Contextualizing Duterte's Rhetoric: The Rhetorical Situation of President Rodrigo Duterte's Public Addresses on the Philippines' Federal Shift

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ABSTRACT

Positive reception from the public is essential as Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte tries to rally support for a constitutional amendment transitioning the country's unitary government into a federal one—a move requiring political and structural shifts that have never garnered support in Philippine history. This paper, in investigating the rhetorical strategies of a popular and populist public figure, asks the question: how did President Rodrigo Duterte respond to and recreate rhetorical situations in persuading the Filipino public to support his federal proposal?

Using Lloyd Bitzer's rhetorical situation, the analysis explains how Duterte's public utterances reveal his careful, conscious, and crucial choices of which social issues to highlight in order to persuade his audience. Aside from reiterating his intent not to extend his presidential term, his rhetoric underscores three exigences: (1) poor governance structure mandated by the current setup, (2) unending conflict in the Mindanao region, and (3) unfair economic opportunities for countryside municipalities and provinces. In his attempt to influence the audience's realities, his speeches focused on the injustices that audiences in Mindanao experience and the promise of federalism as the only solution.

But the main constraint proved to be persistent – the Filipino audience had doubts in any constitutional amendment, as reflected in public polls. Duterte's rhetorical strategy failed to persuade the general population about the urgency, necessity, and the benefits of his federal proposal. This failure is due to the rhetorical situation—a lack of identification towards a common vision and a tradition of dissent against any amendment of the constitution. In this case, the rhetorical situation exceeded his presidential rhetoric.

Keywords: rhetorical situation, federalism, Rodrigo Duterte, rhetorical exigences, rhetorical constraints

Unlike other presidents whose approval ratings waned after the so-called honeymoon period (Social Weather Station), President Rodrigo Duterte or *Tatay Digong* [Father Digong] still enjoyed a 72% approval rating in a Pulse Asia survey conducted in December 2021 (CNN Philippines). Such positive reception is not new to Duterte, who used public support to catapult himself to the nation's highest government position:

> Let me begin by extending my hand in gratitude to all who kept faith with me in our most trying times. Numbers speak a thousand words and tell a hundred tales. But the landslide victory of the Administration candidates as well as the latest survey results show that my disapproval rating is 3%. I hope that the members of Congress—*sana hindi kayo included sa 3%* (I hope you are not included in the 3%)—inspires me with determination to pursue relentlessly what we have started at the start of my administration. (Duterte, Fourth State of the Nation Address)

This public support, arguably, was translated into voter turnout. In May 2019, nine of the twelve newly elected senators openly campaigned with the president while the opposition did not win any seat (Esmaquel). Although first-timers, the president's right-hand man and aide, Christopher 'Bong' Go, and his police chief, Ronald 'Bato' dela Rosa, garnered enough votes to secure the top 3 and 5 ranks, respectively. At the lower House, Duterte's allies make up the supermajority since most political parties coalesced with his Partido ng Demokratikong Pilipino-LABAN (PDP-Laban) for political advantage (Gregorio).

Since both legislative houses are composed of his allies, his resolute voice in asserting priority legislation also impacted the laws being debated and passed. Some bills, albeit controversial in nature, were legislated because of Duterte's support (e.g., the Universal Healthcare Act, the Free Higher Education Act, the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program, the Bangsamoro Organic Law, and the National ID System). One of the most recent controversial legislations was the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, which provides a stronger mandate to the government to fight terrorism. But his opposition believes that the Anti-Terrorism Act threatens democracy as it can be used to crack down on those who oppose his administration. The controversial bill was certified as urgent and was passed in both houses amidst scathing public criticism (Ramos). The continuing public support for the president and the presence of allies in both legislative houses enable an almost sure passage of his priority legislations. But in reality, this often does not come hand in hand as a number of his promised bills, including the death penalty for heinous crimes and his proposal to transition the government structure from unitary to federal, are still awaiting Congress's approval.

In the Philippines, the shift to federalism requires a constitutional amendment. It needs legislation passed by both Houses acting as a constitutional body and strong public support as it still needs to garner the majority of the votes in a plebiscite (Article XVII, Section 4, Philippine Constitution 1987). With the foregoing discussion, the words of support coming from Duterte pressure the legislature to pass the amendment and fulfill his campaign promise. House Concurrent Resolution No. 1, filed by former House Speaker Pantaleon Alvarez, a Duterte ally, passed the House of Representatives but stalled in the Senate in the 17th Congress. After his allies' big win in both Houses in 2019, many were expecting that the president would strongly push for this constitutional amendment but his State of the Nation Address in 2019 did not mention any proposal. Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Eduardo Año noted that it is still Duterte's priority as the president expressed "optimism that the federalist shift remains a 'solution' for the country to progress" (Philippine News Agency). In spite of this legislative hurdle and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Duterte's government launched, through the DILG, a call for signatures of citizens to pressure Congress to pass the constitutional reform (Talabong). In 2021, with less than a year left in office, the proposal to transition to a new structure is still far from being passed and public opinion remains lukewarm.

For a popular and populist president like Duterte, it is curious to find one of his election promises, specifically the "centerpiece of his campaign" (Ranada), which requires legislation and public support, unfulfilled. This research revolves around pertinent inquiries on Duterte's presidential rhetoric and its relationship with the public opinion on federalism. This paper asks: how did President Rodrigo Duterte respond to and recreate rhetorical situations in persuading the Filipino public to support his federal proposal? Using Lloyd Bitzer's rhetorical situation as the framework, public speeches (e.g., State of the Nation Addresses [SONAs], media appearances, political campaigns, and public gatherings) serve as rhetorical artifacts as they embody the president's persuasive performances reflective of exigences, constraints, and audiences of his proposal. How did these rhetorical strategies take into account the constraints and exigences in order to craft a fitting response aimed to persuade the audience of the necessity, beneficiality, and urgency of his proposal? Public opinion, the most important kind of approval Duterte needs to secure, requires citizens' identification with the exigence for compliance and conversion. What could be the reason why, unlike his other controversial policies such as the War on Drugs, his federal proposal has received waning support from the public?

Duterte and His Presidential Rhetoric

Presidential rhetoric studies the use of persuasive pronouncements like public speeches, performances, and articulations in influencing public opinion on the president, the presidency, and its policies. There is a conscious attempt among politicians, all the more so among populist figures (Curato, "Politics of Anxiety"), to venture into performing their speeches, through argumentation, delivery, and organization in order to engage, gather, or even revise public opinion. Rhetoric scholar Roderick Hart notes the impact of presidential rhetoric on public opinion:

> The power derives in part from the office of the presidency, but it also derives from the attitudes presidents have toward the speech act itself. Most presidents, certainly most modern presidents, use speeches aggressively. The position they hold and the information at their command give them the tremendous advantages of saying a thing first and saying it best. . . . Modern presidents play politics, a game about the distribution of power. Speech is how they play. (800)

Speeches, as tools in presidential rhetoric, articulate the intention of presidents and engage the audience in policy-making, specifically on which policies should be passed and which promises should be spoken of. For rhetoric theorist Lloyd Bitzer, these public articulations serve as a "mode of altering reality" through the mediation of the message (4). It is the president's call on which societal and political issues are to be highlighted and prioritized in the public's consciousness, cabinet and legislative discussions, and policy passage. More so, in a society like ours which is fond of either reformist or populist leaders (Curato, "Flirting with Authoritarian Fantasies?" 143), a public speech reiterates the president's and his policies' authority and legitimacy. To some extent, these public speeches during campaigns, or even during incumbency, may be considered performances of a populist—the president is the director and actor, the speech works as his script, and the public as a willing spectator.

For instance, Duterte's performances in front of the Filipino public, or *Dutertismo,* according to sociologist Randy David, is "pure theater—a sensual experience rather than the rational application of ideas to society's problems," evident in the lack of clarity of his pre-election platform which nevertheless allowed him to speak significantly of his love for the nation, of fighting for the human rights of every Filipino, and of doing what is best for the country. These were all promised and performed in campaign speeches that "were rambling and unstructured and peppered with swearing and sexist remarks" (Curato, "Flirting with Authoritarian Fantasies?" 147). As with every performance, the curtain closes (the campaign or a

public event ends) by singing a patriotic song or of Duterte kissing the Philippine flag (David; Curato, "Flirting with Authoritarian Fantasies?"). In his 2016 campaign trail, the president became a performer (Curato, "Politics of Anxiety"; David) to an audience yearning for change from the tumultuous last three years of Benigno Aquino III.

Duterte's politics and rhetoric of 'I will' (Curato, "Politics of Anxiety") and reform (Curato, "Flirting with Authoritarian Fantasies?") were validated in May 2016 when he was voted as the runaway winner by 16 million voters. Nicole Curato suggests that his 'I wills' came with a touch of penal populism—"a political style that builds on collective sentiments of fear and demands for punitive politics" ("Politics of Anxiety" 93). His urgent and often offensive statements were considered populist as much as they were nationalist (Tatcho). Orville Tatcho, in his analysis of the 2016 presidential debates, explains that Duterte's rhetorical strategy and appeal embody storytelling where he, as a rhetor, places himself at "the center of intervention" (48) or the main actor in the proposed solution. Further, his rhetoric is also belligerent as it casts him as the "quintessential Filipino macho who appears strongly as action-oriented and whose character appeals to the general public's penchant for quick fixes and instant results" (Navera 68). His speeches are often divisive and are used as weapons against his critics and political opposition.

While many were enamored by such belligerence, controversy continued to surround his administration due to remarks that depict "exceptional violence" (McCoy 36). Some of these verbal flexes include supporting the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos (McCoy); cursing Pope Francis, the European Union, and US President Barack Obama (Navera); shifting the alliance from the US to China (McCoy); and uttering sexual innuendos and misogynistic remarks (Navera). In spite of these verbal scandals, his everyman ethos, unfiltered expression of thoughts, and dehumanizing rhetoric still resonate with the public (Tatcho 52) as it "consolidates support for the macho heroic figure who can salvage society from the evils that surround it" (Navera 77). Curato adds, "His poll numbers did not take a hit from any of the controversies he created for himself. He cursed the Pope in November. He admitted he had multiple mistresses. He was accused of having undeclared bank accounts" ("Flirting with Authoritarian Fantasies?" 145). What is interesting about his coercive and belligerent rhetoric is that it still holds power over the public as reflected in public opinion surveys that validate the popularity of his presidency, performances, and pronouncements.

Constitutional Change in the Philippines

Being a country with more than 7,000 islands and over 100 ethnolinguistic groups, finding a governance framework fit for all is a challenge. Thus, the promise of federalism to suit the political, geographical, and cultural uniqueness of the Philippines is familiar in our history. A federal government requires small political groups to commune in order to create a bigger, more powerful political state. While this commune requires some powers to be surrendered (e.g., territorial security, taxation, and to some degree, legislation and justice system), it secures sovereignty both for the central and the federal states through shared- and self-rule which is the main political framework of a federal structure (Montes 158).

Wilhelm Hofmeister and Edmund Tayao suggest that the purpose of shifting to a federal structure is state-building, identity formation, and democracy (124-25). Consequently, this shift aims to recognize minority conflict, ensure territorial security, improve governance and democratization, and open opportunities for financial security for local states (Candelaria and Ancheta). Raphael Montes, Jr. paints a win-win situation for the central and the federal governments once the transition to this structure is fulfilled. For the administration of federal states, a larger political unit ensures the stability of financial and administrative development, and for the central state, a more participatory process that may gain public support and stabilizes the legitimacy and to some extent, authority, of the national government. Decentralization—to distribute the political powers and functions of the national state to the federal states—becomes the centerpiece of the said reform.

Most government leaders identify the centralization of power in Manila as the root of inequalities in the country. Centralization started during the Spanish occupation in order for the colonizers to claim power and secure their tenure. In 1893, the Maura Law, a radical legislation at the time, was passed to institutionalize local government units (e.g., *tribunales, municipales,* and *juntas provinciales*) and distribute the powers of the central Spanish government (Brillantes and Moscare). However, the need to secure the territory resulted in an undue concentration of power in Manila, the seat of the Spanish government, unfair employment opportunities to the educated class, the intervention of the church in public affairs, and a corrupt financial system favoring landlords (Brillantes and Moscare). All of these practices maintained a centralized government, which again, became necessary in a nation starting to revolt.

Emilio Aguinaldo and Apolinario Mabini proposed a federal setup during the Malolos Convention in 1898, wherein the country was to be divided into three administrative units representing its biggest islands (Candelaria and Ancheta). This move did not

prosper as the country needed to secure territorial integrity from the impending American colonization, thus focusing all powers and authority in Luzon, specifically, where the president resides. The early years of the American occupation in the Philippines (1902-1905) also accumulated power in Manila to ensure a legitimate government and avoid political and social instability (Brillantes and Moscare). After the war, centralizing the power in the executive was needed to monitor rehabilitation of core systems and physical infrastructures of the government. In Article VII of the 1945 Philippine Constitution, the proposal to decentralize the government became imminent. This constitutional mandate was further strengthened by Republic Act 2264 or *An Act Amending the Laws Governing Local Governments by Increasing their Autonomy and Reorganizing Provincial Governments*, which was passed in 1959. The law devolved powers, specifically on fiscal planning and regulation and taxation, from the national to city and municipal governments.

Alex Brillantes and Donna Moscare note that all these efforts to widen the participation of local government units in governance through decentralization became ineffectual when President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial rule in 1972. The authoritarian regime, in effect, challenged the process of eventual decentralization as Marcos handpicked, rather than elected, local government leaders and reclaimed powers devolved to the local government, (e.g., supervisory powers on managing the local governments, and taxation and executive mandates). When his dictatorship ended, the country needed another constitution to restructure from authoritarian rule. Yet again, the constitutional venture speaks of decentralizing the national government through the 1987 Philippine Constitution. As practiced, this constitutional mandate was further supported by legislation passed in 1991—Republic Act 7160 or the *Local Government Code*. Brillantes and Moscare call this the most radical and the widest decentralization policy to address a century's worth of centralized administration in the national government.

Indeed, the history of decentralization, the core promise of federalism, shows that the nation is familiar with the setup it requires. If this is the status quo in the Philippine government, why is there still a challenge to transition to a government framework which supports decentralization? The challenge may be attributed to the leadership and ethos of the incumbent president as the federal shift heavily depends on the ability to rally public support which, historically, is not supportive of any constitutional amendment.

Social Weather Stations (SWS) provided a summary of public opinion on proposed constitutional amendments in the Philippines from 1986 to 2016. Filipinos supported the change of the 1973 Philippine Constitution of Marcos that allowed the shift from unitary to authoritarian government. Because of the political context

surrounding the period, 64% supported the change in the constitution to return to the unitary system and only 27% disagreed. In history, this was the only constitutional amendment supported by the public. Ever since the passage of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, public opinion was consistent in protecting its democratic promises from any revision.

Public polls on amending the Constitution were carried from September 1992 to March 2011. The twenty-year period provides a glimpse of public acceptance, or lack thereof, of the proposal to revise the Constitution. The closest gap was in 1992, when 59% of the respondents disagreed with the proposal while 40% believed in the need to amend the just passed charter. In 1997, Fidel Ramos proposed a parliamentary system of government through the People's Initiative for Reform, Modernization and Action (PIRMA) which focused on the possibility of re-electing a president (Tomacruz). Interestingly, when asked if the Constitution should be amended so that Ramos can run for another term in 1998, 73% disagreed with the statement. This result has been consistent (Yusingco and Navarro): the public has never been supportive of a second presidential term as this was not enshrined in the 1987 Constitution.

In 1999, Joseph Estrada supported the Constitutional Correction for Development (Concord), which planned to revise the foreign ownership restriction of the Constitution. The highest percentage of disapproval to amend the Constitution was observed in this period, wherein 86% of respondents were against the reform. By the end of 1999, only 9% supported the proposed transition. Estrada did not push through with his proposal "after his government faced corruption scandals which led to his ouster in 2001" (Palatino). Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who succeeded Estrada in 2001 and ran for a contentious second term in 2004, was the most direct and open an executive has ever been with her rhetoric on the constitutional change. These public articulations, before and after the widely contested 2004 elections, raised public awareness on the proposed constitutional change. She called for a reform that bears features of a parliamentary-federal formula (Montes). Her belief in the necessity to shift to a different governance structure roots from the imbalance in economic opportunities in the country.

In 2003, 79% disagreed that the Constitution should be reformed while a measly 21% supported the idea. Controversies during Arroyo's election hurt her credibility and image. Despite a rigorous information campaign, Arroyo's move to reform the Constitution still received lukewarm support, according to the 2006 SWS survey. Specifically, 70% disagreed and only 30% agreed to the Arroyo proposal to change the government structure. A comparative assessment of the pre- and post-2004 election scenario asked the public if they wanted Arroyo to become prime minister

in a parliamentary government. The March 2006 results showed that 55% were against the proposal while only 18% were supportive. Before Arroyo stepped down in 2010, the same question received a 68% disapproval rate from the respondents.

This move by Arroyo did not come to fruition because of various reasons, one of which, ironically, was the fear of Muslim communities in Mindanao to secede when given autonomy (Montes). The intention of federalism to decentralize and give equal power to the local government units was challenged as state governments could be controlled by small political families aiming to build stronger political clout. Sedfrey M. Candelaria and Angelli Camille P. Ancheta note that federalism might be the start of the "weakening [of] an already weak Philippine State" (357).

Aside from secessionist threats, Paul Hutchcroft identified the biggest challenge of a federal shift during Arroyo's administration—her ethos to stand as the face of a wide-scale economic and political transition. After the 'Hello Garci' scandal, her reputation was tainted. This led to many believing that the proposed constitutional amendment intended to prolong her term and extend the constitutionally mandated six-year term of a Philippine president. Since Arroyo's term, the public's disapproval of the constitutional amendment has remained. In 2011, 67% of Filipinos were still adamant about this charter change.

Some observations on the general perception and reception of Filipinos on constitutional amendments over time include the following: (1) while the public approves of a president, this is not indicative of their acceptance of any form or content of constitutional reform; (2) never in the history of public polling (1992-2011) has a public been supportive of a charter change; (3) in terms of awareness of a policy, one of the first steps of policy adoption, the range of awareness on proposals of constitutional amendments (1999-2016) is only from 28% to 41%, which is arguably a low number for a plebiscite to be successful; and (4) the respondents throughout the period are more supportive of a presidential structure, but are against the re-election of the sitting president, and are very resolute against any extension of term limits (Social Weather Stations, *SWS Surveys of Public Opinion on Constitutional Amendments*). Further, a constitutional amendment or a federal shift has never been on the list of the top economic and social issues a president should prioritize. Ultimately, the Filipino public has a negative perception of any kind or degree of constitutional amendment. Most of them, as Michael Yusingco and Sophiya Navarro assert, perceive that any kind of charter change proposed is not geared towards true political and structural reform, but towards the expansion of political power of those in office, to extend their tenure, and exert undue influence. According to University of the Philippines College of Law Professor Dante Gatmaytan, this skepticism started when political trust was tarnished because

term limits were extended under the guise of constitutional change in the Marcos regime (Tomacruz).

Post-Arroyo (2001-2010), the next administration which floated the idea of a federal shift was Rodrigo R. Duterte (2016-2022). Supported by the PDP-Laban which has been at the forefront of federalism since the 2004 elections, the then-Davao Mayor Duterte was very vocal about federalism being a significant part of his campaign promises. In 2018, Duterte handpicked members of a Consultative Committee to propose changes to the constitution. The Committee proposed 18 regions with their own regional assemblies and executive offices (Heydarian). Senators will be voted as state representatives and the House of Representatives will be composed of 400 legislators based on geographic and marginalized representations. Aside from the lukewarm response of the public, the said proposal was also not popular with many opinion leaders and academics (Heydarian).

To argue that the shift to federalism is based on political leadership is nothing new in Philippine politics. Thus, Duterte, aside from political will, needs a good, coherent, and foolproof rhetorical strategy to persuade the Filipino people to support a shift in governance, which has never been publicly supported. This historical, arguably traditional, stance becomes a challenge to whoever will sit as the chief executive and rally for constitutional change. For the purposes of this paper, this will be referred to as the *rhetorical situation*, constituted specifically by constraints that any president, not just Duterte, would face to build consensus on a political, social, and economic policy shift like federalism.

Political Rhetoric and Rhetorical Situation

Political rhetoric is the use of language, signs, and symbols contextualized in political, social, cultural, and economic situations and is communicated as a "form of persuasion, and showing how this relates to the construction of problems, ideology, institutions, and political strategy" (Turnbull 116). The communicative contexts surrounding political actors shape their rhetoric and their functional performances in front of the public they serve. These contexts also decide the opportunities and challenges for government leaders to identify with their constituents—a necessary rhetorical strategy to satisfy an observing and often demanding public sphere. Arguably, political rhetoric heavily banks on maintaining the relationships between the speaker (i.e., politicians and government officials) and the audience (i.e., citizens). In terms of policy proposals like legislation, this rhetorical relationship should be maintained for easy policy passage.

Political rhetoric asserts the relevance of rhetorical situations in understanding how political actors influence the public (Turnbull; Finlayson and Martin). Lloyd

Bitzer's inaugural essay, "The Rhetorical Situation" (1968), explains that in rhetoric studies, one should put a premium on the context that "calls the discourse into existence" (2). The rhetorical situation provides the context where rhetors create a fitting response to transform rhetorical discourses. For Bitzer, the focus on the situation as the 'cause' of all rhetoric means that every articulation (e.g., speech, statement, press release) is strategically designed to respond to a situation and can only be considered rhetorical if it can alter reality. Therefore, these articulations only gain rhetorical significance if situated or analyzed in a rhetorical situation. In a political scenario, a fitting response is created by the political actors to retell the situation to the audience in a way that may render reality as it is or recreate aspects of it—all towards a particular political goal.

In the same work, Bitzer discusses three components of the rhetorical situation: exigence, audience, and constraints. Exigence is the problem that brings rise to the rhetorical situation. This could be retold in various perspectives so as to give way for the essence of multiple realities of the audience. The exigence, interpreted by the rhetor, will be shared with the audience in order to fulfill whatever purpose the rhetor might have (Grant-Davie 265). The audience, as Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca suggest (Grant-Davie 270), includes three types of spectators—the physical audience, the audience who is yet to be formed, and the audience in the mind of the rhetor. The audience is composed of individuals who can be influenced by the discourse designed by the rhetors (Bitzer) and can be "mediators of change" (Johnson 57). Nick Turnbull asserts that the relationship between the speaker and the audience only becomes effective when the rhetor, through his strategic way of telling the story arising from the exigence, successfully influences the audience to fulfill the roles that he wants them to take (117). This is the measurement of the impact of a rhetor and his message to the audience.

The last component of the rhetorical situation is the constraint. These are persons, objects, events, or relationships that have the power to challenge the success of communicating the realities of the rhetor to the audience (Bitzer 8). Keith Grant-Davie asserts a more encompassing definition of constraints by including factors—even linguistic, historical, and geographical—that could encourage or discourage the audience to identify with the discourse (266). These opportunities or obstacles should be resolved to ensure the identification of the audience with the rhetoric. These three components—exigence, constraints, and audience—are interrelated in creating the rhetorical situation and how it can birth or kill rhetorical discourses aiming to recreate realities.

Richard Vatz refocuses the core of rhetorical situations from the situation itself to the linguistic credibility, creativity, and performativity of the rhetor. While Bitzer

asserts that it is the rhetorical situation that determines rhetoric, Vatz, in his work "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation," asserts that the rhetor's choice on which exigences to present to the public supports two assumptions: (1) people freely choose the events to communicate, which guarantees that they have a purpose for their choice/s and (2) people assess and invent meanings of these realities for the audience to listen and be persuaded, which means that language choices become value-laden and reflective of the intent of the rhetors. Further, Vatz disagrees with Bitzer since rhetorical situations might not always be the cause of rhetoric, for at times, rhetoric might also create rhetorical situations (156). The creation of rhetoric and/or the rhetorical situation is the responsibility of the rhetor, a consequence of his supposed sensitivity to language choice and choosing the salient reality (Consigny 176). Turnbull observes that this paradigmatic shift gives agency to the rhetor and the audience as proactive communicators (118).

The 'situatedness' of political rhetoric strongly dictates the rhetoricity of any discourse related to a rhetorical situation. In political communication, specifically in persuading the citizens for policy support, the rhetor—in this case, the politicians or government officials—has to carefully handpick the policy needs, policy problems, and policy solution in order for the audience to believe, vote, or support the proposition on the table (Consigny 177-78). It matters to politicians to appeal and identify with the rationality and emotions of the audience to win their support. This is a clear manifestation of the connection among rhetoric, rhetorical situations, politics, public opinion, and realities.

Public speeches, embodied and performed by political rhetors like presidents, are artifacts of how they, as public institutions, consciously assign themselves as legitimate performers eyeing for the public's acceptance. Speeches, as the fitting response, may reflect the exigences that rhetors want to highlight, the audience addressed, and to some degree, the constraints that the political rhetoric might face. Against the original claim of Bitzer that rhetors are passive actors taking into consideration the three components of the rhetorical situation, Craig Smith and Scott Lybarger assert that the rhetor is not limited by the situation but a directly involved actor that might highlight some exigences and constraints to have his desired impact on the public as the audience (198). Public speeches become opportunities for "reinterpretation and redirection" of the issues that the government needs to respond to (Finlayson and Martin 447). Indeed, rhetorical situations become the stage and the rhetoric becomes the script of the president as a performer (448).

In presidential rhetoric, the impact of the articulation and performance of the president as the highest executive of the land will inevitably impact the public as the spectators in this political performance. This is further evidenced by the

impact of the War on Drugs rhetoric of US President George Bush that catapulted drugs as "the most important problem facing this country [the United States of America]" (Smith and Lynbarger 203). Indeed, articulations, performances, and, in contemporary rhetoric, even tweets (Johnson) and photographs (Booth and Davisson), when analyzed using the rhetorical situation, reflect the intention of the rhetor. The political actor becomes a performer who directs, creates a script, and, of course, performs his own piece for the public-as-audience to consume. In the end, public support is warranted so that the president can still claim his legitimate position and push for his policies and programs.

Analyzing Duterte's Speeches as Rhetorical Artifacts

This study problematizes the ironic, yet interesting, struggle of popular and populist Duterte to garner support for his federal proposal. Public polls show that Duterte still enjoys the trust and approval of the citizens and this validates his courage to propose controversial policies like the violent War on Drugs and the Anti-Terror Law.

To be analyzed in this paper are articulations, news bits, and speeches of Duterte in his pre-2016 elections campaigns and his five-year term as president including his five (5) State of the Nation Addresses and his media appearances. These events were spread from 2016 to 2021 and most were in front of local government leaders and allies in politics. The pre-election statements reflect his sensitivity to and awareness of the issues relevant to federalism. This period also signifies the start of the campaign promises with federalism as one its core commitments. Bitzer's rhetorical situation was used to analyze statements in support of federalism, specifically the exigences narrated by the president to appeal for the much-needed structural change in order to ensure public support. The statements were also contextualized in the public opinion on federalism as provided by the Social Weather Stations (2016-2019). This study aims to relate, to a certain degree, the rhetoric of the president to the perceived public acceptance, or lack thereof, of his federal proposal. Finally, this paper examines the impact of the rhetoric of a highly regarded president on the challenges posed by a long history of disapproval of any constitutional reform proposal.

Rhetorical political analysis as the framework for analysis focuses on political actors as performers and their texts as tools and forms of persuasion and political strategy. The interaction of the rhetor, or politicians, and the audience require a rhetorical analysis for it shows how actors "select arguments in the mobilization of strategic concerns as a means of managing situations" or "changing realities" (Turnbull 116). For James Martin, rhetorical political analysis suggests that ideas are instances of action (25). He further argues that every speech, when analyzed using the situation it resides in, reveals a rhetorical strategy or "the purposeful assemblage of arguments

for a particular occasion and setting in light of its anticipated effects and by means of available techniques" (29).

Duterte's Choice of Presidential Exigences

In a rhetorical situation, the exigence is a problem that requires a solution or modification using rhetoric (Turnbull). It highlights the important political, social, and cultural issues that need rhetorical attention. In political speeches, the conscious and strategic manipulation of the rhetors, or in this case, the president, in choosing which problems, opportunities, and solutions to present to the public reveals their rhetorical strategy. Through their speeches, national leaders frame the issues that the government should face, and they also suggest the fitting response or solution to these chosen issues. For a federal proposal to gain enough support to pass Congress and to be approved by the Filipino public in a plebiscite, the president, through his articulations and performances of public speeches, should highlight the necessity, beneficiality, and urgency of federalism. These arguments, guised as exigences, aid in revealing the true intention of the president as rhetor.

On various occasions, Duterte underlined the innovativeness and necessity of the federal shift. In his speech at the Federalism Summit in Naga City (17 Oct. 2017), he even called Federalism Alyansa Bikol convenor Dante Jimenez a 'trailblazer' or someone who pioneers a new path. This name-calling sets the bar high for policy expectations from the audience. In the same speech, he defended his radical approach in supporting the war against terror in Mindanao, specifically in Marawi, which turned out to be more destructive than constructive. He noted that structures have to be destroyed because there is no alternative solution to the problem—a rather vivid analogy to how the constitution, as a structure, requires some reconstruction too. Moreover, his violent rhetoric is consistent in asserting that there is only one solution to the problem—which is his own proposal.

As the first president from Mindanao, Duterte's central exigence, based on the number of occurrences in his speeches during campaign and incumbency, was focused on the promise of peace in the said region. The southernmost island of the archipelagic nation has been a witness to endless struggles from secessionist movements, two of which involve the Abu Sayyaf in the 2000s and, more recently, the Maute group that caused the Marawi siege in 2017, one of the first major political challenges faced by Duterte as president. The political situation in Mindanao is framed and narrated as the main exigence that the federal proposal would resolve once passed.

In his inaugural address, Duterte introduced the need to respect all signed peace agreements which could only be successful if and only if they are implemented through constitutional and legal reforms. In a speech during the Eid'l Fitr celebration on 16 June 2018 in Davao City, his hometown, he likened federalism to peace and to the Bangsamoro Organic Law. By exclaiming "I am for Federalism. I am for peace," Duterte established a direct connection between the proposal to change the government structure and the dream of the Mindanao region of a well-deserved and long-lasting peace and justice. Following this justification was the support for the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, giving autonomy to local governments in Mindanao which want to identify themselves as part of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region. He identified the relationship as mutual—federalism supports Bangsamoro, which the audience has been longing for decades. This strategic juxtaposition, of using the needs of the audience to promote one's political agenda, is rhetorical, on one hand, and populist, on the other.

Moreover, the ideation of federalism as the offeror of peace oversimplifies the struggles of the people living in Mindanao. This oversimplification is one of the main characteristics of Duterte's rhetoric and a part of his "I will" strategy. During the Federalism Summit in October 2017, the president talked about his recent visit to Marawi, a few weeks after the siege caused by the Maute group left the whole city devastated and a big part of its population displaced. The speech shared many exigences that the president chose to highlight: (1) the necessity of destruction to rebuild and (2) the change of structure to avoid another impending crisis. The speech, delivered on 17 October 2017 in front of party members of PDP Laban from different regions, revealed the conditional political rhetoric of the president—we have to do this, or else. He framed the destruction of Marawi as a necessity in rebuilding a nation again: "we have restored peace but that would not be a cause for a celebration because we have destroyed in the process the city which I admit because we had to do it." This alluded to the people's fear that his federal proposal will destroy the integrity of the 1987 Philippine Constitution and the stability of the country. The narration continued with a threat, "*Pag hindi natuloy* [if this Federalism does not push through], or any change that would modify the present structure, which is really an unfair set-up, it will lead into a trouble again sa Mindanao." This rhetorical exigence works for him and his proposed solution to issues; as the audience finds no other solution presented, the president, as rhetor, provides them no other choice but to accept his proposal. This is an example of threat as a rhetorical strategy.

Aside from the threats Duterte threw at the audience, he also spoke of his vision to the audience as citizens: "It is our vision to create a system of government that will give lasting peace, progress, and prosperity for all of our peoples." This articulation of the 'sure' connection between the troubles in Mindanao and the solution that only a structural shift—specifically federalism—could offer, vividly illustrates the narrative and performative functions of the President. Most especially, his conscious choice of the issue and resolution to be presented to the public was revealed.

While preceding presidents focused on the economic promise of a constitutional change to garner support of the public, Duterte's promise of peace in Mindanao comes first in terms of rhetorical focus in most of his speeches. But as a strategist, he also apparently chose the specific exigence to highlight with respect to the audience. On several occasions during his campaign in 2016, he emphasized the long-standing issue of our government's centralized structure and how federalism responds to this by eliminating corruption, giving local governments more budget and authority, and bringing the government closer to people (Ranada). Having recognized this century-old exigence, Duterte often mentioned two historical roots of the problem—the 'strong central government' established by Spanish colonizers and the injustices experienced by citizens of Mindanao. The struggle and the legacy that passing the charter change proposal entails was also used by the president to tell the audience how it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for them to be included in this constitutional amendment. In a campaign sortie in Dagupan City, he underlined the economic inequalities faced by local governments. He noted, "Federalism will pave the way for competition. They can invite foreign investors directly. It will eliminate bureaucratic greed. Manila gets everything so regions are forced to beg" (Ranada).

Most of the speeches Duterte delivered in front of local government officials affiliated with his political party, PDP-Laban, catered to local leaders. The exigence, in these occasions, focused on these local officials' limitations in using their resources and in collecting more taxes and revenue. To appeal to them, Duterte highlighted the promise of federalism to decentralize effectively, which will give them more than enough power to allocate their budget and, more importantly, keep a bigger portion of their taxes.

The last exigence, which Duterte carefully responded to, was the fact that a call to support federalism was never received positively by the Filipino public since the 1980s. There had always been doubt in the real intentions of presidents when they rally the public for a constitutional amendment. This reality and its repercussions were addressed by the president by assuring the audience that he supports: (1) transparency in the process towards the proposal of and transition

to federalism, (2) the maintenance of the presidency but with limited powers, and (3) the relinquishing of the presidency after his six-year term as president and not sitting as the transition president as the federalism proposal envisions. These promises were chosen and articulated in various public speeches and were spread throughout his years in office.

Duterte's acknowledgment of a transparent process in proposing and transitioning to federalism aimed to quell the perennial opposition to a constitutional amendment that is elitist—most of the members of the consultation committee were politicians and justices—and tainted with corruption. As he stated in one of his speeches (20 Mar. 2019), "Day to day, the public will be briefed about the outcome – however you want the federal proposal to be implemented" ("Para day-to-day they will be briefed kung ano ang outcome – how gusto mong maapply 'yang federal system sa gusto mo"). Aside from transparency, the president's rhetoric on the limits of the power of the president served as one of the foundations of his argument—a further guarantee, albeit rhetorical, that he did not plan to accumulate power with the proposal.

One recurring rhetorical response to this exigence was his "assurance" that he will not use the proposal to extend his term. Some of the many instances wherein these pronouncements were made in the last five years are quoted below:

> 1. You know my advice to you is maintain a federal system, a parliament, but be sure to have a president. *Huwag... Hindi na ako niyan* (It's not me anymore). (Duterte, First State of the Nation Address)
>
> 2. But, I can commit today to the Republic of the Philippines and its people: If you hurry up the federal system of government and you can submit it to the Filipino people by the fourth, fifth year, *proseso 'yan e* (that is a process). You call for a referendum and after that call for a presidential election, I will go. (Duterte, First State of the Nation Address)
>
> 3. I have no illusions of occupying this office one day longer than what the Constitution under which I was elected permits; or under whatever Constitution there might be. (Duterte, Third State of the Nation Address)
>
> 4. If the BBL [Bangsamoro Basic Law] and it provides for a Constitution and you craft a Constitution adapting to the federal system and yet during the transition, you want a new leader to handle the transitioning of this country from unitary to federal, I would be happy to step down. I will resign. (Duterte, "Eid'l Fitr Celebration 2018")

The consistency of these arguments makes this a cardinal rhetorical strategy that serves to extinguish any possible opposition to the recurring perception that a charter change is used to extend political powers.

Indeed, Duterte has an active role in this rhetorical situation—he handpicks exigences that must be modified or highlighted for the audience to see what he sees. In his federalism rhetoric, Duterte consciously highlighted the exigences that are both personal and communal, making his chosen issue a problem of the whole community. As Scott Consigny argues, the rhetor does not just respond to the exigence. Rhetors choose the events they communicate in order to create the realities they want the audience to receive and live in (Vatz). Most of the time, his rhetoric creates the exigence to enact the desired response and support from the public.

The choice of Duterte to focus on exigences like the conflict in Mindanao, the demand for local government's autonomy and authority, the need to decentralize economic opportunities, and the fear of prolonging presidential terms in his public speeches reveal his sensitivity to how citizens (i.e., the audience), relate with these problems. But unlike previous administrations' exigences which focused on economic opportunities that benefit the population, his focus on peace in Mindanao incentivizes only one region and may alienate those beyond its borders. Thus, it was a challenge to include the whole population in his rhetoric. Unlike his rhetoric on the War on Drugs which pinpoints an enemy and persuades the people to vilify such a target to validate his violent policy, his federalism rhetoric seems to be less consistent, less assertive, less urgent, and less violent. The issues raised do not concern ordinary Filipinos, unlike the safety and security issues highlighted in the War on Drugs. His promises of peace in Mindanao and delegation of authority to local government leaders did not trickle down to the masses as they did not identify with such issues.

The Audiences and the Constraints

One third of the rhetorical situation is the audience to whom the exigences and the speeches are presented. According to Bitzer, preparing how to package a message should reflect the different audiences the rhetor is referring to—the physical audience, the audience which is yet to be formed, and the audience in the mind of the rhetor. More interestingly, Grant-Davie assumes that the rhetor invites the audience to accept new roles—who they should be and who they could be—in resolving the exigences presented (271).

For Duterte's speeches on federalism, his rhetoric was geared towards three general audiences: Filipino citizens, in general, people in Mindanao, in particular, and local government leaders. The most relevant audience would be the citizens. Albeit the original contexts of his public speeches were delivered before national and local politicians, the President made it a point to uplift the morale and participation of the citizens in his speeches.

In contrast to the belligerent and divisive rhetoric when talking about his enemies, Duterte's federalism rhetoric revolved around Filipino values of cooperation and nonviolence in suggesting a role for the public as audience. Aside from narrating that the federal proposal drafted by his appointed Constitutional Consultative Committee will "embody the ideals and aspirations of all the Filipino people" (Third State of the Nation Address), Duterte identified the draft proposal as the "Bayanihan Federalism." *Bayanihan*, from the terms *bayan* (nation or town) and *bayani* (hero), is a unique Filipino value of helping each other achieve the same goal. Retired Chief Justice Reynato Puno, the head of the Committee, noted that the goal of the proposal is "to hold together the various federated regions and established regions that are socially, economically, and politically viable and sustainable" (Presidential Communications Operations Office). Duterte chose the roles for Filipinos to unite despite their political and cultural differences and it is through this that they can be part of the solution. This is an example of Grant-Davie's proposition.

In his speeches mentioning federalism, Duterte's rhetoric mimicked a courting process that is waiting for a positive response, or in this case, the public's support for the proposal. One of the ways this courting transpired was the evident credence he gave to the people's "voice" and "participation." In his speech in front of local leaders in Camarines Sur (17 Oct. 2017), he praised the constant and strong participation of the citizens in fighting the drug crimes in their communities and requested that this support be extended once the Federalism proposal is in the legislative mill. Aside from expressing his trust in the citizens, Duterte recognized that the proposal could also become difficult to implement if grassroots and people's organizations were not included. In his 2016 State of the Nation Address, he noted, "At this stage, I also have directed the DILG to undertake nationwide information and campaign on Federalism in partnerships with various alliances and with LGU, civil society, grassroots and faith-based organizations" (First State of the Nation Address). Just like any other Philippine president, Duterte mentioned that the diversity of the religious, political, and cultural background of the constituents is not a challenge because, as his speeches claim:

> I am confident that the Filipino people will stand behind us as we introduce this new fundamental law that will not only strengthen our democratic institutions, but will also create an environment where every Filipino—regardless of social status, religion, or ideology–will have an equal opportunity to grow and create a future that he or she can proudly bequeath to the succeeding generations. (Third State of the Nation Address)

This unity amidst diversity was used to further the claim that our nation, despite its diverse cultural composition, could only work if citizens cooperate. This rhetoric is the perfect call for a diverse, often conflicting, nation to unite.

This call for unity also extends to another significant audience that the president always addresses—the Moro and the Lumad. The former are the Islamized communities in Mindanao while the latter are the island's Indigenous peoples, both of whom are already established communities even before the Spanish colonizers came on the island. As such, these two groups of people are addressed in two ways—(1) as the rightful owners of power and lands in Mindanao and (2) as victims of oppression. These ways of addressing the Moro and the Lumad enabled the president to call on support for the passage of the federal proposal to help alleviate the social injustices that they experience. These injustices are rooted in a structure of government that challenges their rights to practice their own culture and governance and a system of resource distribution that favors the national government and not them. The inclusive rhetoric of Duterte was a strategy assuring all citizens—from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao—of their involvement as (i.e., as an affected population) by the proposal. The audience was persuaded to support the federal shift so that they will enable a society that is just and peaceful for them and their fellow Filipinos living in conflicted areas. In Duterte's words, "And history then did not mind the struggles of both the Christians and here in Mindanao, the Moro people. It is time for us to understand that they have been victims of an injustice" (16 June 2018).

The focus of his exigence in communicating with the population in Mindanao translated to public support and awareness of Federalism for the people in Mindanao and the Muslim population. Public polls (Social Weather Stations, *First Quarter 2018 Social Weather Survey*) also show that awareness of the proposal was highest in Mindanao (37%) followed by Metro Manila (28%), Visayas (22%), and Luzon (20%). These results reflect how the region was successfully influenced and made aware by the government's effort and of course, by Duterte's persistence to include Mindanao in his speeches on federalism. Such an awareness also translated

to an agreement—the highest level of support for federalism came from Mindanao with a net score of +43 (59% agree, 16% disagree). While Catholics still hold the majority of the population, awareness of the proposal is highest among Muslim respondents at 51%, which translates to a very strong net agreement (+47).

While Mindanao's public opinion was promising for Duterte, the poll revealed how other citizens may not be as aware and supportive of the transition. As Jenny Edbauer (2006) argues, multi-audiences might pose a challenge to the rhetor because having diverse backgrounds make audience identification more difficult, and this was imminent in Duterte's rhetorical failure. He was able to persuade local leaders through the argument of autonomy and authority and banked on Mindanao's clamor for peace and justice for its citizens. His rhetoric on federalism was clear on its benefits to local leaders and people living in Mindanao, but it failed in including those living outside the island. As a "mediator of change" (Johnson 57), Duterte's rhetoric was too focused on these particular audiences and failed to recognize another significant audience—the 'would be' audience or those who will vote during the plebiscite. The general population was excluded from his rhetorical strategy.

Another important audience that was excluded were the legislators. Duterte missed the opportunity to directly converse with the representatives and senators in all of his State of the Nation Addresses (2016-2020). While he mentioned federalism, there was no clear pronouncement to direct the legislature to pass his federalism proposal. Leaving out two important audiences—the public and the legislature—affected the overall impact of his proposal.

Aside from leaving out essential audiences of the rhetorical situation, a significant constraint also awaited him. For Bitzer, constraints are persons, objects, and relations with the right amount of influence to constrain decisions and actions (8). This also involves the power struggle that may challenge the rhetor in influencing the audience (Grant-Davie 272). In the speeches of the president with federalism as the main persuasive point, there were several constraints that he himself recognized. First, public opinion was not supportive of any constitutional amendment for fear of extending term limits and abuse of power (Tomacruz). As stated earlier, this constraint was faced by Duterte:

> Nobody is interested here in this government me, especially, to go beyond my term. I do not intend to perpetuate myself. I will not shame my family and all for any ambition in this world. (17 Oct. 2017)

This constraint of the Federalism proposal was again used to reiterate his nonchalant attitude towards re-election or extension of term. This, of course, was an indication that the president recognized that a negative ethos on Federalism will not be of any help.

To respond to the constraints that challenge the integrity of his Federal proposal, Duterte painted the opposition, just like in any other policy he proposed (Navera), in a negative light. For instance, he managed to threaten the public that if the proposal to shift to federalism were to be blocked and if the opposition were to win: "I know that it would create a fissure and eventually, maybe a breakage" (17 Oct. 2017). He also managed to respond, albeit violently, to the opposition that always criticized him: "The opposition would say, 'Dictator!' Well, damn it, who wants to be a dictator? They also say I'm a thief. Son of a b****." ("Kaya sabihin niyo, 'diktador,' ay *leche*. Sino bang gustong mag-diktador? Eh opposition… Magnakaw daw ako. P****** i**") (17 Oct. 2017).

Duterte also framed the United Nations and all other international firms that were against his policies as enemies of the state. Just like in his Drug War rhetoric, he spoke of the international community as meddlers in domestic affairs:

> What's problematic is when the UN enters and meddles in our affairs. Then when they recognize a belligerent state now, then you have to treat it as an independent entity.
>
> (Ang mahirap niyan, kung papasok na naman 'yang mga UN tapos makialam. Then when they recognize a belligerent state now, then you have to treat it as an independent entity.) (17 Oct. 2017)

This identification of actors as constraints also allowed Duterte to persuade the public that there is an imminent threat to his administration and his policies, thus urging the audience to believe in him and his policies.

When the Rhetorical Situation Exceeds Presidential Rhetoric

> "To view rhetoric as a creation of reality or salience rather than a reflector of reality clearly increases the rhetor's moral responsibility"
>
> Richard E. Vatz, "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation"

In the first quarter of 2018, the Social Weather Stations (*First Quarter 2018 Social Weather Survey*) conducted a comprehensive public opinion poll on federalism. Despite the 50-million peso budget allocated to the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on Federalism and Constitutional Reform consisting of the DILG and the

Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO), poll results showed that only 25% of Filipino adults nationwide were aware of the government's proposal, and 75% only learned about this during the survey. In terms of support, 37% will support (14% strongly agree; 23% somewhat agree), 29% will not support (12% somewhat disagree; 17% strongly disagree), while 34% were undecided. This public poll suggests that (1) the awareness of the proposal is too low that the articulations of the president might not have had a big impact after all, and (2) while the support is higher in percentage than the disapproval, the plebiscite needs more than 50% support for a constitutional amendment to succeed. The undecided, should they continue to propose the amendments, is an area of opportunity and challenge.

Through his rhetoric of federalism, the popular and populist Duterte gave us a glimpse of his sensitivity to the rhetorical situation of his call for legislative and public support for a federal government. The original framework of Bitzer's rhetorical situation suggests that the situation—the interrelatedness of the exigence, constraint, and audience—defines the fitting response of the rhetor. Indeed, in Duterte's federal proposal, he considered the policy proposal's situation. He acknowledged that the issues like the war in Mindanao, the limitation of local leaders, and economic opportunities need to be framed strategically for people to identify with his proposal. There was also a clear indication of his awareness of the audience as he tried to address their needs and their hope for a better nation. His rhetoric also recognized the challenges that he faced—a long history of disapproval of any constitutional amendment, fear of extension of presidential term, and dissent from the opposition and other international agencies.

But as Vatz notes, the rhetor can also manipulate the rhetorical situation so that the audience can better identify with the rhetorical strategy. Duterte's conscious use of the promise of a lasting peace for Mindanao and the chaos that might ensue if the proposal for federalism were to be blocked is an indication that he picked the realities presented to the audience. His agency as the rhetor and his acknowledgment of the situatedness of his rhetoric reveal the complex relationship of rhetoric and rhetorical situation—that even if the fitting response is anchored on the rhetorical situation it wishes to change, there are situations that cannot be easily changed. In Duterte's case, the challenge was the long tradition of Filipinos' dissent against any constitutional amendment (Tomacruz). His popularity and credibility did not affect the perception of the audience of the necessity, beneficiality, and urgency of his campaign. This may be attributed to the inconsistent and vague articulation of the benefits of federalism for the general population.

As Bitzer asserts, the fitting response should highlight not just the personal gains of the government but also its communal relationships to the public (10). But Smith and Lybarger argue that while everyone can identify with the exigence, it is not that easy for the majority to relate with such exigence considering the diversity in cultural, economic, and educational backgrounds. Unlike the War on Drugs where safety and security can easily be related to the audience as exigences, a federal proposal and its exigences could not be perceived as imminent by the general public. The latter did not see their relationship with the problems that supposedly could be resolved by a federal proposal. Still, many Filipinos remain doubtful of the proposal to change the constitution, even when the suggestion comes from a highly regarded national leader like President Duterte.

Going further, as rhetoric is situated, the lack of the public's identification with Duterte's goals was complicated by several controversies that hampered the momentum of the transition to federalism. Issues such as the War on Drugs, the Marawi siege, the Anti-Terror Law, and the global pandemic were external situations that hindered the public from fully focusing on the federal proposal. These rhetorical situations exceed the president and his popularity. This paper argues that swaying public opinion not only requires a popular president but an encompassing and urgent need to change the Constitution, which has its own history and rhetorical situation. In Duterte's case, the rhetorical situation surrounding the constitutional change exceeded his presidential rhetoric.

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