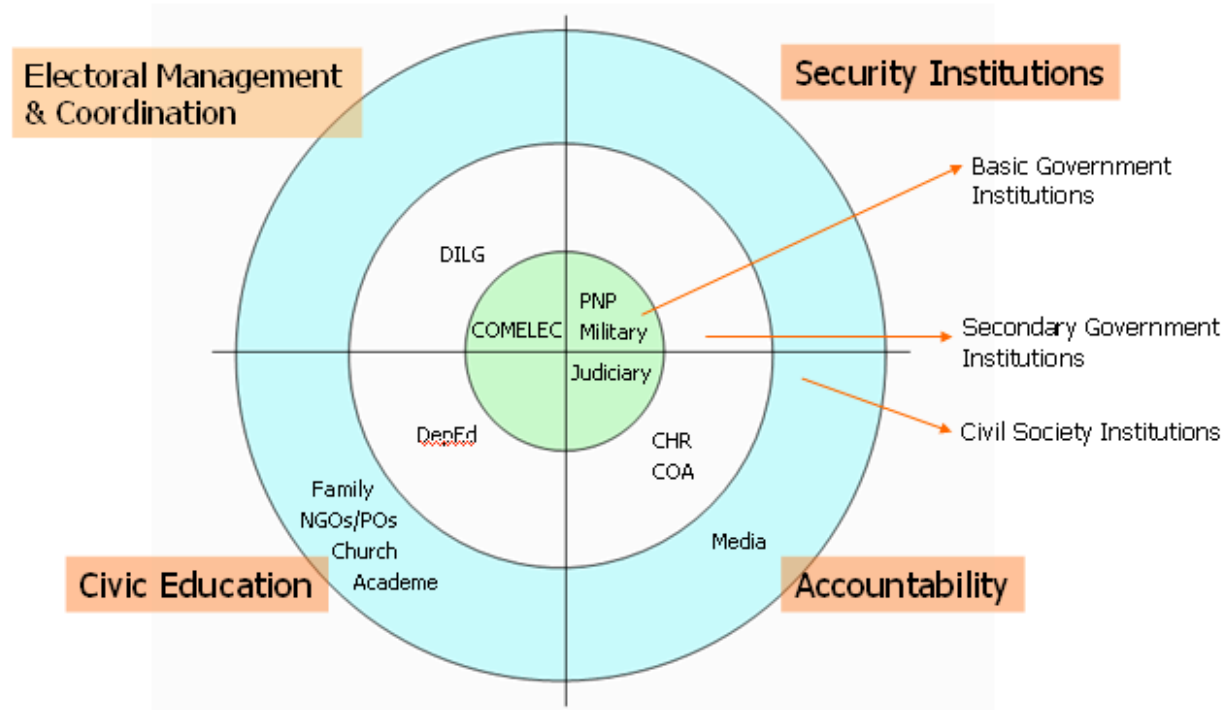
- Basic Institutions
- Secondary Institutions
- Civil Society Institutions

Basic Institutions pertains to government institutions which play a direct role in ensuring peaceful elections and preventing ERV. These are at the forefront of administering elections, preventing conflict, ensuring election laws are followed and imposing sanctions against offenders and ERV perpetrators. These institutions include the COMELEC, AFP, PNP, and the Judiciary.

Secondary institutions, on the other hand, are government institutions which provide support mechanisms to basic institutions in addressing ERV. They do not necessarily prevent election-related violence but oversee the performance of basic institutions or provide services that allow them to function more effectively. These institutions therefore have less accountability and serve secondary roles in ERV prevention. These include the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and the Commission on Audit (COA).

Lastly, civil society institutions are actors outside the government which help directly or indirectly in preventing ERV. These institutions supplement, and at other times, complement government in performing functions which the government fails to deliver sufficiently, filling in the gaps left by underperforming agencies. These include the media, the Church, the academe and other NGOs/POs active in advocating for peaceful elections.

Several government and civil society institutions have been focusing their efforts in addressing election-related violence in Nueva Ecija. These institutions can be classified according their functions and legal mandate. They can be coordination institutions, security institutions, accountability institutions and civic education. This categorization is shown by the diagram below.



- Electoral Management and Coordination Institutions are composed of groups that are directly involved in the process of elections (such as the COMELEC and the DILG) and with clear electoral functions. They perform their coordination duties over inter-agency processes to ensure peaceful elections.
- Security Institutions, which consists of the AFP and PNP, provide security to COMELEC officials, polling centers, and candidates; enforce the law, and install and execute mechanisms that seek to ensure peace and order throughout the entire electoral process.
- Organizations such as the Commission on Human Rights, Commission on Audit, and the Media are classified as Accountability Institutions. They are in charge of monitoring and investigating human rights violations and ERV incidents.
- Civic Education Institutions such as the Church, DepEd, and other academic institutions on the other hand provide basic civic values education to students and conduct voter-education programs and campaigns as well as advocacies for peaceful elections.

Given these classifications, it can be deduced that there are indeed varying levels of responsibility and accountability among these institutions. Institutions inside the core, (given that their performance directly affects elections in a specific given area) greatly determine the level of election-related violence. However, there are also different functions that these institutions perform which other than ERV-prevention, but are nonetheless important.

Hence, in order to understand how these institutions respond to electoral violence, this study has adopted a framework which not only identifies the institutions involved in ERV-prevention, but also how their mandates are operationalized and how they define election-related violence.

### III. Institutional Efforts

The concerned institutions (given their functions and levels of responsibilities) have been performing their duties and doing their part in eradicating ERV. This is based on Their self-assessment reports with success indicators, as well as peer assessments.

Election Management and Coordination institutions have been focusing their attention in managing and supervising the whole or a portion of the election process, as well as coordinating with other concerned agencies.

1. Records show that the COMELEC (whose functions are largely based on the Omnibus Election Code) has performed its functions, including coordination with agencies to ensure that the 2007 elections were peaceful. It was also able to introduce significant changes in the electoral process through election automation for the faster counting of votes.
2. The DILG, on the other hand (which supervises local officials and the PNP through the NAPOLCOM), has closely monitored the elections and has assisted the COMELEC during the conduct of elections together with the PNP. It has also been a consistent recipient of the top local government award in Nueva Ecija for the past seven years.

Meanwhile, the AFP and the PNP, which are classified as Security institutions, each have their own contributions in preventing election-related violence.

1. The AFP, apart from recording reports and cases of election-related violence, has also conducted internal security operations, provided additional security during elections, and performed duties in connection to the Joint Security Coordinating Center with the COMELEC and the PNP which began on January 10, 2010.
2. The Philippine National Police, for its part, has provided security to COMELEC officials, polling centers, and candidates during elections; implemented the gun ban, checkpoints, coordinative checkpoints; and exerted efforts to neutralize the police force.

Apart from such security and protection needs, these Accountability institutions were also able to hold the different election institutions accountable.

1. The Commission on Human Rights reported that they were able to conduct investigations on human rights violations and election-related violence, recommended actions for governing bodies in human rights cases, and had responded to cases of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings.
2. Various media outfits also claim to have monitored events surrounding elections, and have provided reports on election violence, which has helped raise the public's awareness of the issue.

Lastly, Civic Education groups that deal with the promotion of important democratic values and respect for human rights also had their own contribution, despite the fact that their functions are not directly related to ERV-prevention.

1. The Department of Education has provided basic civic values to students, which is expected to translate into how students perceive elections and politics in general and their role as key players and voters.
2. The academe has also helped promote social awareness through their voter education and social responsibility programs.
3. Various NGOs and Church groups have also participated in efforts to eradicate election violence through the voters' education programs that they have conducted and through their advocacies for peaceful elections. They also served as election watchdogs through the programs they have implemented. These initiatives are important as it made them serve as buffers between political groups.

The abovementioned achievements outline the different endeavors of these institutions in addressing the problem of election-related violence. On the outset, it appears that these groups were able to do a lot of programs and other initiatives while capitalizing on their own niches and areas of responsibility.

But despite these efforts, election-related violence is still an 'immediate concern' in Nueva Ecija because of the still-substantial cases of electoral violence. There seems to be an imbalance between what were achieved by institutions in their performance of their duties, and the actual state of elections in the province today, which remain burdened by violence and abuses.

One possible explanation for this continuing phenomenon is that institutional efforts remain non-programmatic, unconsolidated, and untargeted—that is, the response to election violence remains reactive and very sporadic. Since each institution has of its own approach and action plan, there are limited coordinated efforts among the stakeholders, and no cohesive prevention plan has been developed.

Aside from these loosely coordinated, another notable observations are the conflicting or varying information on the electoral violence in Nueva Ecija. The study discovered that the institutions are unable to establish the gravity of the ERV problem in the province. Some agencies (particularly the security institutions) claim that election-related violence cases in Nueva Ecija have already been contained and are already declining in terms of number. Other institutions, however, argue that election-related violence is still intense in Nueva Ecija. They cite qualitative assessments and anecdotal reports, though they lack solid facts and figures to back their claim.

This conflicting view by the stakeholders is one of the factors why there are varied assessments of the situation, which leads to different strategies and approaches by each of these agencies.

#### **IV. Institutional Limitations**

There are indications that the concerned institutions are unable to assert their autonomy and are captured by the elites, thus aggravating the problem election-related violence in Nueva Ecija. Furthermore, the enactment of the Local Government Code in 1991 have made local politicians even more powerful, since local chief executives can now choose the provincial director of the PNP, reassign uniformed men and appoint or recommend fiscals, among others. Institutional reform efforts, on the other hand, have been stalled due to intense pressure from political forces inside and outside these institutions.

Due to the slow pace of institutional reform, the concerned institutions have not achieved any major breakthrough in addressing election-related violence in Nueva Ecija.

#### *A. Institutional Capacity*

One of these limitations is the lack of institutional capacity and motivation in addressing ERV. State institutions have limited manpower and resources, and are quite susceptible to political pressure. A case in point is the appointment process of the COMELEC, which remains vulnerable to politicization.

Furthermore, some of the institutions are unable to exact accountability from the perpetrators. The Commission on Human Rights as well as the Commission on Audit, for instance, lack prosecutory powers; while the judiciary's passive character has not prove to be effective in solving the issue of electoral violence. Data-banking also remain dismal since most of the documents are not easily available to the public.

There is also no sustained intervention from civil society organizations in the province to prevent election violence. a number of stakeholders also question the reliability of media reports.

#### *B. Gaps in the Definition of ERV*

Aside from these deficiencies, institutions also are constrained by their very limited definition of election-related violence. For one, it seems as though there is no generally-accepted definition that could help distinguish whether or not a violent incident is in fact election-related. There is a wide spectrum of concepts regarding election-related violence, which also includes the standards and criteria for classification.

Institutions often look at motive as the primary basis for classifying incidents as election-related. However, more often than not, institutions are unable to establish motive. Motive, determining the motive or intent of the perpetrator are already difficult to determine, much less establish whether it was done to affect the results of the elections. As a consequence, there are cases that are often categorized as election-related since it happened within the election period, but, are subsequently taken off the list due to lack of evidence and are reclassified as personally motivated or business-related.

As mentioned in the earlier sections, election-related violence incidents also occur within the election period—that is, 90 days before, during, and 30 days after the elections. However, complications arise with this definition since it seems to cover all criminal offenses that occur during that period, even if they are not necessarily election-related. Furthermore, a number of ERV cases have been identified that occurred outside the election period. This then raises several questions about the criteria: Should cases outside the given timeframe be disregarded? Should prevention initiatives be conducted only during the given timeframe?

Tactic-specific approaches are also problematic. Under this criteria, forms of election-related violence can be identified as shooting, explosion, ambush, harassment, arson, ballot snatching and gun ban violation. It may be further expanded to include acts that affect the environment, behavior

and conduct of the electoral process such as abductions, killings, physical attacks, intimidation, and other acts resulting in death, injuries and damage to property.

However, while these acts are in fact the most apparent incidents of ERV, other tactics and forms of violence are also employed which may not necessarily be considered as election-related. Legal and state-led mechanisms that may suppress the voting rights of certain groups are not monitored and reported. For example, the NPA's imposition of PTC and PTW fees in their areas (as well as the politicians who participate in and tolerate this practice) are not held accountable.

This leads us to the actor-specific criteria in determining election-related violence. Apart from politicians and other usual actors that are involved in election-related violence, it is possible that other groups are involved as well, such as partisan armed groups, the local communist movement or Southern Philippines secessionist groups, and even state security institutions. This then prompts the following questions: Are there strategies to identify state actors (such as security personnel) who have also contributed to the problem of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija? Are there ongoing initiatives to hold these perpetrators (whether state or non-state actors) accountable?

### *C. Unclear Standards in Declaring ERV Hotspots*

Another challenge that needs to be addressed is the unclear criteria for identifying election hotspots due to the ambiguity in the standards provided by the COMELEC and the PNP. At present, there is no quantifiable measure on what constitutes "a series of killings," and there is also no way by which to measure the intensity of violence.

Data from various institutions, moreover, also contributes to the problem of definition. The concerned institutions, for example, are not able to provide updated information on the number of ERV incidents that have occurred in Nueva Ecija. PNP data shows that election-related violence is very minimal while AFP data indicates says insurgency is at an inconsequential level. Yet despite these statements, Nueva Ecija is still included in the Election Watchlist, along with Abra and Maguindanao. This then prompts us to pose the following questions: Why is Nueva Ecija still considered an election hotspot despite the above-mentioned data from the police and the military? What are the bases for Nueva Ecija's inclusion in the Election Watchlist? Should all areas of concern and areas of immediate concern be included in the list despite the significant quantitative differences in ERV incidents?

Because information from the election-related institutions are either unclear or conflicting, the bases for the declaring election hotspots cannot be validated. Needless to say, the establishment of a third party validation process has yet to be fully explored.

## **V. Implications**

For institutions to effectively respond to election-related violence, their current weaknesses would have to be dealt with and addressed. This is even more imperative since institutional limitations can lead to certain implications that may greatly affect impacts and outcomes:

### *A. Institutional Response*

Because of the ambiguity in definition of election-related violence, only a few cases have so far been filed in court. In addition only a small number of perpetrators were held accountable. And since ERV cases are hard to classify, the accuracy of the reports are put into doubt. This, then, affects the effectiveness of these institutions in preventing election-related violence.

Moreover, the process of declaring election-related violence hotspots remains discretionary, as it is based on the recommendations of the PNP and the local authorities. This can be dangerous if no clear, objective and verifiable criteria are developed. It may also affect the budget, since limited national resources may not be allocated efficiently.

### *B. National-Local Dynamics*

If an area is declared as an election hotspot, it alters the relationship of the national and local government. Once an area is included in the Election Watchlist, the national government (through the COMELEC) is now able to exercise direct control over the said province or municipality. In other words, some of the powers that have been devolved to the LGUs as outlined in the Local Government Code of 1991 can be temporarily withheld.

This can also serve the interest of the national government, particularly in Nueva Ecija, for several reasons: For one, insurgency remains a problem in the province since it continues to be a stronghold of the communist movement. With Nueva Ecija as an election hotspot, the national government can actually contain or curtail the communist insurgents.

In addition, by gaining control over Nueva Ecija, the national government can pool the votes from the province. Historically indentified as an opposition province, Nueva Ecija has a large vote base, ranking 11th from a total of 80 provinces.

Apart from votes, Nueva Ecija is also an important agricultural province, since it is the country's main provider of rice.

### *C. Evaluation System*

Because of the difficulty of establishing the level of election-related violence, the progress of those initiatives designed to curb ERV are consequently also difficult to assess. And since there are no clear operational understandings on the problem of election violence, no institution is able to provide a more-or-less accurate picture of the ERV situation in Nueva Ecija. Hence, we should not assume that elections in the said province are finally becoming less violent.

What perhaps is most evident is that existing frameworks and deeply rooted societal norms are not able to effectively guide institutional responses. While these institutions do perform their mandated functions, certain institutional limitations hamper the impact of these institutional responses. These limitations include, the gaps in the operational definition of ERV and the ambiguous standards for placing a province under COMELEC control. In addition, these limitations also affect the relationship the relationship between the national and local governments.

## Power Analysis

In order to understand the ERV situation in Nueva Ecija, it is important to look into the behavior of key political actors, and how their relationships with each other affect the degree of violence in the said province.

In a nutshell, Nueva Ecija politics can be characterized as patronage-based with a long history of political violence. For decades, the province was dominated by one family—the Josons. But in recent years, power has become more diffused with the emergence of new political clan contesting the electoral arena. As a consequence, the use of violence has become more rational and carefully calculated to ensure a clan’s survival.

Given this situation, political violence has now become decentralized with new actors being involved in ERV incidents. New methods of violence are also being employed that go beyond the typical notion standards of election-related violence. The communist insurgency is also seen as one of the factors that allow the persistence of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija.

### I. Political History

It was pointed out in the earlier sections that Nueva Ecija politics is patronage-based. A patron-client relationship, according to John Thayer Sidel, in his work called *Beyond Patron Client Relationships: Warlordism and Local Politics in the Philippines*,<sup>4</sup> is “an exchange relationship or instrumental friendship between two individuals of different status in which the patron uses his own influence and resources to provide for the protection and material welfare of his lower status client and his family who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services to the patron.” This, in other words, creates a “vertical dyadic relationship of reciprocity between individuals of unequal status, wealth and power” that unites social classes through mutual aids.

In Nueva Ecija, this system of patronage system can actually be represented by the diagram below:



<sup>4</sup> Sidel, John Thayer, “Beyond Patron Client Relationships: Warlordism and Local Politics in the Philippines”, in *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*. Vol 4, No 3 (Philippines, 1989).



The succeeding sections will now discuss the political history of the said province.

### A. *Eduardo “Tatang” Josen*

Since the 1960s, Nueva Ecija politics has practically been dominated by one family—the Josons. Their dominance began with Eduardo “Tatang” Josen, who served as provincial governor for 33 years—from 1959 until his death in 1992. In those years, he remained in power, with only a short break from politics in 1986-1987 when he was ousted from office after the EDSA Revolution. He was, however, able to regain the governorship in 1988.

As a politician, he was allegedly involved in election-related violence as a means for maintaining power and neutralizing his opponents. Sources also say that he used to have his own Civil Security Unit which existed for almost four decades, even g after his death. However, Tatang’s reputation for violence (it would seem) was not a factor in the elections since he was well-supported, not only by the people, but even by the communist insurgent group Hukbong Mapagpalaya ng Bayan (HMB) which had a strong mass base in the said province at that time.

At the height of his power, Tatang Josen enjoyed a near-monopoly of power in Nueva Ecija. His dominance, however, was repeatedly challenged by Honorato Perez—a former provincial fiscal who also had his own small group of supporters. Ironically, Perez was, at one time, Tatang’s ally; but after a personal falling out, the two became bitter political rivals. The most intense period of their rivalry was in 1988, when Perez was elected as Cabanatuan Mayor, while Tatang Josen’s son, Danding, won as Vice Mayor. It is not surprising therefore that this rivalry was inherited by their sons and continued even after their demise.

Since Tatang was the single most important political player in Nueva Ecija, his death in 1992 created a vacuum which allowed the entry of new patrons and actors. Consequently, there was a sudden increase in the number of ERV incidents after Tatang’s death, specifically during the 1992 elections.

For the next three years, several bloody incidents were reported which resulted in the assassination of some of Nueva Ecija’s important leading personalities. These cases are listed below.

#### 1. The murder of Honorato Perez’s private secretary

During the campaign preparations for the 1992 elections, Honorato Perez’s private secretary Andres Quibuyen, Sr., was murdered by unknown assailants. The Josons were immediately blamed for the incident, since Danding was running against Perez for the mayoralty post of Cabanatuan.

#### 2. The murder of Danding Josen

Reprisal was swift, for two weeks after Quibuyen’s, Danding Josen was shot in Brgy. Caalibangbangan in Cabanatuan. The results of the investigation reveal the following primary suspects: Ret. Army Col. Francisco Quibuyen, Army Pvt. Andres Quibuyen, Jr., and C2C Alexander Quibuyen—the brother and two sons of Andres Quibuyen, Sr., respectively.

However, there are also reports implicating Perez as the mastermind, who commissioned the relatives of his deceased secretary to perform the dirty work for him. But regardless whether this was

true or not, Danding's murder effectively eliminated Perez's staunchest political opponent, paving the way for his reelection in 1992.

The Josons, however, remained influential and was even successful in having Tomas Joson III (another of Tatang's sons), elected Governor of Nueva Ecija in the same year.

### 3. The murder of Honorato Perez

In April 1995, there was a chance encounter between the Joson and Perez camps. The Joson brothers Boyet and Tommy saw two of the suspects in Danding's murder, and immediately gave chase. Upon learning about the said incident, Perez then came to the site to face the Josons which resulted in a shootout. He, however, died in the encounter after being shot at close range.

Tommy and Boyet Joson surrendered to the police and were detained in Camp Crame. Perez's second wife Bing Custodio replaced him as gubernatorial candidate, but her candidacy did not prosper.

Yet despite the imprisonment of the Joson brothers, Tommy was still elected as Governor of Nueva Ecija, while Boyet won as Mayor of Quezon. Their victory was quite revealing, indicating that their involvement in election-related violence actually had no significant effect on the voters.

Perez's death had also ended the bitter rivalry between the Joson and Perez clans. This was accompanied by a sharp decline in the number of ERV cases recorded by the PNP. In fact, for the past 10 years, the police had recorded very few incidents of electoral violence—most of which are cases with unclear motives and have not been clearly established as election-related.

#### B. *Other Josons in Power*

Apart from Tommy and Boyet, other members of the Joson family were elected into office. Among them are the following:

Eduardo Tomas "Tommy" Noriel Joson III	Governor 1992-2007
Eduardo Nonato "Edno" Noriel Joson	Governor 1997-1998 and Representative of 1st District of Nueva Ecija
Mariano Cristino "Boyet" Noriel Joson	Former Mayor of Quezon, Nueva Ecija and Vice Governor of N.E. 2004-2007
Josie Manuel-Joson	Wife of Boyet and Former Congresswoman of 1st Dist. of Nueva Ecija
Edward Thomas Filart Joson	Vice Governor, elected in 2007
Eduardo Basilio Manuel Joson	Mayor of Quezon, Nueva Ecija and son of Boyet
Jose Francis Steven "Bopet" M. Dizon	Mayor of Guimba, Nueva Ecija and son-in-law of Edno Joson

Arvin Salonga	Mayor of San Antonio, Nueva Ecija and son-in-law of Boyet
---------------	---

### *C. Shift in Alliances*

While were able to retain their influence over Nueva Ecija, two factors proved significant in eroding their monopoly of provincial politics. The first was Tatang’s death and alliances that the Josons have made with national elites.

In 1992, when Honorato Perez was elected Mayor of Cabanatuan, he was an ally of Fidel Ramos who ran and won as President. During that time, the Josons were allied with Danding Cojuangco who was also a presidential candidate.

After Ramos’ term ended in 1998, the Josons supported the presidential candidacy of Joseph “Erap” Estrada. He eventually won the presidency and a significant portion of his votes came from Nueva Ecija, which was still, at that time, a Joson stronghold. As a result, the province was granted approximately Php 1 Billion for the construction of a new Provincial in Palayan—one of the first major projects of the Estrada administration. During that time, Edno Joson, son of Tatang, also served as the administrator of National Housing Authority (NHA). Furthermore, brothers Tommy and Boyet were also released from prison, shortly after Erap’s victory.

However, when Erap was ousted in 2001, Tommy and Boyet withdrew their support from Erap and shifted their support to Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Their two other siblings however, Edno and Ding Liit, remained loyal to former President Estrada.

The brothers became further divided during the 2004 elections when Tommy and Boyet remained in the Arroyo camp, while Ding Liit supported the presidential bid of actor-turned-politician Fernando Poe, Jr. Edno on the other hand ran for senator under ticket of another presidential bet, Raul Roco. In the end, Arroyo won the elections; but she did not get any significant votes from Novo Ecijanos.

The brothers’ decision to support different national candidates in the 2004 and the 2007 elections created a rift in the Joson family and is seen as one of the major factors for their declining support. Nonetheless, Tommy’s son Edward Tomas still won as Vice Governor in 2007; while Edno was elected as congressman for the First District of Nueva Ecija. Boyet’s son Dale Joson, on the other hand, won as Mayor of Quezon.

But the family was not as powerful as before, for their fifteen-year winning streak was broken. Tomas Joson lost as Cabanatuan Mayor, while Ding Liit lost as Governor.

### *D. Emergence of Other Political Forces*

Tatang’s death and the public’s withdrawal of support for the Joson family has changed the terrain of Nueva Ecija politics—opening the gates for competition and allowing the entry of new political forces. Among them are the Umalis, the Violagos, the Vergaras, the Esquivels, the Antoninos, and the Vendivils, all of which have more than one member of their family in high political positions. The table below shows some of the emerging political families that have gained significant power in Nueva Ecija politics in recent years:

Umali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aurelio "Oyie" Matias Umali – currently governor and former two term 3rd District representative 2001-2007</li> <li>• Dante Umali – Kagawad of Cabiao in 1998-2001</li> <li>• Czarina Domingo-Umali – currently 3rd District representative 2007-2010</li> </ul>
Violago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eleuterio Rueda Violago – Representative 2nd district, Nueva Ecija 1992-1998, Officer-in-charge (Cory appointed) Mayor of San Jose City, Nueva Ecija in 1986</li> <li>• Marivic V. Belena, wife of former City Mayor Alex S. Belena, Daughter of former, Dr. Eling F. Violago – Congressman of 2nd District of Nueva Ecija</li> <li>• Joseph Gilbert F. Violago – incumbent congressman of 2nd District of Nueva Ecija</li> </ul>
Vergara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Julius Cesar Vergara – Mayor of Cabanatuan in 1998-2001</li> <li>• Alvin Vergara – current Mayor of Cabanatuan</li> </ul>
Esquivel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark Anthony Esquivel – Vice Mayor of Jaen in 1998-2001</li> <li>• Rolando Esquivel – Kagawad of San Isidro in 1998-2001</li> </ul>
Antonino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antonio Esquivel – Mayor of Jaen</li> <li>• Rodolfo Antonino – 4th District Representative</li> </ul>
Vendivil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alfredo Vendivil – Mayor of Lupao in 1998-2001</li> <li>• Julita Vendivil – Kagawad of Lupao Nueva Ecija in 1998-2001</li> </ul>

Because of Tatang's death and the rift in the Joson clan, the power that was once monopolized by a single family has now been diffused among other political actors in Nueva Ecija. The emergence of these new political forces have created intense electoral competition, and as of yet, no single patron has gained dominance. Thus, the power configuration in Nueva Ecija politics also changed drastically.

Along with the diffusion of power to various political elites, the support base has also become diffused as we now see clients with multiple patrons that emerged. This, in turn, has created a competition for supporters among the politicians. Because there are now more patrons in Nueva Ecija, the clients have also become divided into different groups. This created a new political configuration composed of small clusters of patrons and clients. Thus, this diffused political terrain can now be exhibited in a new diagram below, in contrast to when there was still a monopoly of power by the Josons:



F. Local Government Code of 1991

Apart from looking into the Joson family as a focal point of analysis, it is also important to note other historical events that have contributed in changing the power configuration in Nueva Ecija. One of the things that may be attributed for the sudden emergence of new political aspirants is the enactment of the Local Government Code of 1991. More formally known as Republic Act 7160, the said law states that

the territorial and political subdivisions of the State shall enjoy genuine and meaningful local autonomy to enable them to attain their fullest development as self-reliant communities and make them more effective partners in the attainment of national goals. Toward this end, the State shall provide for a more responsive and accountable local government structure instituted through a system of decentralization whereby local government units shall be given more powers, authority, responsibilities, and resources. The process of decentralization shall proceed from the national government to the local government units.<sup>5</sup>

In a nutshell, this policy of political devolution from seeks to decentralize government functions and to strengthen local government units (LGUs) by expanding the power of local officials to provide services for their localities.

As a consequence, more resources are now available to LGUs and, in turn, the local politicians who control them. R.A. 7160 also expands the power of local chief executives, making political seats even more viable and attractive. This may explain factor why the number of political aspirants in Nueva Ecija have also increased since the 1990s.

#### *G. Socio-Economic Developments*

Alongside the political devolution and the diffusion of power to various political elites, there are also signs of significant economic developments in Nueva Ecija which have relatively improved the people's quality of life.

Records from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) from 1990 up to the present, (shown below) indicate that Nueva Ecija has experienced rapid urbanization and a significant increase in its population. Literacy rate has also improved, as well as the number of their overseas workers. More importantly, Nueva Ecija's internal revenue allotment has been increasing in hundreds of millions each year. Their agricultural industry remains strong, while other industrial options were also opened.

---

<sup>5</sup> Republic Act 7160, An Act Providing for the Local Government Code of 1991.

DEMOGRAPHY (Source: 2000 Census of Population and Housing)	2000	1995	1990
Total population	1,659,883	1,505,827	1,312,680
Urban	813,909r	-	376,755
Rural	845,974r	-	935,925
Male	842,016	765,372	-
Female	817,867	740,455	-

EDUCATION (Sources: 2000 CPH/1994 Functional Literacy and Mass Media Survey)	2000	1994	1990
Literate (simple literacy in thousands)	1,176	914	950

DEMOGRAPHY (Source: 2000 CPH)	2000	1995	1990
Overseas workers (Highest educational attainment 10 years old and over)			
Both sexes	24,465	16,926	8,582

INTERNAL REVENUE ALLOTMENT (Source: Department of Budget and Management)	2006	2005	2004
IRA (million pesos)	823.40	747.40	695.80
Rank	11	11	11
Percentage of IRA to total financial resources	64.40	50.70	49.00
Rank	61	68	71

All of these socio-economic improvements mean that Novo Ecijanos now have more economic independence and capacity for the common relies less on dole outs from politicians.

The vitality of economic dependence of one class to another class of higher status in patronage politics was pointed out by Craig Charney. In his book *Political Power and Social Class in the Neo-Colonial African State*, Charney argues that in a patronage system, people tend to understand economic and political power as one and the same. 'The patrons' participation in the political race creates a struggle for reproductive and productive goods, which explains the intensity and violence of electoral competition, despite the absence of challenges to the fundamentals of the system.'<sup>6</sup>

Based on this logic, a province whose citizens have more economic capacity encounters fewer struggles for economic and political resources. Thus, citizens do not rely heavily on their politicians, which create a weaker patron-client bond. Economic improvements also create a situation wherein political support is more fluid, thereby hindering the dominance of a single political actor over other elites.

Ultimately, all of these factors—the death of Tatang Joson, the shift in national political alliances, the Local Government Code of 1991, and the social and economic developments in the province—contributed to the diffusion of power thereby changing the terrain of Nueva Ecija politics. However, the diffusion of power further intensifies the struggle for power, which results in electoral violence.

<sup>6</sup> Charney, Craig. "Political Power & Social Class in the Neo-Colonial African State". Review of African Political Economy, No. 38, Politics and Imperialism. (1987): pp. 48-65.

## II. Decentralized Form of Election-Related Violence

However, despite the continuing occurrence of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija, the number of ERV incidents is gradually decreasing. Despite the diffusion of power among competing elites, PNP reports show very few ERV cases involving high-ranking politicians over the past decade. Even when Nueva Ecija was declared as an election hotspot, there were very few reported cases of political or electoral violence in recent years, aside from illegal possession of weapons. There are also very few or almost no reported high profile cases. In recent years for example, there have only been two (2) reported incidents of election-related violence that directly involve political families—these are the case of the Antoninos and the Esquivels on one hand, and the case of the Vendivils on the other.

Over the years, the difference in the number of ERV cases is very minimal, with only an insignificant gap between the 2004 and 2007 elections. The real difference, however, lies in the emergence of new forms of election-related violence and the actors that were involved in recent ERV incidents.

In the past, electoral violence mostly includes high-ranking politicians and officials. But recent PNP records show that from the years 2001 up to the present, most ERV incidents involve the following actors:

1. Local officials in the barangay level
2. Staff and supporters of the dominant politicians
3. Civilians

Given this trend, it can be said that new actors (who are non-politicians) are now involved election-related violence in Nueva Ecija.

Because people are no longer heavily dependent on politicians, the latter are now calculating and rationalized in their use of violence. Using the balance of power framework, Charles Davenant (in his *The Doctrine of Equilibrium*) states that violence springs from “a precept of common sense, born of experience; to secure their own safety with the objective of self-preservation.”<sup>7</sup> This means that Nueva Ecija politics in recent years has achieved an “equilibrium” through the rationality of politicians in reacting to situations based on careful calculation of cost and benefit, which partly explains the decline in the number of high profile ERV cases.

Thus, electoral violence has now become more decentralized, unlike in the past wherein power (and political violence) was a monopoly of a single family. ERV incidents now happen sporadically in small pockets with randomly affected characters. Violence has become dispersed and has expanded to include other actors, and not just the politicians who are directly involved in the electoral race. It is not as extensive as it was during the peak of the Josen-Perez rivalry, but it still continues to occur alongside the continuous intensity of electoral competition.

---

7 Davenant, Charles. “Essay on the Balance of Power”. II. The right of making war, peace and alliances. III. University Monarchy (London, 1701).

### III. Communist Insurgency

With the decentralization of power and violence, obscurities on the types of election-related violence arise. Aside from the involvement of new actors in the recent ERV cases, another new characteristic of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija is the involvement of communist insurgents in local elections.

#### A. *Peasant Rebellion*

The Philippine communist insurgency is rooted in the nation's history of peasant rebellion, and was also a radical response against the Marcos dictatorship. Nueva Ecija has been one of the strongholds of the communist movement in the Philippines. Even Tatang Joson, was a former member of Hukbalahap—the armed wing of the now almost-defunct Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas. The fact that he was former a former communist rebel was the main reason why Tatang Joson was able to gain the support of the insurgents, thereby strengthening his own power over the province.

In order to gain a better understanding of the communist insurgency, it is important to investigate the history of the ‘Huk’ Rebellion. It began in the late 1940’s and early 1950’s, with rebels exercising influence over Central Luzon which is region in the largest and most populated island of the Philippines, in which Nueva Ecija is a part of. These rebels were peasant farmers who used to work for their landlords. The rebellion began as a result of the growing dissatisfaction over the tenancy or landlord system which was deemed as abusive and repressive.<sup>8</sup> And being a province that it known as a agricultural area in the Philippines, Nueva Ecija still continues to experience communist insurgent activities.

After the Huk defeat in the early 1950s, the insurgency again grew in strength after Marcos’ declaration of Martial Law in 1972, and has continued up to this day.

#### B. *Insurgent Groups in Electoral Competition*

The communist movement has responded to the changed political terrain in Nueva Ecija by asserting their control over certain areas of the province and by participating in elections. They do so by:

1. allowing their above-ground affiliate groups to field candidates, and
2. through the imposition of Permit to Win or Permit to Campaign fees.

By participating in the elections, communist insurgents are able to penetrate the state and expand their reach.

The military is, of course, expected to initiate efforts designed to neutralize the insurgency. However, as groups allegedly affiliated with the communist movement enters the electoral arena, the military’s counter-insurgency efforts become hazy, which results in human rights abuses. A UN Report, for instance asserts that activists believed to be covertly working with the CPP-NPA-NDF,

---

<sup>8</sup> Dugdale-Pointon, TDP. (23 July 2006), ‘Insurgency in the Philippines’



have been killed; and that these killings have been attributed to the military, the police, or hired killers. These incidents indicate that the military's counter-insurgency strategy becomes when they are already dealing with above-ground Left-wing organizations.

The Permit to Campaign/Win strategy of the New People's Army on the other hand, is essentially a means to collect taxes from political aspirants in a particular area under their control. Failure to comply with this demand might provoke the anger of the insurgents and can therefore be classified as a new form of election-related violence. Since the standard for election-related violence are acts that curtail the democratic process through the use of violence, such insurgent activities, despite not physically harming any person, disrupts the electoral processes using the threat of violence. Thus, PTC or PTW activities are new forms of election-related violence in themselves, as they are practices that hamper the real essence of elections as a minimum requirement in the fulfillment of democracy.

In addition, election violence continues to occur in Nueva Ecija because the different power blocs allow its perpetuations. In other words, both the politicians and the insurgents tolerate the use of violence, either because there is no benefit from challenging each other, or that there are certain mutual benefits that they gain from each other—politicians use the base of the insurgents, and in turn, insurgents get resources from the politicians. In short, there seems to be a symbiotic relationship between the politicians and the insurgent groups, and that the communist insurgents even aggravate the problem of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija.

## Cultural Analysis

As defined by Sir Edward B. Tylor (1871), culture is that “*complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits that were acquired by people as a member of society.*” Belief systems shared by members of the society guide daily life as manifested in actions, behavior, value judgments as well as feelings towards a certain social phenomena (Fry, 2006).

Violence in a given culture is a social phenomenon that can occur in a given society and may elicit sentiments from those directly affected by it. The kind of sentiments elicited is an expression of the characteristics of a belief system that is operational within that particular culture. In other words, cultural beliefs can favor responses towards any type of social phenomena that may occur such as, but not limited to, violence, hostilities and conflict (Fry, 2006).

Several studies on the connection between culture and violence have looked at various cultural factors to explain the phenomenon of violence in a society. Bond (2007) and Spierenburg (2005) regard culture as a context of violence wherein violence is attributed to certain cultural characteristics that propagates and sustains it.

As cited in Bond (2007), Berger and Luckman (1967) indicate that “plausibility structures” creates conditions that enable cultural actors to orchestrate activities (possibly violence) that may be favored or disapproved by the society. The reaction of the society to these activities (for our purposes, violence) will greatly depend on how it is viewed as it emerge and exist and how it is internalized. Bond (2007) argues that a “socialized logic of a cultural system” shapes any circumstance predisposing towards violence. Hence, culture being a provider of plausibility structures may be responsible for making violence in a given society legitimate.

Consequently, reaction to violence is a function of how cultural actors are socialized towards it. The society’s beliefs, attitudes, values, and behavior could be a reflection of how they are oriented in a cultural system to respond to and deal with violence (Bond, 2007).

### Possible Cultural Explanations to Violence

#### *Concept of violence*

In attempting to explain violence, it is necessary to look at how it is perceived by the cultural actors experiencing it and how it is regarded in common discourse (Pontara, 1978). In studying how actors perceive violence, the reasons why they resort to violence might be discovered. Spierenburg (2005) argues that in some societies, cultural actors resort to violence in order to attain something, such as revenge, reward, etc. Bond (2007) argues that the instrumentalist concept of violence enables actors to regard violence as justified and justifiable. Consequently, if cultural actors perceive the orchestration of violence to achieve certain ends, then it becomes normal and legitimate (Jarrett, 2009).

### *Concept of life*

In understanding the prevalence of violence in a certain culture it is necessary to know how actors view and value life. The perception of actors on the value of life plays a vital role in influencing how they perceive violent acts (Batsanov, 2006).

### *Macho culture*

Morphologically-speaking, males are structured to be more robust and stronger than females (Bramblett and Steele, 1988). Taking off from this morphological difference, most literature on the relationship of culture and violence looks at the connection of the male character in the perpetuation of violence on the assumption that morphological differences also entails differences in human behavior (Fry 2006). Bond (2007) indicates that males dominate in destructive activities and were found cross-culturally to exhibit greater levels of externalizing disorder. Goudsblom (1998), as cited by Spierenburg (2005) theorizes that violence is monopolized by males. Macho culture takes off from the traditional concept of male honor which values self-worth, merits, male bravery and toughness (Spierenburg, 2005).

In the Philippines, almost all of the prevailing cultures have elements of machismo (Peralta, 2000). The male character is regarded as having a covert system of supremacy and is commonly associated with violence, particularly domestic violence (Medros, 2007). In a previous study on electoral violence in Abra by the Ateneo School of Government, it was identified that gun use can also be attributed to the prevailing macho culture. Gun use is regarded as a form of power and therefore a status symbol. It was observed that mere possession of a gun entails a feeling of superiority, being the most convenient tool to protect one's self from lawless elements and violent entities.

### *Regard to authority*

In a society with the presence of violence, authority figures are assumed to deter actors from committing violent acts. It is interesting to know how cultural actors perceive authority figures, specifically "institutional authorities" such as the police, military and government officials, and how that perception influences their attitudes and behaviors towards committing violent acts. Ray & Lovejoy (1990) indicates that the perception of actors towards authority figures, specifically "institutional authorities" influences their attitudes and behavior towards violence and will likely lessen if not deter them from committing violent acts.

### *Concept of Leadership and Social Involvement*

Batsonov (2008) indicates that the instituted system of government influences a "culture of violence" especially when that government is based on violence or was instituted through violence, brute force or fraud. Thus, the perception on government leadership by cultural actors has an implication on the existence of violence in the society. It is interesting to know how these perceptions explain the response and actions of the actors to violence in a given setting.

Social apathy, indifference to prevailing injustices, and disengagement from issues are also features that might be helpful in explaining the prevalence of violence in a given society. Actors in a given

setting might be preoccupied with their own concerns and therefore disassociate themselves from prevailing social issues such as violence. This preoccupation with personal concerns creates a psychological context to violence and is translated into insensitivity to wider political and social problems. This insensitivity therefore leads to inaction and eventually to dependency to other actors to address problems (Betsanov, 2008).

## Variables to be investigated

Drawing premises from previously stated theoretical assumptions on culture and violence, cultural analysis begins from the following assumptions:

1. The understanding, attitudes and behaviors towards violence stems from the belief and value systems that is shared within a given culture;
2. Violence, being a social phenomena, can be attributed to the shared belief and value systems in a particular society;
3. Culture plays a role in people's sentiments and outlook in life, particularly in approaching or dealing with situations or social phenomena such as the occurrence of violence;
4. The occurrence of violence elicits a certain kind of reaction from cultural actors, and that reaction can be regarded as an expression of the belief system;
5. The cultural patterns, including the shared understanding, behaviors and attitudes towards violence (in general) can explain why election-related violence (in particular) is conducive to a given society.

With the said assumptions, analysis of the socio-cultural aspect of electoral violence in Nueva Ecija seeks to look at the perceptions and acquired belief systems towards violence of a sample of the general population. It also seeks to have an understanding of observable practices, behaviors, attitudes and local constructs that provides the base of electoral violence culture.

Further, this analysis will delve on the role of culture on election-related violence in Nueva Ecija in terms of cultural composition or make-up (i.e. how violence figures in people's notion, perception, attitudes and practices), cultural reaction (i.e. disengagement), cultural conductivity (i.e. context where certain response towards violence is deemed desirable, necessary and appropriate) and taken-for-granted realities (i.e. people's day-to-day interaction and activities).

In addition, this analysis will examine the factors or set of concepts that contribute to cultural reaction to violence. These concepts indicate shared understanding, behaviors and attitudes within a given society and will be organized using two constructs, specifically socio-cultural and political culture. Socio-cultural concepts will refer to general societal beliefs and values, while political culture concepts will refer to attitude and behavior towards politics.

Moreover, this analysis will try to look at the Novo Ecijanos' *response* towards election-related violence (ERV). Their *response* will be inferred by examining their *reaction* towards the situation and their *involvement*.

The reaction will be assessed by looking at *fear*, which will be operationalized by their *electoral participation*. Involvement will be assessed by using a *social involvement scale*.

The socio-cultural aspect will be explored using the following dimensions: concept of violence, attitude towards authority, *macho* culture and concept of life. Moreover, political culture will be considered in terms of the people's understanding of election-related violence and their concept of leadership or attitude towards politics.

### Sampling of Respondents

Cultural analysis made use of ethnography (using participant observation) and attitude survey as primary data gathering tools.

A multi-stage sampling was employed in the attitude survey wherein the respondents were selected using multiple randomizations. The multi-stage sampling involved the process of taking random samples of preceding random samples such that:

- 1) Towns that are in hotspot and non-hotspot categories (as of the 2007 elections) were made as sample clusters;
- 2) Sample towns were randomly selected from each of the sample clusters (random selection of primary units);
- 3) Sample barangays were randomly selected from each of the sample towns (random selection of additional sample units); and
- 4) The respondents (the ultimate units) were randomly selected from each of the sample barangays.

The sample population is  $n=188$  relative to the voting population of Nueva Ecija (1,105,143). With the sampling method, the sample population is supposed to be in proportion to the size of the clusters relative to the whole. In which case, 53% (100) of the population came from the hotspot cluster and 47% (88) came from the non-hotspot cluster. The percentage is based on the percentage size of each of the clusters to the total number of towns in Nueva Ecija: 17 out of its 32 towns are hotspots, and 15 out of 32 are non-hotspots. Five towns were randomly selected in the hotspot cluster while four towns were randomly selected in the non-hotspot cluster. Four barangays were randomly selected per town and five (5) to six (6) respondents were randomly selected per barangay. Initially, the clustering was eyed useful in the design for comparison purposes, just in case significant differences are to be observed in the survey results. However, the results obtained homogenous responses, and no significant differences were observed from the two clusters.

With the sample size, the sampling procedure rendered a plus-minus 6% margin of error, with 90% confidence level and 50% anticipated response distribution.

### Profile of Survey Respondents

The distribution of respondents based on gender has an almost insignificant difference with females comprising 52.7 % and males comprising 47.3 %. More than a third of the respondents (39%) belong to the 18-30 years old age block with a small percentage (6%) belonging to the 51-60 years old age block indicating that the sample population is relatively young. Majority of the respondents are Tagalog (77.7 %) and Catholic (86 %) with almost half educated through high school (48.9 %). Majority of them are employed (69.1 %) with *may sariling pinagkakakitaan* (39.9 %) and *pagsasaka* (21.3 %) as their source of income. *May sariling pinagkakakitaan* refers to small income generating activities

which they perform (owning a store, selling different merchandises, driving a tricycle, being distributors of Avon and Sara Lee, money lending and the like).

## Culture in Nueva Ecija

Generally, the results of the cultural analysis show that Novo Ecijanos are peaceful. The results seem to be ambivalent such that if the cultural predisposition of the Novo Ecijanos does not warrant a context where violence can be easily propagated, why is it that violence persists in Nueva Ecija? To what extent can culture explain the persistence of violence in the province?

To answer the question, this section highlights the major cultural pattern that was observed using the methods employed in the cultural analysis. If we look at violence in Nueva Ecija using culture as a framework of analysis, two opposing realities surface – there is a violent culture that is shared by the elite segment of the population, while at the same time there is a relatively peaceful culture that is shared by the majority.

As demonstrated in the power analysis, violence is part of the way how ruling politicians conduct politics. They are calculating, and their motivations show that they see the value of using violence. Violence is used to achieve certain political ends—to stay in power, to maintain and preserve their clout. Over the years, politicians in Nueva Ecija, including their supporters, have employed violence.

Likewise, respondents have also reported instances of encounters, brawls and hired killings involving politicians. They also reported instances of intimidations and some of them suspect that some of the politicians are involved in syndicates and other illegal activities such as jueteng and cockfighting.

In contrast, the culture of the general public, or the culture shared by the majority, is predominantly non-violent. Based on the results of the different scales (i.e. concept of violence, attitude towards authority, macho culture) devised to measure attitudes and perception of the general public, Novo Ecijanos exhibit a culture that has non-violent tendencies.

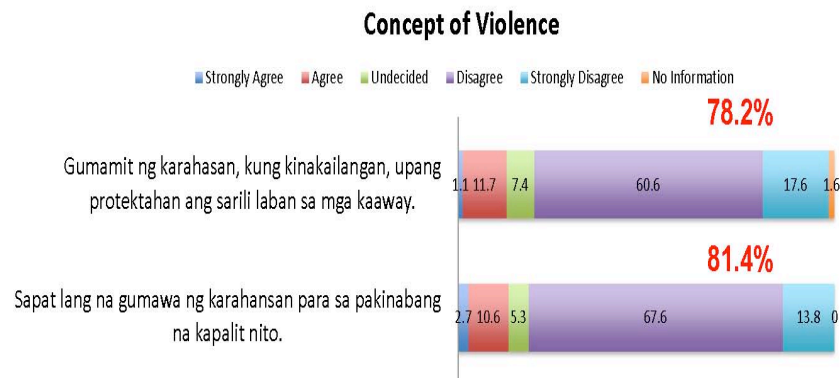
Majority of the respondents (72%) believes that there is election-related violence in the province. 51% considers it as a problem in the province and is disturbed by it. However, the respondents believe that violence does not stem from their action but rather, it is perpetuated by the long-standing rivalry between and among the local political elites. 58% believes that election-related violence intensifies because of entrenched political families' tight competition for power.

The existence of a violent culture among these politicians may be attributed to the disengagement of the general public within the culture of the political elites. The general public, recognizing that there is electoral violence in the province are disengaged because they enjoy a certain level of autonomy and independence that enables them to maintain their own set of values and beliefs that is entirely different from those of the political elites. On the other hand, the political elites also enjoy the same autonomy and independence which allows them to maintain their own culture. Disengagement on the part of the general public, results to complacency that encourages low value for participation in addressing the issue of electoral violence.

## Socio-cultural Results

### *General Concept of violence*

In order to get the perception of the people on the concept of violence, they were presented with statements reflecting some observed reasoning for using violence. The following figure presents the results.



The results show that there is no indication of violent attitudes among the respondents. This observation is further substantiated by the first item which indicates that majority of the respondents (78.2 %) will not resort to violence even if there was a compelling reason to do so or even at the expense of protecting one's own life. Further, this result indicates that the respondents will resort to non-violent means to protect their lives or to resolve conflicts.

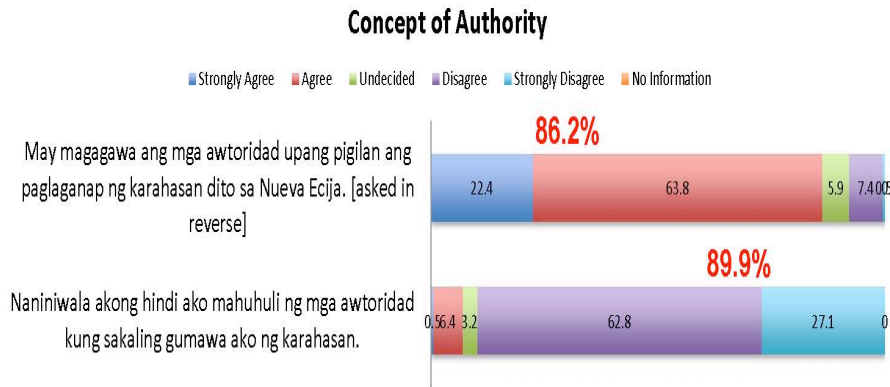
The responses on the second statement indicates that majority of the respondents (81.4 %) does not consider resorting to violent means to achieve their purpose. It indicates that the respondents will resort to other means aside from violence in order to achieve their purpose.

Examining the results, it is observed that the common Novo Ecijano does not consider violent means as a necessary resort and as a means to achieve an end. Based on interviews and participant observation, it was observed that Novo Ecijanans are naturally frank and with a good sense of humor but prefers to lead a quiet life. It was observed that when engaged in a conversation or discussion, they would not think twice about letting others know about their point of view but at the same time would make it a point to be sensitive enough to others' opinions thereby avoiding confrontation. A normal day in the life of a Novo Ecijano would consist of waking up early in the morning to attend to their day's work, resting during the hottest hours in the afternoon and attending to their work again in the latter part of the afternoon.

In a community that was observed, people believe in their capacity to channel aggression and competitiveness through sport activities. In almost all parts of Nueva Ecija, it is common to see basketball tournaments organized by barangay officials among the male population.

### *Attitude towards authority*

Assessment of attitude towards authority was done by presenting the respondents with statements manifesting disregard of authority. The following figure presents the results.



The results indicate that the respondents have a high regard for authority and do not subscribe to the idea of undermining it. Further, it is indicated that the people have a high dependency on authority figures to mitigate if not totally eradicate violence in the province.

The first statement shows that an overwhelming majority of the respondents (86.2%) agree that authorities can do something to mitigate if not totally eradicate violence in the province. This indicates that majority of the respondents have a very high trust for authorities and their capacity to provide solutions to violence and election-related violence. Hence, the results indicate that authorities are perceived by the respondents as one of the factors that can contribute to the resolution of violence in the province.

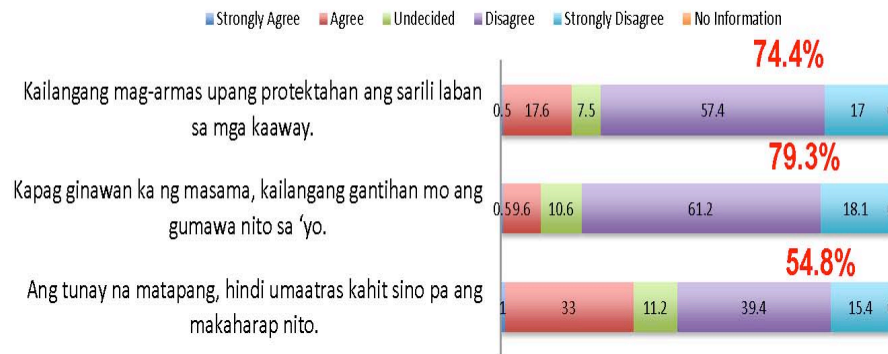
The second statement shows that an overwhelming majority of the respondents (89.9 %) disagree that they may perform violent acts as long as they will not be caught by the authorities. Analyzing the responses, it indicates that respondents perceive committing violent acts as totally unacceptable because of the presence of authorities who will reprimand them. Hence, the results indicate that respondents exhibit a very high regard for authority and will not subscribe to the idea of undermining it.

### *Macho culture*

To study and illustrate the so-called “macho” culture among Novo Ecijanos, a three-item scale indicative of observed common “macho” values was presented to the respondents. The following figure presents the results.



## Macho Culture



The responses from the respondents indicate that a “macho” culture does not figure prominently among the culture of the Novo Ecijanos. In the first statement, it was indicated that in order to protect oneself, one must take up arms. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (74.4 %) disagreed, thereby indicating that they do not consider taking up of arms as necessary to protect themselves. This shows that majority of the respondents does not perceive firearms or guns as effective means of protecting themselves.

The second statement indicates that it is necessary to retaliate when something bad is done to them. Again, an overwhelming majority of the respondents (79.3 %) disagreed, thereby indicating that as a culture they will not retaliate when something bad is done to them. At first, this might be interpreted as cowardice. However, based from the results of the participant observation, it is indicated that their unwillingness to retaliate when harmed stems from strong faith in God and general belief on greater courage and strength by not inflicting harm on others.

The third statement, with a small significant difference in responses indicates that Novo Ecijanos are willing to retreat in the face of enemies. Based on interviews, this willingness to retreat in the face of enemies comes from the belief that it is more rational and practical to retreat from an impending conflict rather than figure out in a fight which will result to greater damage and more problems.

However, in terms of gender relations, observations from the ethnography indicates that Novo Ecijano society is structured traditionally such that females regard males as more dominant and have stronger character. In the household, males tend to be more assertive and domineering. They tend to assert control, autonomy, and protection over the females in the family. In the family, there is an existing covert tendency of parents to favor giving education and opportunities to male children over females. When asked about this, a Novo Ecijano mother indicated that males should have more opportunities for education and in turn, in life because they will be the heads of the family who will in turn support the needs of his future family. Further, females are seen as provider of supplementary financial support for the family.

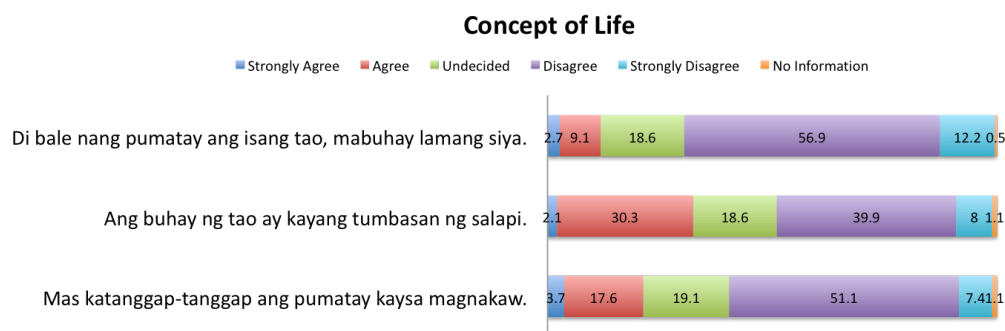
Additionally, there is a clear cut division in gender roles among Novo Ecijanos. In one instance, it was observed that drinking alcohol and having multiple romantic relationships is favored and

regarded as normal among males but frowned upon for females. Affairs of the household are commonly the duty of females.

Summing up the results, it can be inferred that for the general populace, male assertion does not figure prominently outside the household and are contained within the household.

### *Concept of Life*

To determine the concept of life of the respondents, they were presented with statements containing different reverse notions about the sanctity and importance of life. From the said statements, they were asked to make a response on the extent to which they agree or disagree with what the statements are indicating. The following figure presents the results.



Majority of the respondents (56.9 % disagree, 12.2 % strongly disagree) considers that killing others in order to live as not acceptable. This indicates that Novo Ecijanos will not consider sacrificing the lives of others in exchange for their own lives. This shows that they have a high regard for life and would not consider doing harm to others in order to achieve one's own purpose.

When asked whether life can be equated with money, majority of the respondents (39.9 % disagree, 8.1 % strongly disagree) indicated that this is not acceptable. This indicates that there is a prevailing belief among Novo Ecijanos that no amount of money can substitute for the value of human life.

When asked whether killing is more acceptable than stealing, majority of the respondents (51.1 % disagree, 7.4 % strongly disagree) indicated that it is not the case.

Analyzing the results of the responses, it is evident that Novo Ecijanos generally have a high regard for life and consider it as sacred. Drawing conclusion from this, it is indicated that as a people, if given a choice, they would not sacrifice lives over personal safety and gain.

### **Political Culture Results**

Taking off from the socio-cultural orientations of the Novo Ecijanos, this section will try to examine political culture. Understanding of election-related violence and their outlooks towards leadership will be analyzed.

### *Understanding of election-related violence*

The following table shows that competing political families are perceived as the most probable perpetrators of election-related violence. There seems to be a prevailing perception that incidents of election-related violence must be perpetuated by competing political families because they are the very ones who will benefit from being in power. Additionally, the table also shows that hired men and those that are working for the politicians ranked second as the most probable perpetrators of election-related violence largely because they also benefit from their political patrons being in power.

PERCEIVED PERPETRATORS OF ELECTION-RELATED VIOLENCE		
1	Mga magkakalabang pamilya sa pulitika	56.7%
2	Mga goons, hired killers at iba pang naninilbihan sa pulitiko	36.1%
3	Mga rebelde (i.e NPA)	3.4%
4	Pulis	1.4%
5	Militar	0.5%

However, it is interesting to note that unlike in Abra where the primary reason for working for political patrons was due to poverty and unavailability of opportunities for better livelihood, debt of gratitude and long-standing political association between families seems to be the primary reason. In an interview with a former political leader of a prominent political family in Nueva Ecija, it was stated that their loyalty on the political patron does not rest on financial reason alone. They are loyal to the politicians because of long history of good relationship between them. According to the political leader, the family patriarch gave him an opportunity for a good start in life when he was younger despite his foolhardy ways and was able to make him feel that he is part of the family. Through the years, the political family was also able to help them in many ways which made the lives of his children better. As a matter of fact, he stated that when given the chance he would be willing to risk his life if only to protect their political patron.

As a province, Nueva Ecija is relatively well-off. As a first class province with five cities, it registered a 28.3 % growth rate from 2000-2001 and was the top palay-producing province until the present<sup>9</sup>. An NCSB data posted in 2003 on the total financial resources generated per province shows that Nueva Ecija is one among the richest provinces in the country. Novo Ecijanos, therefore has better employment and livelihood opportunities which decreases the tendency to be entirely dependent on political patrons. With closer proximity to Manila, majority of Novo Ecijanos likewise has a wider option when it comes to seeking opportunities for employment.

However it is interesting to note that vote-buying is still rampant in the province. Based from the ethnography, majority of Novo Ecijanos claim that buying of votes (and in some instances, selling of votes) is commonly observed every election period. People see this as an opportunity for additional

---

<sup>9</sup> Source: NCSB

income and indicated that acceptance of the vote money does not entail actual voting of the politician. They claim that they actually have the freedom to vote for who they wanted even if they accepted money from the politicians.

In summary, the prevalence of election-related violence is attributed by the respondents to intense political rivalry. However, even if the respondents believe that ERV is happening in Nueva Ecija, majority indicated that they hardly experience it. The following table shows that when they were asked to report about their experiences on several types of ERV, majority indicated that they hardly experience anything.

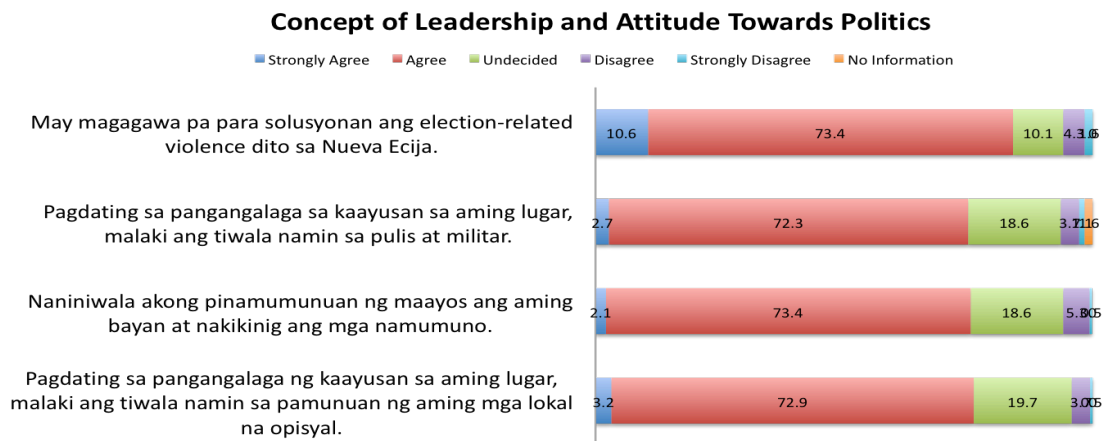
<b>EXPERIENCE TO DIFFERENT TYPES OF ELECTION-RELATED VIOLENCE</b>					
<b>Base: Dito sa Nueva Ecija, gaano kadalas kayo makakita o makarinig ng mga sumusunod na uri ng election-related violence?</b>					
<b>Uri ng election-related violence (Types of Election-related violence)</b>	<b>Wala (Never)</b>	<b>Bihira (Rarely)</b>	<b>Madalas (Often)</b>	<b>Palagi (Always)</b>	<b>No Info</b>
pamamaslang na may kinalaman sa pulitika	37.2	47.3	14.9	0	0.5
panunutok ng baril	48.9	39.4	11.2	0	0.5
pagpapaputok ng baril	43.6	42.6	12.2	0	1.6
pamamaril ng kahit sino, pulitiko man o hindi	61.7	31.9	4.8	0	1.6
pamamaril ng mga bahay	71.8	25.5	1.6	0.5	0.5
Pambubugbog	65.4	27.1	6.9	0	0.5
pagdukot ng tao (abduction)	79.3	19.1	1.1	0	0.5
Terorismo	89.9	8.5	1.1	0	0.5
intimidasyon / pananakot sa mga tao	64.9	30.3	3.2	0.5	1.1
pamililit/ pamumuwersa (coercion) na iboto ang isang kandidato	63.8	30.9	4.3	0	1.1
pagbabanta ng pagpatay	63.8	32.4	3.2	0	0.5
pagbabantang barilin ang bahay ng isang residente	82.4	14.9	1.1	0	1.6
pagbabantang dukutin ang mga kamag-anak ng isang kandidato o mga taga-suporta nito	82.4	16.5	0.5	0	0.5
paghahamon ng away	72.9	16.5	7.4	2.7	0.5

Nonetheless, the response on actual experiences of ERV should not be taken at face value. There are some indications that the Novo Ecijanos are rather confused with the complex configuration of ERV and were probably scared to indicate actual experience of ERV. Additionally, the respondents seemed to be detached from the situation of ERV in Nueva Ecija. Although they recognize that it is happening, the issue of election-related violence seemed to be a non-issue for them.

### *Concept of Leadership*

As perceived by the respondents, leadership figures in the solution to electoral violence. Although they recognize that something can be done to mitigate ERV, it was observed that they perceive others, most specifically their leaders and security forces as agents to solving election-related violence. Further, there is a prevailing perception that their leaders are contributing sufficiently in

the efforts of maintaining peace and order in the province. This is illustrated by the responses below on series of statements presented to them to measure concept of leadership.



Based on the responses, a great majority (10.6 % strongly agree, 73.4 % agree) indicates that something can still be done to provide solution to electoral violence. This indicates that despite the situation, Novo Ecijanos are still hopeful that the situation can still be alleviated. On the succeeding statements, an overwhelming majority of the respondents exhibited high trust for the capabilities of security forces and leaders to maintain peace and order. 75% (2.7 % strongly agree, 72.3 % agree) of the respondents indicated high trust in the capabilities of the security forces to maintain order in the province. 75.5 % indicated that they are governed well by their leaders and 76.1 % indicated high trust in the capabilities of their local leaders to govern them.

Analyzing the results, it is shown that the general public is optimistic that the government can provide solution to the prevalence of electoral violence. In turn, they are highly dependent on these agents for solutions, which breed complacency and inaction on their part. As perceived by the general public, a culture of dependency seems to be the most appropriate response. The people's dependency on security forces and leaders lie in their strong belief in the problem-solving capacity of these leaders. With that strong belief, they are led to thinking that nothing can be done by the general public which would be effective enough to alleviate the problem of electoral violence. The general public does not see their active participation along with their leaders in solving the problem. As shown by the results of the participant observation, no collective action by the civil society has been really instituted in the province against electoral violence considering the long history of electoral violence.



When the respondents were asked on their expectations from elected political candidates in exchange for their support, an overwhelming majority indicated good and effective leadership. This illustrates that, more than any material reward, Novo Ecijanos expect their leaders to provide honest public service to them. This reinforces the previous expectation that the respondents has a high regard for leadership and considers it as one of the key factors that would help mitigate electoral violence.

### *Culture of Fear and Participation in Elections*

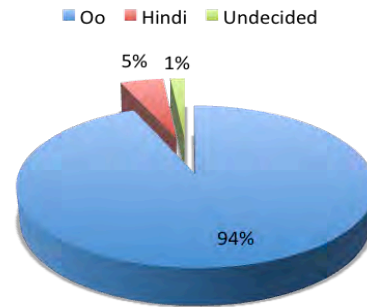
In understanding the culture of fear towards election-related violence, respondents were asked to report if there have been instances that they did not go out to vote due to fears of violence. Majority of the respondents (81%) reported that they never had such an episode of not voting because of fear. In fact 62% expressed that they are religiously voting (as shown in figure below) regardless of reported cases of ERV.



Based from the results, Novo Ecijanos seemed to have developed tolerance for election-related violence. They are not afraid to go out and exercise their right to vote. They are not prevented by the existence of ERV to perform their daily routines. This shows that there is no culture of fear among them and that ERV will not prevent them from continuing with their daily lives. There is an impression that the people has a high regard for the election process and considers the exercise of the right to vote as worthy of their time. Thus, people religiously vote during elections. Although they still consider ERV as a problem, the people tend to think that violence is inevitable. They tend to think that violence can occur anytime and is expected from competing politicians during elections.

When the respondents were asked whether they will participate in the May 2010 elections, almost all (94%) indicated that they will go out and vote. This supports that there is no culture of fear among Novo Ecijanos. In fact, electoral participation through voting is considered as a worthy exercise. They see voting as an effective means of involvement in government and as a basic right that they have to avail of.

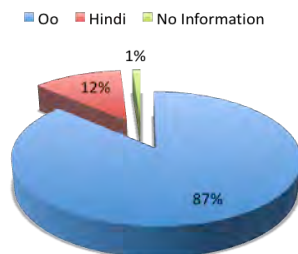
## Boboto sa Mayo 2010



## Values on Election-Related Violence

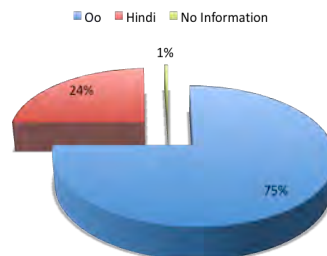
To be able to understand the values and consequently, the response of Novo Ecijanos to election-related violence, they were asked whether they will report and stand as witness given a case of election-related violence in their locality.

### Magrereport kung may nakitang karahasan



Results indicate that an overwhelming majority of the respondents (87%) will report incidents of violence that they have witnessed. 75% indicated that they are willing to testify. Both of these results illustrate a promising value system in approaching ERV. However, this promising value system has yet to be translated into action. In Nueva Ecija, there are cases of ERV that remain unresolved because they are either unreported or there are no witnesses. It goes to show that the Novo Ecijanos are disengaged with the situation. However, this promising value system might prove to be valuable in considering possible solutions to ERV.

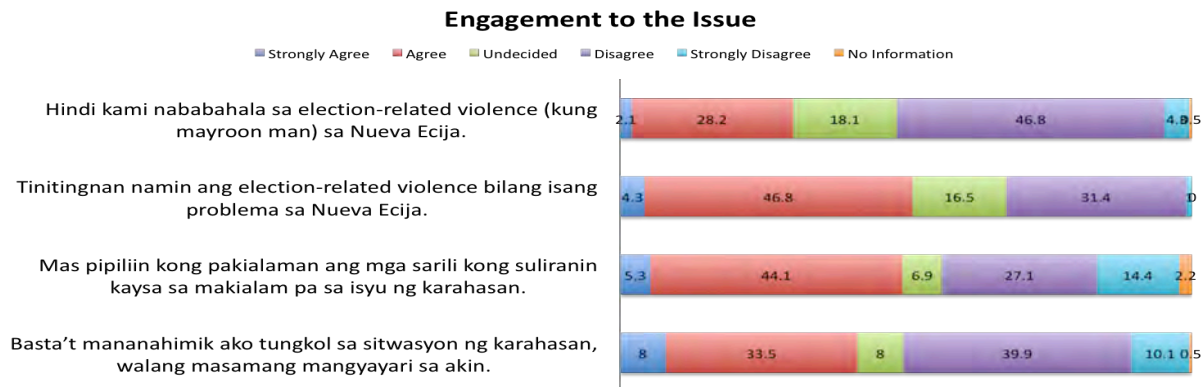
### Tetestigo kung may nakitang karahasan



Analyzing the results, it shows even with the absence of fear and a promising value system that mitigating ERV in Nueva Ecija still needs much work. People are not afraid because they are disengaged from the issue which further translates into inaction. They may not be afraid or may have promising values when approaching ERV but they still need to translate it into further action. They are not doing anything and in turn not being reactive because they have somehow developed complacency with the situation. Thus, Novo Ecijanos refuses to do anything about ERV and chooses instead to rely on leaders and security forces to give solution to the problem, which they think has the greatest capacity to perform the job.

### Social Involvement

In understanding the level of involvement of the respondents on the issue of election-related violence, they were presented with four statements that are worded in reverse involving perception on election-related violence. The following figure presents the results.



The responses to the four statements suggest that Novo Ecijanos are bothered by the prevalence of election-related violence and perceive it as a problem but would rather do nothing to resolve it. 50.8% indicated that they are bothered with election-related violence and 51.1 % perceive ERV as a problem in the province. However, 49.4% indicated that they would rather attend to personal concerns than attend to matters concerning ERV. Although not statistically significant, it is further illustrated by the fourth statement that keeping silent about the situation of ERV in the province is perceived by the people as an effective mechanism to avoid being affected.

The said results indicate that the respondents seem to not care anymore about the situation. This explains indifference and therefore inaction on their part. They tend to disassociate themselves with the situation of ERV and avoid engaging the issue. They tend to think that they can do nothing about the situation because even if they do, the situation will still persist. After all, they are not affected and can go on with their lives even with the prevalence of ERV. Ultimately, it is not clear to them how they can be immediately benefited when ERV is resolved.



## Summary

Based from the results of the survey, understanding the situation of election-related violence using the cultural perspectives poses a challenge. The results would tell us that generally, Novo Ecijanos are peaceful and has non-violent tendencies. Given the said cultural disposition, it poses a challenge as to the reason why violence still persists in the culture.

The culture of violence in Nueva Ecija does not characterize the culture of the Novo Ecijanos as a whole, as it is present only among the elite or political actors. Hence, a violent culture co-exists with a relatively peaceful and non-violent one. Although shared by many, the non-violent culture is unable to influence or challenge the culture that co-exists with it. This is because the general public remains non-reactive to the values held by the political elites.

The intensity of violence that is propagated within the circle of the elite remains the same – from the time when power was still monopolized by a single political dynasty up until the diffusion of power. Violence has transformed alongside the change in power configuration. Doing politics with violence seems to be the norm.

As power got diffused, balance of power emerged. Power holders recognized that they are on an equal footing, forcing them to be more rational and calculative in inflicting violence towards one another. Although rationality has set the rules of the game, there are still isolated instances of friction caused by irrational violent behaviors.

The culture of the elites goes against the culture of the general public that is generally not predisposed to violence. It is situated in contrast to a wider context where majority of the people adhere to non-violent values. In fact only 2.5% of the survey respondents see the possibility they can be violent. 81.4% of them do not see the necessity to use violence even to their advantage. 78.2% said they will not use violence even for the purposes of protecting themselves from potential enemies. Even the “macho culture” that is known to be one of the variety of factors that make a cultural context conducive to violence did not figure in the responses. Majority of the respondents disagree on statements reflective of macho traits. As most of the responses would show, macho culture is not observed in over 70% of the respondents.

High regard towards authorities can also be an indication of non-violence. The impression that authorities are capable of containing violence, and viewing them as deterrents to violence, veers the people away from doing violent acts.

In understanding in detail the existing culture in terms of people’s understanding, values and attitudes towards ERV, the results show that majority of the respondents (72%) believe that ERV occurs in Nueva Ecija. Furthermore, 51.1% of them see it as a problem. Consistent figures would show that a considerable majority (58%) agree that ERV is primarily caused by political rivalry. Ironically, majority of the respondents believe that there is ERV yet they report that they hardly experience it. When asked to report about their actual experience on several types of ERV, a significant majority said they hardly experience anything. However, this cannot be taken at face value as some of the respondents were probably scared to tell about their actual experience. This can also be an indication that the people are confused with the complex configuration of ERV in Nueva Ecija.

The people have promising values towards approaching ERV. 87% said they will report cases of election-related violence and 75% are willing to testify. However, actual practice shows otherwise. There are ERV cases that are unresolved because they are not reported and nobody wants to serve as witnesses. It goes to show that their values do not get translated into action, which eventually reflects their disengagement.

50.8% of the respondents said they are concerned with the situation of ERV, but 49.4% said they would rather choose to attend to their own concerns than involving themselves to the issue. It shows the contrast that people have positive values towards ERV but seemingly, it is a non-issue to them. It further develops into a sense of complacency making them divorced and disinterested from politics in general, and from the issue of ERV in particular. In fact, more than 70% of the respondents see that addressing the issue of ERV is the sole concern of their government institutions.

It is therefore imperative that values must be translated into action. The non-violent pre-disposition of the Novo Ecijanos must be capitalized to make the province, especially its elections, peaceful.

With these, it goes to show that there is a very limited appreciation of the problem. The people's awareness level is also limited probably because they are not well-informed about the issue. This result to low participation and it can also be a hindrance in encouraging the people to participate. They are divorced from politics because they possess different values from the elites. They tend to be concerned to their immediate milieu and let politics run as it is being run by them.

Nueva Ecija is near Metro Manila and majority of its towns are partially urban. The province is classified as first class municipality. Nueva Ecija is the top palay-producing province. This relatively fair socio-economic status of the province gives more opportunities to the people of Nueva Ecija.

Compared to the people of Abra, Novo Ecijanos are relatively well-off. They rely less on politicians. Politics is not seen as a source of livelihood, making the people not overly dependent or not dependent at all to politicians. In fact, only 7% of the respondents believe that in absence of a source of livelihood, people would seek to serve the politicians.

The varied opportunities that are available to the people render them disinterested in politics. People seem disinterested in the political affairs because they do not see the immediate benefits of their participation. They may not even see the need to engage into certain relationships with politicians.

This attitude can be further articulated by their concept of life. The responses would show that generally, the people are not ready to sacrifice life over rewards.

Interestingly, the younger generation of Novo Ecijanos possesses these non-violent dispositions. It must be that the younger generation is detached from the violent culture of the past that continues to define the culture of a small segment of Nueva Ecija society today. This gives promise to a peaceful Nueva Ecija, more so if the younger members of the political elites would share the same culture.

More than ever, it is imperative that values must be translated into action. The non-violent predisposition of the Novo Ecijanos must be capitalized to make the province, especially its elections, peaceful.

The attitude of complacency is seen as a result of the certain level of autonomy and independence that the people enjoy. However, the peoples' complacency, disengagement and refusal to take an active role in political participation negate opportunities to address important issues such as ERV. All of these taken together will just lead to the perpetuation of the status quo – a continuing violence through its decentralized form.

## Synthesis and Summary

This part of the research summarizes the key findings and conclusions of the study and puts forth recommendations to address the problem of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija based on the observations and analyses.

Given the explanations of all three analytical lenses in tackling the issue of election-related violence, it is clear that there is indeed a practice of electoral violence in Nueva Ecija, which is evident in the recorded ERV cases. However, it has already been established that compared to other election hotspots, the problem is not as severe, both quantitatively and qualitatively, if it is to be based (1) on the data of other provinces where election-related violence is also apparent and (2) on the evaluation of key stakeholders. Hence, the assessments of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija are conflicting, depending on the perspective of the stakeholder, which are more often contradictory. This gives rise to a wide range of opinions about the issue of election-related violence, some of which view the problem as critical and grave, and some, as stable and not that severe.

Yet despite the less severe ERV in Nueva Ecija, the problem of electoral violence remains persistent because of its continuing occurrence. Not only are they ERV, most of these acts can also be classified as political violence, which causes them to overlap in some instances. This further blurs the distinction between the two concepts, and therefore, the definition of election-related violence becomes hazy and confusing, causing more complications in the identification of acts of violence as election-related or as politically-motivated alone.

To give light to this phenomenon, this research looked into three possible explanations. The first was concerned with the characteristic of power distribution in Nueva Ecija politics, which includes the dynamics of various political actors and other stakeholders. The second explanation deals with the institutional response of the concerned agencies that affect election-related violence and the situation of elections in Nueva Ecija in general, and how these respond and even contribute to the continuing problem in the province. And lastly, this research used the social lens as a tool in determining and understanding the culture of Novo Ecijanos and how this possibly relates to election-related violence.

The first explanation looked into the condition of diffused power in an insurgency-challenged context that results in decentralized and multi-faceted election-related violence, where the actors are not only political rivals but also include state and non-state actors.

The diffusion of power is the result of the breakdown of the leading political dynasty and the emergence of new political families. The diffusion of power then gave to rise various political elites that are now on relatively equal footing, forcing them to be more rational and calculating in taking risks and in devising political strategies.

Furthermore, the diffusion of political power can also be attributed to the diversification of the source of income and urbanization of the province of Nueva Ecija. Over the years, Nueva Ecija's economic situation has improved significantly with the emergence of new industries and businesses, resulting in the emergence of a new middle class in Nueva Ecija. Thus, other options for fiscal survival were made available to Novo Ecijanos, which lessened their financial reliance on

government officials and which somehow reduced the politicians' stronghold over the citizens of Nueva Ecija.

However, the complexity of the situation is largely attributable to the continuing insurgency in Nueva Ecija. On the one hand, there seems to be a clash between how the insurgents are responding to the limited democratic context; and, on the other hand, in how the military is responding to this change of strategy of the insurgents. Because the military is mandated to defend the sovereignty of the country and to contain the problem of insurgency from known leftist groups, counter-insurgency efforts performed by the state becomes complicated when some elements of the insurgents or their affiliate rise above-ground and engage in legal processes such as elections. Hence, their involvement in electoral competition becomes a cause for more confusion and complications in terms of implementing democratic policies that protects even the rights of legitimate opposition groups.

Another cause of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija is the constrained and internally-challenged response of the institutions and actors. The main impediment to an institutional response against this practice of violence is the determination and establishment of what is to be considered as election-related violence. Needless to say, the issue of election-related violence is in fact a problem of semantics, as termed by Chair Leila de Lima of CHR, which concerns the ambiguity of the definition and the complexity of the criteria for which acts of violence in election can be identified. Such conceptual difficulty would have operational implications as some actions cannot be taken by institutions that have no direct mandate on the matter; such as the Commission on Human Rights, which only has direct mandate strictly on identified human rights issues alone; or when actions are constrained and restricted following the limits on what is considered election-related.

Another looming major institutional problem is the alleged involvement of state actors and security institutions in cases of election-related violence. As the ones primarily held responsible in maintaining peace and order, the problem becomes more complicated as the very actors that are supposed to impose the law begin to be tainted with accusations of violent acts. Instead of being perceived as solvers of the problem, these reports on their alleged participation in election-related violence give them the image of a perpetrator. This creates a problem of credibility among these state agencies. In relation, the complications brought about by the evolution of elements linked to the insurgency is also a challenge to the institutional response as this blurs the line on what should and should not be considered as counter-insurgency.

Finally, there's the question of capacity, which gives rise to qualms as to the effectiveness and robustness of the efforts of the concerned institutions in dealing with the issue of electoral violence. Whether institutional responses are actually able to prevent election-related violence has yet to be settled, as well as the ability of these institutional instruments and mechanisms to address the issue. This question on capacity could also be linked to the ability of these institutions to be independent and autonomous from politicians. Given the historical baggage of a centralized power controlling the affairs of Nueva Ecija, this remains a challenge despite the change in the political configuration.

The third and last angle which this research has explored as to why election-related violence persists in Nueva Ecija is the general indifference and disinterestedness of the Novo Ecijanos towards politics as a whole, which results to the people's lack of tendency to subscribe to violence in elections. This reflects the general peaceful disposition of their culture—a stark difference compared

to the apparent existence of the practice of election-related violence in their province. A possible explanation to this is that, even though the public has no preponderance to violence, their non-violent tendencies do not rub off to the political sphere because, their values and attitudes remain confined in the private terrain, being characterized as detached from the political arena which is reflected in their general non-involvement in politics.

This broad disinterestedness could be explained by the lack of any compelling reason to be concerned and be involved in political affairs, which in turn can be explained by the emergence of diverse sources of income and means for employment that altogether elevated the Novo Ecijanos' economic status and way of life.

Because of these perceived reasons, the public's participation in politics is not seen as vital since it does not yield immediately needed benefits. This can explain their low political involvement.

With all these explanation, it can be surmised that the situation of electoral violence, although undeniably apparent, is relatively not as severe when compared to other election hotspots in the Philippines. The complex situation of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija, however, must not be looked over and must be urgently addressed because of three important reasons. First, the culture of indifference and disinterestedness among Novo Ecijanos is risky in that it obviously perpetuates a status quo of non-participation and accepted detachment of the private arena from the political. This is characterized by the continued persistence of violence in elections and the lack of concern for others that are still affected by the conditions of election-related violence.

Therefore, this status quo posts extreme danger, as this general public detachment among the people of Nueva Ecija continue to belittle the issue and to keep a blind eye on comparatively "insignificant" cases of violence, such as incidents involving ordinary people and using forms of violence that are less severe as killing such as harassment and intimidation, which are not reported or are totally ignored and discounted. Because of this, there is a chance that the actual situation of election-related violence is not yet fully determined due to misreporting of incidents. With the situation of decentralized violence in Nueva Ecija, this scenario is not far from reality, and this status quo could easily transition to worse if left unaddressed.

Lastly, the most critical reason why we need to address this issue is the complications that the internal institutional challenges that are being posed in addressing the problem of election-related violence. Due to the complexity of the concept and the ambiguity of the definition, the dubious declaration of election hotspots without solid basis could very well be used as a tool for national control. This may not only weaken local institutions but could also be a means of the national to perpetuate their power over the area and to even control certain elements of local politics. And that, as we have seen in the various examples of events in Philippine politics, posts a lot of danger to democracy.

In sum, the situation in Nueva Ecija as far as election-related violence is concerned, points to several changes and developments such as diffusion of power, economic development and the emergence of a middle class that are largely pacifists. However, the past continues to haunt the present with its remnants such as traces of the centralized power in institutions, the insurgency, and the general disinterestedness of people in politics that could be due to their disillusionment towards the past state of affairs of Nueva Ecija politics. These odds and ends that are products of their historical



SCHOOL OF  
GOVERNMENT



baggage prevent a complete transition to a different Nueva Ecija; hence, the province continues to be plagued by election-related violence.

## Recommendations

With these aforementioned assertions, it is only necessary to conclude this study with recommendations that could possibly bring forth positive changes in the conduct of elections in Nueva Ecija. This research aims to provide proposals that are deemed as essential in responding to the existing problem and to help mitigate the problem of election-related violence. Key areas that need to be addressed are identified.

### *Challenge in Definition*

It has been well-established by this research that at present, the definition of election-related violence is only limited to incidents involving political rivalries. In order to address this problem as a more widely encompassing issue, the complex problem of semantics must be settled first. It is essential to expand this limited definition to classify other related acts under the same category. Furthermore, it is critical that the government also acknowledges the other forms of violence that are apparent and that also exist in relation to the elections, which involve non-state actors that undermine the democratic process, as well as state actors that hamper the full exercise of the right to suffrage.

Aside from this, the state must also look into the definition of the election-related violence to provide a clear and structured operationalization of the concept, along with verifiable indicators that will enable cases and status to be validated more easily. Despite the necessarily limitedness of the standards of what constitutes as election-related violence, the criteria should still consider all the elements of the definition—actor, tactic, time, motive, situation and outcome.

### *Question of Accountability and Institutional Responsibility*

In relation to the first point of addressing the definitional problem of election-related violence, the next recommendation is to address the question of accountability. Operationalizing or establishing clear standards and verifiable indicator as bases for declaring hotspots shall strengthen accountability by determining which groups or agencies shall be held responsible or liable to such incidents of violence. As previously mentioned, the police hold the basic responsibility of determining which areas would be considered as hotspots. Thus, there should be an effective way of validating the police reports.

The database for incidents of election-related violence remains to be one of the biggest challenges in responding to this problem. Without a solid database of validated reports and regular unhindered reporting of the situation of election-related violence in the province, it is hard for to have a programmatic and systematic responses and efforts. There should be a regular reporting of concerned government agencies, and, so as to create a more unbiased situation, it is recommended that the civil society should also have their own reporting to validate and/or substantiate the data provided by the government.

The inability to programmatically address the problem is largely rooted in the institutions' inability to identify their specific objectives and targets. Thus, in order to address the problem, the institutions



must clarify what they exactly want to achieve, including a detailed and rational description of the end goal and their target outcomes. With this, it is necessary to provide clear performance indicators that will exactly determine the successes and the failures of the initiative as far as election-related violence is concerned. In doing so, it will be easier to check and assess the situation of electoral violence in the provinces, which will aid in reviewing the performance of the institutions when it comes to realizing their responsibility of responding to the said issue, due to the need to continuously assess the progress and strategy of electoral violence prevention.

In relation to this, there is a need to account for the institutions' strengths, which would be made possible by the fulfillment of the previous suggestion. It is imperative so that the people will be aware of the capabilities and resources that are available and how much of these will be needed.

### *Multi-Stakeholder Coordination*

Another major recommendation that is perceived to be the most crucial is the need for a multi-stakeholder coordination. In Nueva Ecija, there have been attempts in the past to create an environment that would forge cooperation and coordination between institutions and groups. However, these efforts were not sustained; yet it still proves to be a greatly necessary act that will bring about unity among the different institutions in Nueva Ecija with a common goal of eradication electoral violence. The creation of a multi-stakeholder group is critical in strategizing, coordination of efforts, ensuring transparency and accountability of election-related violence efforts and the monitoring of progress.

### *Political Education*

Another important element to consider is how well-adept are the citizens in terms of political critical thinking—a skill that proves to be essential in guiding people to create sound decisions in aid of their political involvement. Hence, another recommendation is to initiate political education efforts in Nueva Ecija, which is a very critical area to tackle, given the disparity of the general characteristics of Novo Ecijanos regarding their personal principles and their political participation. The survey result pointing to a kind of populace that is generally peace-oriented but are otherwise disinterested in politics could be treated as both a threat and an opportunity. If this problem is not addressed, the culture could be a threat as this could allow the situation of violence to worsen due to the continued detachment of the people from the public sphere, alongside their denial of their responsibility as political actors.

Thus, political education, affirmative actions and support mechanisms are needed in order for those pacifist values to translate into actions, which could greatly influence the political arena. Quality political education programs, if conducted in a holistic but focused manner, could result to a more informed people that are able to look beyond the electoral influences of political dynasties and leftist rebel groups and that are able to situate oneself in a larger political context that necessitates proactive involvement.

The best way to conduct these political education efforts is through sectoral organization in order to link the issue of election and the concerns of the various sectors of Nueva Ecija. In this manner, it is more likely for the people to immediately appreciate and recognize the importance of the electoral process. In relation to this, existing institutions that already provide political education must be

maximized and supported in order to create a more far-reaching effect. However, there should be an effort to check on the content and methods being used to ensure that these are effective and responsive to the problem of election-related violence or citizen participants.

### *Alternative Reporting Strategy*

The next recommendation is in response to the situation of decentralized violence happening in Nueva Ecija. Given that election-related violence is now happening sporadically all over the province and have concerned all kinds of people, chances are the people who are affected by this refuse to come forward and hesitate to provide information regarding incidents of related to the issue. In line with this, there should be an alternative venue for reporting election-related violence cases. Instead of just coming forward to the police for information, there needs to be a special method for the people to report safely and freely, especially for those who do not trust the current institutions, or feel that what they experience is not something worth bothering the authorities about. An accommodating and open alternative venue could be most useful due to the nature of the new decentralized forms of election-related violence in Nueva Ecija. This would also aid in providing complementary needs to government data.

Given the complexity and sensitivity of the issue which hampers the participation of Novo Ecijanos in keeping track of election violence incidents, this proposed alternative venue for reporting cases must not be legally demanding in order to be relevant and effective. Current observations of the process in which reports are made and processed show that the legal demands for cases of election-related violence is constraining and hindering in addressing the problem because of the limited definitions and standards in which the various elements of the issue is classified that either discourages or disqualifies claims or incident reports that may not necessarily fall into the preset legal criteria. An alternative venue to is recommended that will be devised as a quick response mechanism without strict legal demands, which means that this system would take other actions that are not necessarily legalistic but are still with due prudence.

### *Addressing Loose Firearms and Private Armed Groups*

The next recommendation is perhaps the most challenging response because of its covert extra-legal nature—addressing the problem of loose firearms and private armed groups. Due to the lack of concrete information about the gravity of the proliferation of loose weapons and private armies in the Philippines, the general observation of the situation is that there are not enough legal instruments to address this pressing problem. In dealing with this, the most immediate action that should be undertaken is to identify the agencies or stakeholders that should be made accountable in addressing the problem of loose firearms and private armed groups, because it is necessary to clarify the tasks of these specific groups in order to achieve the goal of this national project to alleviate the problem. In doing so, these institutions will be held responsible for the continuing existence of the problem and will be sanctioned, which should also be legally instituted. In relation to this, to be able to facilitate the fulfillment of these tasks, there is also a need to identify and to be specific about the challenges in addressing these problems in terms of legal instruments and resources, which will also aid in keeping track of the actual situation of loose firearms and private armies in the country.

### *Dealing with Communist Insurgency*

Finally, there is a question of insurgency in the perpetuating problem of electoral violence. Given the extensive and rather complicated history of communist insurgency in the country, addressing this issue alone is not an easy task and that is not the intended goal of this research. Doing so would require a more comprehensive political solution. However, perhaps the most immediate step to respond to this problem of insurgency, as far as electoral violence prevention is concerned, is to articulate that the insurgency issue has implications on the conduct of elections, particularly in Nueva Ecija and perhaps in other elections hotspots, and its implications could seriously hamper the democratic process if not carefully dealt with considering all those concerns. In this light, it is recommended that the role civil society should be strengthened in terms of their participation and involvement. It must be able to act such that it closely watches the abuses of both the state and non-state actors during election, and current efforts to perform such must be strengthened and revitalized

Coming from a study on Abra where every possible aspect of the issue seems bleak and difficult, the appreciation of the situation of Nueva Ecija lies in the fact that their state of elections is comparatively better off. However, some hurdles continue to hamper their transition to a more peaceful province during elections, and every Novo Ecijano must own up to responsibility and take this opportunity to claim the future of their politics through their continued participation. The role of the political leadership is just as important as well as the institutional framework through which they conduct their elections. With proactive involvement, coupled with robust institutional adjustments to deal with this issue, Nueva Ecija is capable of slowly eliminating the election hotspot status and is definitely poised to overcome the pressing problem of electoral violence.

## REFERENCES

- Bond, Michael Harris (2007). Culture and Collective Violence: How Good People, Usually Men, Do Bad Things in *Voices of Trauma: Treating Psychological Trauma across Cultures*. Springer: USA. Accessed 13 April 2010 at [www.humiliationstudies.org/Documents/BondCultureCollectiveViolence.pdf](http://www.humiliationstudies.org/Documents/BondCultureCollectiveViolence.pdf).
- Batsanov, S. (2006). Culture of Violence. Discussion Points for the Isodarco Winter Course. Unpublished document. Accessed 12 April 2010 at [www.isodarco.it/courses/andalo06/.../andalo06\\_Batsanov-paper3.pdf](http://www.isodarco.it/courses/andalo06/.../andalo06_Batsanov-paper3.pdf)
- Charney, Craig (1987). "Political Power & Social Class in the Neo-Colonial African State". Review of African Political Economy, No. 38, Politics and Imperialism.
- Clarke, Paul Barry and Foweraker Joe (2001). "Interest Groups" in Encyclopedia of Democratic Thought. London: Routledge.
- Dahl, Robert A. (1991). Modern Political Analysis 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. Engelwood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, reprinted in the Philippines by Goodwill Bookstore.
- Davenant, Charles (1701). "Essay on the Balance of Power". II. The right of making war, peace and alliances. III. University Monarchy: London
- Fry, Douglas (2006). The Human Potential for Peace: An Anthropological Challenge to Assumptions about War and Peace. New York: Sage Pub.
- Jarrett, Stephanie (2009). *Violence: An Inseparable Part of Traditional Aboriginal Culture*. Accessed 12 April 2010 at [www.bennelong.com.au/occasional/stephFinal3.pdf](http://www.bennelong.com.au/occasional/stephFinal3.pdf).
- Medros, Fernando (2007). Domestic Violence and Culture: Moving Toward More Sophisticated Encounters. Accessed 12 April 2010 at [http://www.melissainstitute.org/documents/eighth/DOMESTIC\\_VIOLENCE\\_CULTURE.pdf](http://www.melissainstitute.org/documents/eighth/DOMESTIC_VIOLENCE_CULTURE.pdf)
- Peralta, Jesus T (2000). Glimpses: Peoples of the Philippines. Intramuros Manila: National Commission for Culture and the Arts.
- Ray, J.J. & Lovejoy, F.H. (1990). Does Attitude to Authority Exist? *Personality & Individual Differences* 1990, 11, 765-769. Accessed 12 April 2010 at <http://jonjayray.tripod.com/autgen.html>.
- Rigby, Ken & Rump, Eric (1979). The Generality of Attitude to Authority. *Human Relations*, Vol. 32, No. 6, 469-487. Accessed 13 April 2010 at <http://hum.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/32/6/469>
- Spierenburg, Peter (2005). *Violence and Culture: Bloodshed in Two or Three Worlds*. Accessed 12 April 2010 at <http://www.law.berkeley.edu/institutes/cs/ Taiwan%20Piece.pdf>.

Sidel, John Thayer (1989). “Beyond Patron Client Relationships: Warlordism and Local Politics in the Philippines”, in *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*. Vol 4, No 3

Steele, D. Gentry & Bramblett, Claud A. (1988). *The Anatomy and Biology of the Human Skeleton*. Texas: Texas A& M University Press.

## Republic Act

Republic Act 7160, An Act Providing for the Local Government Code of 1991.

## Reports

Alston Report 2008, Phillip Alston. United Nations Human Rights Security Council.

Dugdale-Pointon, TDP. (23 July 2006), “Insurgency in the Philippines”

## News Article

Manila Bulletin. <http://www.mb.com.ph/node/233006/pnp-li>.

## Interviews

Norman Patrick Patino, Vote for Peace 2010

P/SSupt. Ricardo Marquez, Provincial Director

Bp. Mylo Hubert Vergara, Diocese of San Jose City, NE 121809

Bp. Sofronio Bancud, Diocese of Cabanatuan 010810

Mrs. Eva de Guzman Brgy. Capt., Poblacion East, Lupao, NE 010910

Col. Melquiades Feliciano, 71<sup>st</sup> IB 011010

Rev. Fr. Greg Garcia, Justice & Peace Commissioner, Diocese of Cabanatuan 011810

Supt. Tarcila Javier, Dep Ed-NE 011810

Dr. Rolando Veneracion, Chairman, ASKI Inc. 012410

Mr. Abraham Pascua, Provincial Director DILG 012710

Mr. Dionisio Tolentino, Former staff of the Josons 020410

Ka Julio “July” Tolentino, RR 031310

Atty. Panfilo Doctor, Asst. RED COMELEC-III 020910

Mr. Alexis Dysangco, CIC 020910

P/CI Mario Sinacruz, PEMAC Officer, NE-PPO 021010

P/CI Arnold Palomo, Head, PSRT 021110

Atty. Danilo Valdez, Head of Legal, CHR-III 021910

Sarsagat, 56<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade 012110

Nueva Ecija Rep. Edno Josen

Chief of Staff Eng. Dennis Agtay (Umali Camp)

RTC Chief Judge Caspillo (Judiciary)

Armand Galang, DZXO and DWJJ 021010 (Media)

Tom Mariano, Founding Chairman of Kikilalanin Ko Movement (Youth)



SCHOOL OF  
GOVERNMENT



The Asia Foundation

Ms. Lovella Castro, Sec-Gen 030910 (Karapatan)  
Mr. Randy Cruz, on political families and history 031110  
Col. Felicito Virgilio M. Trinidad 031210 (503rd IBrigade)