| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Lived Experiences of Chiefs of Police in the Implementation of Executive Order #70 in Negros Occidental

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| **ABSTRACT**

The Philippines has been dubbed as a "haven for terrorists" and was identified as one of the countries with the most significant number of communist party organizations in the recent decade. This study explored the lived experiences of Chiefs of police in the implementation of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict in the Province of Negros Occidental. The informants of this study were seven (7) Chiefs of police throughout the Province of Negros Occidental who were subjected to individual in-depth interviews. Eight (8) emergent themes described the positive and negative experiences of the informants assigned in the implementation of NTF-ELCAC. For the positive experiences, four (4) themes were developed, namely: *Triumphs of Governance: Orchestrating Success in Project Realization, Unleashing the Power of "We": Embracing Community Involvement, Illuminating Minds: Cultivating People's Understanding through Effective Communication,* and *Planting Seeds of Appreciation.* For the negative experiences, four (4) themes were formulated, namely: *A Badge and a Prayer: Risking All to Uphold Law in Mountain Lands, Echoes in a Chamber of Neglect to Government's Broken Promises, Extending Olive Branches Across Battle Line,* and *Navigating the Minefield.* In addressing the challenges encountered by the informants in the implementation of NTF-ELCAC, four (4) themes were created, namely: *Collaborative Policing, Fortifying Security, Effective Community Partnerships,* and *Embracing the Storm with Resilience.* For the informant's aspirations to improve the implementation of NTF-ELCAC, four (4) themes were formulated, to wit: *Harmonious Police Force Collaboration, Sharpening the Spear: Building Resilient and Effective Officers, Like a Well-Oiled Machine: Ensuring Smooth Ammunition Supply and Combat Preparedness,* and *Undeterred Determination: A Chronicle of Unwavering Commitment to Serve and Protect.*

1. Introduction

Terrorism and armed conflicts are generally defined as using violence or threats of violence to individuals and property to intimidate a larger audience than the immediate victim to achieve a political or ideological motive (Mendoza et al., 2021). Various counterterrorism strategies have been developed globally by integrating military, political, and socio-economic interventions. This led to the adaptation of the whole-of-nation approach, which has supplemented the traditional military-centric strategies wherein it involves the combination of various government agencies' efforts and outreach to civil society aimed at containing these insurgent threats (Galula, 2006).

The Philippines has been in dispute with several communist party organizations in the past decade. The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) is the most prominent communist party in Philippine history. Although previous administrations conducted peace talks with the late Jose Maria Sison and representatives of the National Democratic Front (NDF), the armed conflicts continued, and the relationship between the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and the government was further strained during the

term of the former president, Rodrigo Roa Duterte. The government asserted that the CPP-NPA employed the peace negotiations as a strategic ploy to regroup, reinforce, and reorganize their forces. In contrast, the CPP accused the government of failing to authentically address the underlying causes of the insurgency, which prompted them to persist in their endeavors.

In 2017, the continuation of hostilities by the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the CPP, despite the ongoing ceasefire, led to the termination of peace talks, as declared by Duterte in his Proclamation 360 and the issuance of Proclamation 374, which officially designated the CPP-NPA as terrorist groups. A year later, the former president issued Executive Order #70 (EO 70) to establish the whole-of-nation approach to end local communist armed conflict in the Philippines. This order emphasizes the integration of government efforts and collaboration with various stakeholders to address the root causes of insurgency and foster sustainable peace.

Negros Occidental, a province known for its vast sugar plantations and agrarian unrest, serves as a significant base for NPA activities as the environment of inequality and neglect provides a conducive backdrop for the NPA to garner support by aligning its revolutionary goals with the peasants' struggles for social equity, land reform, and justice. The implementation of EO 70 has had profound impacts on the law enforcement agencies' role against the insurgency problems of the country and their coordination with the community and local government units.

The Chiefs of Police (COP) in Negros Occidental play an essential role in the localized implementation of Executive Order No. 70. Their lived experiences offer a distinctive viewpoint on the effectiveness and challenges of this approach. In this regard, there is a need to do more research on the lives of the chief of police in the individual area assigned in the implementation of the National Task Force to End Local Communism and Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) to understand their essential role in the comprehensive approach of the program.

The researcher, as a registered criminologist and a police officer, is interested in probing the lived experiences of the chiefs of police assigned in the implementation of the National Task Force to End Local Communism and Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), the significance of such experiences, challenges, and aspirations for them as leaders and supervisors are essential in understanding the anti-insurgency measures of the government. Moreover, gathering the data will guide in providing insights into how the implementation of Executive Order No. 70 addressed the underlying causes of insurgency through a holistic approach to promote peace and stability in the Philippines.

2. Literature Review

This study is anchored on the following theories, namely: Self- Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan (1985), Competence Motivation Theory (CMT) which was developed by Susan Harter (1978), and Organizational Support Theory which was proposed by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), is a comprehensive framework for understanding human motivation and behavior. The theory posits that individuals have three innate psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to the desire for self-determination and control over one's actions, competence involves the need to feel effective in one's interactions with the environment, and relatedness pertains to the desire to connect with others and experience a sense of belonging. SDT suggests that the satisfaction of these needs is crucial for fostering optimal human development and well-being.

Central to Self-Determination theory are the three basic psychological needs. Autonomy is the need to feel in control of one's actions and decisions. Competence involves the need to feel effective and capable in various activities. Relatedness pertains to the need for social connections and positive relationships with others. According to the Self-Determination theory, individuals actively seek opportunities to satisfy these needs in their daily lives. When these needs are met, individuals are more likely to experience greater motivation, engagement, and overall well-being (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Deci and Ryan (1985) stressed that self-determination theory distinguishes between different types of motivation based on the degree of self-determination involved. Intrinsic motivation occurs when individuals engage in an activity for its inherent enjoyment or satisfaction. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, involves engaging in an activity for external rewards or to avoid punishment. Self-determination theory introduces the concept of motivation, where individuals lack motivation and fail to see the value or relevance of an activity. The theory suggests that intrinsic motivation is associated with more positive outcomes and well-being compared to extrinsic motivation.

Self-determination theory has been widely applied across various domains, including education, work, sports, and healthcare. In educational settings, for instance, providing students with opportunities for autonomy, fostering a sense of competence, and

encouraging positive relationships can enhance intrinsic motivation and learning outcomes. In the workplace, promoting autonomy-supportive leadership and creating environments that fulfill basic psychological needs can improve employee motivation, job satisfaction, and performance. Understanding and applying self-determination theory can have profound implications for designing interventions that support individuals' psychological well-being and promote optimal functioning in diverse contexts (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

While self-determination theory has received widespread acclaim, it is not without criticism. Some argue that the theory's emphasis on autonomy may not be universally applicable across cultures. Critics also contend that the theory does not sufficiently address the impact of external factors, such as social and economic structures, on motivation. However, this theory continues to evolve, with researchers exploring its cross-cultural applicability and refining its concepts. The ongoing development and application of self-determination theory contribute to our understanding of human motivation and offer valuable insights for creating environments that nurture individuals' well-being and autonomy.

Meanwhile, the Competence Motivation Theory (CMT), which was developed by Harter (1978), is a psychological framework that focuses on the inherent human drive to seek competence and mastery in various activities. The theory posits that individuals are motivated to develop and demonstrate competence across different domains, such as academics, sports, and social interactions. Harter emphasizes that competence motivation is a fundamental and universal aspect of human behavior, influencing individuals from childhood through adulthood.

Competence Motivation Theory (CMT) identifies several key components that contribute to competence motivation. These include the desire for mastery, the pursuit of challenges, and the importance of receiving feedback on one's performance. According to Harter, individuals are naturally inclined to seek opportunities that allow them to feel competent and effective. The theory suggests that positive experiences of competence reinforcement, where individuals perceive themselves as successful and capable, enhance motivation and contribute to the development of a positive self-concept (Harter, 1978).

One notable aspect of Competence Motivation Theory (CMT) is its developmental perspective. Harter emphasizes that competence motivation evolves throughout an individual's life. In childhood, competence motivation may manifest in the pursuit of new skills and challenges. As individuals grow older, the focus may shift to competence in social interactions, academics, or work-related activities. The theory suggests that the satisfaction of competence needs at each developmental stage contributes to the individual's overall psychological well-being (Harter, 1978).

Harter (1978) explained that Competence Motivation theory has significant implications for education. Harter argues that educational environments should be designed to provide students with opportunities to experience success, engage in challenging tasks, and receive constructive feedback. When students perceive themselves as competent learners, they are more likely to be motivated, participate actively in the learning process, and develop a positive attitude toward education. The theory underscores the importance of creating a supportive and encouraging educational context that nurtures students' competence and motivation.

While Competence Motivation theory has been influential in understanding the drive for competence, it is not without criticisms. Some argue that the theory could benefit from more explicit integration with other motivational theories to provide a more comprehensive understanding of human motivation. Additionally, research continues to explore the cultural and contextual factors that may influence competence motivation across diverse populations. As scholars further investigate and refine the theory, it remains a valuable framework for understanding how individuals are intrinsically motivated to seek competence and mastery in various aspects of their lives.

On the other hand, the Organizational Support Theory (OST), developed by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), focuses on the influence of perceived organizational support (POS) on employees' attitudes, behaviors, and performance within the workplace. This theory posits that when employees perceive that their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being, it leads to positive outcomes such as increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and motivation. The central idea is that perceived organizational support acts as a form of social exchange between employees and their organizations.

At the core of Organizational Support theory is the concept of Perceived Organizational Support (POS). POS refers to employees' beliefs regarding the extent to which their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. This perceived support can be derived from various organizational practices, including fair treatment, recognition of achievements, opportunities for professional development, and supportive interpersonal relationships within the workplace. Employees who feel supported are more likely to reciprocate by exhibiting positive attitudes and behaviors that contribute to the organization's success (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Rhoades & Eisenberger (2002), in their Organizational Support theory, proposed that Perceived Organizational Support (POS) has a significant impact on various employee outcomes. Employees who perceive high levels of support are more likely to experience increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and trust in their organization. Moreover, they are likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors, such as going beyond their formal job requirements to help colleagues and contribute to the organization's success. Research has also shown a positive relationship between POS and employee performance, as individuals feel motivated to reciprocate the support they receive.

The theory identifies factors that contribute to employees' perceptions of organizational support. Fairness in organizational procedures, supportive supervision, and opportunities for skill development are key antecedents. When employees believe that they are treated fairly, have access to resources, and receive feedback that helps them grow professionally, their perception of organizational support is likely to be higher. Effective communication from leadership and the existence of a positive organizational culture also plays crucial roles in shaping employees' perceptions of support. Organizational Support theory has practical implications for organizational leaders and managers. To foster positive outcomes, organizations should prioritize fair treatment, open communication, and opportunities for employee growth. Recognizing and rewarding employees for their contributions can enhance perceived organizational support. However, critics argue that the theory could benefit from further exploration of contextual factors that may influence the impact of perceived support, such as cultural variations and industry-specific characteristics. Despite these criticisms, Organizational Support theory remains a valuable framework for understanding the dynamic relationship between organizational support and employee attitudes and behaviors (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Organizational Support theory draws heavily from the concept of social exchange, emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between employees and their organizations. In a social exchange framework, employees perceive the support they receive as a form of investment by the organization. In return, employees are more likely to invest their effort, commitment, and positive behaviors back into the organization. This mutual exchange contributes to the development of a positive organizational climate and fosters a sense of loyalty and dedication among employees. Trust and organizational commitment are key outcomes predicted by Organizational Support theory. When employees feel that the organization genuinely values their contributions and cares about their well-being, a foundation of trust is established. This trust, in turn, enhances employees' commitment to the organization. High levels of organizational commitment are associated with lower turnover intentions and increased willingness to go above and beyond their formal job requirements (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) also shed light on Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs), which are voluntary actions by employees that contribute to the overall well-being of the organization. Employees who perceive high levels of support are more likely to engage in OCBs, such as helping colleagues, participating in organizational initiatives, and being proactive in problem-solving. This willingness to go beyond the minimum job requirements benefits both the individual and the organization.

The theory emphasizes the antecedents that shape employees' perceptions of support. Fairness in organizational procedures, including equitable distribution of rewards and opportunities, is a critical factor. Supervisors and leaders who provide support, recognition, and constructive feedback also contribute significantly. Additionally, the organizational culture, communication practices, and industry-specific characteristics influence how employees interpret and respond to organizational support. Contextual factors, such as cultural variations, may impact the effectiveness of perceived support, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding of these dynamics (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

From a practical standpoint, Organizational Support theory suggests that organizations can enhance employee well-being and performance by implementing practices that foster perceived organizational support. This may include transparent communication, fair performance appraisals, opportunities for professional development, and recognition programs. By attending to these aspects, organizations can create an environment that not only attracts and retains talent but also promotes a positive organizational culture where employees are motivated to contribute actively to the organization's success. The theory provides a roadmap for organizational leaders seeking to strengthen the bond between employees and the organization, recognizing the mutual benefits of a supportive workplace.

The legal framework of Executive Order No. 70 has its roots in the state principles and policies of the State as embodied in Article II, Section 4 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution; it states that the government's primary responsibility is to serve and protect its citizens. The constitution further vested the government with the power to call upon its citizens to contribute to national defense and security if the situation necessitates it. EO 70 operationalized this constitutional mandate through its whole-of-nation approach to countering insurgency by engaging multiple government agencies, local government units (LGUs), civil society organizations, and the private sector.

However, this law was not the first law enacted by the government to protect its people from the terroristic acts of these armed groups. Republic Act 9372, also known as the Human Security Act of 2007, was enacted in the Philippines as a response to the growing threats of terrorism. The law aimed to provide the government with the necessary tools to combat terrorism effectively while safeguarding the rights and liberties of its citizens. Meanwhile, Republic Act 11479 (2020), commonly referred to as the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, was enacted to address the shortcomings of RA 9372 and align the country's anti-terrorism measures with international standards. RA 11479 sought to strengthen the government's capability to prevent and counteract terrorism while incorporating safeguards to protect individual rights. The law expanded the definition of terrorism, introduced more severe penalties for those involved in terrorist activities, and established the Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC) to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach to counterterrorism efforts.

Despite these measures, the communist insurgency endured for decades. Fonbuena (2017) stated in her column that, despite the agreement to establish a ceasefire, the armed forces continue to incur casualties as they engage in combat with communist insurgents, rendering on-and-off peace talks pointless. In November 2017, the former president issued Proclamation 360 formally ending the talks, and Proclamation 374 declaring the CPP and NPA as "terrorist organizations" as the confrontation between the military and the NPA killed a baby in the process. The following year, in 2018, former President Rodrigo Roa Duterte issued Executive Order No. 70 to terminate the 50-year campaign of deception, falsehoods, and atrocities perpetrated by communist terrorists against Filipinos.

The Executive Order synchronized the government's instruments of power with the capacities of private sector partners to create a national approach to ending local communism, strengthening the country's strategy for ending a long-running communist insurgency. The National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) was created to spearhead the program headed by the President of the Philippines with National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr. as vice-chair during his term.

The task force adopted the National Peace Framework that contains plans and programs for inclusive and sustainable peace, which addresses the root causes of insurgencies and conflicts. This effort also allows for localized peace talks with communist groups. The framework will include a mechanism for localized peace engagements or negotiations and interventions that are nationally orchestrated, directed, and supervised while being locally implemented. In this way, the government and the people will collaborate towards peace (Executive Order No. 70, 2018).

Furthermore, this program comprises twelve (12) operational clusters of relevant government agencies assigned specific roles within the framework. The NTF-ELCAC's clusters are 1) Local Government Empowerment; 2) Basic Services; 3) Localized Peace Engagement; 4) E-CLIP and Amnesty Program; 5) Sectoral Unification, Capacity Building Empowerment and Mobilization; 6) International Engagement; 7) Legal Cooperation; 8) Strategic Communication; 9) Poverty Reduction, Livelihood and Empowerment; 10) Peace, Law Enforcement and Development Support; 11) Infrastructure, Resource Management and Employment; and 12) Situational Awareness and Knowledge Management. These clusters were predominantly composed of civilian participation in contrast to the previous militaristic approach to insurgency, which was designed to comprehensively address insurgencies such as local communism and armed conflict attacks in the region.

The government has implemented the "whole-of-nation" strategy of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to combat terrorism and extremism. The strategy acknowledges that military action alone is unsustainable. Previously, insurgency problems were solely tackled by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and other concerned law enforcement agencies. However, with this modern approach, the government will prioritize and harmonize the provision of essential services and social development programs in regions that are either affected by or vulnerable to conflict. A National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) has been established to supervise the provision of these services with the engagement and cooperation of local chief executives.

 The New People's Army (NPA), known as the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), is one of the most prominent insurgent groups in the country. The NPA persisted in numbers as it exploited the peasantry's role in providing armies with the revolutionary's main power. The insurgency, which was sustained by ideological differences and socio-economic grievances, persevered as the rebels frequently cited issues such as land reform, social inequality, and perceived government neglect as the reasons for their resistance.

Known for its agrarian unrest, Negros Occidental therefore serves as an ideal staging ground for the CPP's revolution. The province of Negros Occidental, located in Western Visayas, is renowned for being the bastion of sugar plantations. Even after several decades of a formal government-sponsored agrarian reform program designed to address the issue of farmer landlessness, the province's sugar industry wealth is still linked to wealthy families, which has resulted in ongoing mistreatment and abuse of farm

laborers during times of crisis. Furthermore, by tying the peasants' problems to the NPA's desired goals of social equity, land reform, and justice, this situation creates a favorable environment for the peasants to rebel against the government (Acled, 2023).

With the region's high frequency of armed conflicts, chiefs of police play a critical role in implementing the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) and counter-insurgency efforts in Negros Occidental. They supervise local law enforcement agencies, facilitate operations, and collaborate with government, military, and community organizations. These include management and coordination of intelligence and analysis, community relations, peace and order, security, training and development, program and project implementation and support for socio-economic development. They ensure that the national strategies are appropriate for their area of responsibility and they are supposed to oversee the effectiveness of the strategies. They also work in conjunction with other agencies to ensure the security of development initiatives and to aid in the provision of services to conflict-affected regions. In general, chiefs of police in Negros are critical to addressing and resolving local insurgent issues.

In his book, Rapoport (2022) narrated the history of terrorism. He stated that the creation of Narodnaya Volya in 1878 was the catalyst for the evolution of modern terrorism from propaganda of ideas to propaganda by deed. Unlike some other later terrorist groups, Narodnaya Volya carried out planned and purposeful acts of terrorism, mainly against leading Russian officials, not to create panic among the general populace. Rapoport (2022) attributes Narodnaya Volya as the originator of the anarchist wave, the first of four waves of modern terrorism. The following wave, the post-colonial or anti-colonial wave that started in the 1920s, aimed at removing the colonial dictatorships that had been in place for decades. The New Left that appeared in the mid-twentieth century was more factional towards the communist ideology. The religious wave, which was primarily Islamist, highly influenced the terrorism of contemporary times. He asserted that, despite the significant disparities between their ideologies, there is frequently a single unifying theme that underpins them. More particularly, terrorist groups often exploit the perceived resentment and injustice, which autocrats and minority regimes amplify to gain people's support and push for secession from the current political authority.

Stern (2004) examined the characteristics and causes of religious terrorism by analyzing the dynamics and motivations of the terrorists. The book also shows that religious terrorists often employ religious discourse to garner support and justify their actions using religious texts and ideologies. Religious extremist groups require charismatic leaders since they often twist religious teachings to suit their political and ideological agendas. Religious terrorism is rooted in socio-economic and political factors such as poverty, political repression, and social inequality. Moreover, psychological and social factors also played a crucial role in convincing people to become part of terrorist groups, such as the search for identity and purpose, the need to belong and isolation. Therefore, she has suggested that to combat terrorism, it is necessary to tackle the root causes of terrorism, including social, economic, and political factors, to dispute the radical messages, and to provide the potential terrorists with a positive vision of their lives.

In contrast, Parlade Jr. (2015) provided an extensive background on the insurgency in the Philippines, particularly that led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA). Factors that contributed to the rise of insurgency can be traced back from the Hukbalahap movement in the Second World War up to the formation of the CPP-NPA in 1969. Past injustices like land grabbing and poverty have fostered the ideas of the emerging rebels. He pointed out that these conditions are being used by the CPP to establish a socialist revolution in the Philippines and mobilize the masses in rural areas by promising changes and justice. He also added that they have tended to the recruitment of youth and deprived groups with such thoughts and concepts. The book further discussed the need for the government's counterinsurgency strategies to be broadened not only in the form of military offensives but also in socio-economic interventions that would target the sources of the rebellion to effectively address the problem (Parlade Jr., 2015).

Lewis (2021) discussed the counterterrorism approach that focuses on the involvement of non-state actors, including private companies, international organizations, and civil society groups. He highlighted that the state actors, including the military forms and the law enforcement authorities, cannot effectively undertake counterterrorism efforts on their own. He highlighted the importance of considering the non-state actors in the fight against the tactics of recruitment and de-radicalization of the terror groups, which targeted at winning the hearts and minds of the people.

Sherman (2017) evaluated the counterterrorism measures of the Philippines. This chapter discussed the ongoing shift between population-based and enemy-based strategies in combating the threats of insurgency and terrorism in the country. Population-based strategies are aimed at eradicating the causes of terrorism, providing socio-economic justice, and implementing measures to win over the hearts and minds of the people. On the other hand, enemy-based strategies focused on the destruction of the terrorist threats through military and police operations aiming at eliminating the terrorist organizations and their leaders. The Philippines' counterterrorism measures evolved as they rightly combined these two approaches to adopt a strategy that is critical in the long run when facing different kinds of armed threats.

Banlaoi (2014) highlighted the need for knowledge on how to prevent violent incidents through peace negotiations and early warning systems in the Philippines. The book also describes the historical and present-day causes of conflict, such as colonialism, ethnicity, poverty, and politics, that fueled the ideologies of the local armed conflicts. In his book, he suggested the use of conflict mapping to determine conflict hotspots in order to determine the cause of triggers as well as patterns of violence. He also stressed the importance of early warning systems as indicators of potential violence, including political and social tensions.

In the article published by the United Nations (2023), the Philippine Ambassador Peñaranda emphasized that the Philippines has effective mechanisms and approaches to counter the threats of international terrorism in the framework of global peace and security. He elaborated on the measures that had been taken to address and prevent terrorism and radicalization, with the 'Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020' as a key measure in the whole-of-the-nation approach to addressing and combating international terrorism. Furthermore, the overall strategy against insurgency and local armed conflicts is being handled and coordinated by the National Task Force to End Local Communism and Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC).

Qureshi (2020) conducted a related study that delved into the Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) in the community. The study aimed to evaluate and critique the epistemological understandings of the war on terror in countries with active counter-terrorism programs. The research mainly focused on the experiences of those directly affected by the policies of this worldwide phenomenon. By rethinking the war on terror as an experience of war, we can broaden our understanding of its temporal and spatial boundaries and how it is experienced. This study provides a comprehensive understanding of war and expands our knowledge of its boundaries. It shows that those affected by the policies of the war on terror can claim to have undergone an experience of war, even when that experience takes place outside of the war zone. The study calls on the CTS community to center the lived experiences of those affected by the war on terror in their work and decision-making when engaging with policy and policymakers. This call represents an ethical re-centering of CTS scholars to the violence of the war on terror by reminding us of how harm can occur (Qureshi, 2020).

In another related study, David (2023) examined the development of the Hungarian police anti-terror units and the history and growth of the country's anti-terror capability from 1987 to 2010. It emphasized the historical significance, the cultural heritage, and the tactical methodology behind the evolution of the Hungarian stance on terrorism and anti-terrorism from its most acute aspect, the boots on the ground and the operators behind the orders, by using interviews and memories of former unit members, contemporary manuals and media sources, and presenting the legal background (David, 2023).

Additionally, another study focused on the efforts of the country in fighting domestic terrorism and adopting policies and strategies to counter radicalism and terrorism. The effectiveness of the policies, strategies, and tactics in combating terrorist ideology, reducing the number of terrorist activists and sympathizers, as well as preventing terrorist acts in the Kingdom. It was concluded that although the government's roles and efforts in counter-terrorism programs are fruitful and advantageous, further strategic actions are necessary (Qurtuby & Aldamer, 2021).

In his study, Cherney (2021) focused on police engagement in Muslim communities to prevent terrorism. To understand the practice of community engagement and the tactical and strategic considerations needed when police engage Muslim communities, this paper presents the findings from in-depth interviews with members of the Australian Federal Police Community Liaison Team (CLT). The interview data show the various aspects of trust that CLT members believe are necessary for effective engagement, with evidence of integrity being key. With intelligence sharing considered a result rather than a purpose of effective outreach, data show how Australian Federal Police liaison officers balance gathering intelligence and community interaction. The interview findings suggest that types of outreaches have certain inherent limits because of the variables surrounding counter-terrorism operations. Strategies to control the community impact of counter-terrorism arrests are investigated. The ambiguities and dangers of reaching out to some difficult-to-reach groups, including Muslim youth, are highlighted. A key result of engagement activities is the desire of Muslims to voluntarily approach CLT members, evidenced by examples of outputs and outcomes. The importance of community engagement in counterterrorism is underlined.

In a study, it was found that immigrant community residents and law enforcement agencies have questioned the use of community-oriented policing as a counter-terrorism measure. The residents fear that law enforcement may target them on immigration issues. In contrast, law enforcement agencies believe that residents of immigrant communities can provide critical information on counter-terrorism activities but are reluctant to share information due to the fear of it being used against them during immigration proceedings. This can result in a lack of trust between the stakeholders, hindering domestic counter-terrorism efforts and impacting the business environment (Goldberg & Christopher, 2019).

In conclusion, the theories and related literature mentioned above offer a comprehensive guide for the researcher to organize the data gathered, as these findings serve as a basis for developing a tangible outcome of the study, particularly regarding experiences,

challenges, and aspirations of the chiefs of police in their participation in the implementation of the National Task Force to End Local Communism and Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC).

3. Methodology

For this research, the researcher designed the interview guide in such a way that the researcher could be able to identify the lived experiences of the informants. The first part of the questionnaire is composed of biographical and preliminary questions for the researcher to know better the informant. This part also aims to set a friendly atmosphere between the researcher and the informant. The next segment of the questionnaire was the experiences of the informants assigned in the implementation of the National Task Force to End Local Communism and Armed Conflict in the Province of Negros Occidental. The third part shows how the informants address the challenges encountered in the implementation of NTF-ELCAC. The last part includes the aspirations of the informant to improve the implementation, specifically the National Task Force to End Local Communism and Armed Conflict.

The researcher sent a transmittal letter to the chiefs of police and awaited the latter's approval. The transmittal letter includes a short introduction of the researcher's background and the nature and title of the study. It also provided the informants of the study, the research design, the significance of the study, and the request to conduct individual in-depth interviews with ten seven (7) chiefs of police who served as informants of the research. The researcher assured that the data and information gathered would be treated with utmost confidentiality and not used outside this study. The transmittal letter includes the interview guide, the research instrument, and the informed consent form. Once approved, the researcher waited for the ethics committee's approval.

After receiving the approval form, the researcher asked for an individual in-depth interview with the informants. When the schedule was finalized, the researcher conducted first a courtesy call to the chiefs of police. Subsequently, the researcher met the informants in a place where they felt safe and comfortable. Then, the researcher discussed and explained to each informant the study's objective, the procedure through which the interview will run, the privacy of the proceedings, and the informants' identity and rights. When the informants agreed to be interviewed, the researcher requested each informant to affix their signature to the informed consent form. The signed informed consent proved that the informants agreed to be interviewed.

The data collection method utilized in this research was the individual in-depth interview. This process involved the generation of an exact amount of data. The researcher ensured that it would keep a good record of what was said and done during the interview as well as in the focused group discussions. The researcher used an audio recorder, and the recordings were transcribed verbatim before the data were analyzed.

The data gathered during the individual in-depth interview were subjected to thematic analysis. The primary basis for the data analysis is the information given by the informants. The information or data gathered were coded for easy identification and management by the researcher. The responses were put into categories and themes. These cluster themes were created from the formulated meanings extracted from significant statements. Lastly, from the cluster themes, the researcher created emergent themes that answered the sub-problems.

The informants of this study were (7) chiefs of police from the municipalities of Calatrava and Binalbagan and the cities of Sagay, Escalante, San Carlos, Himamaylan, and Kabankalan. Each locality has a police officer with an assigned chief of police. Only the chief of police in localities with high incidents were invited as informants of the study. The chiefs of police from the seven localities were invited as research informants.

The seven (7) chiefs of police were assigned to implement the duties and functions of NTF-ELCAC for at least one year. Under this qualitative research, the seven (7) informants consented to undergo individual in-depth interviews.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Experiences of the Informants Assigned in the Implementation of NTF-ELCAC

4.1.1 Positive Experiences

4.1.1.1 Triumphs of Governance: Orchestrating Success in Project Realization.

One of the positive experiences of the participants noted significant infrastructure improvements, such as concrete roads, which facilitated farmers' access to markets. The EO #70 programs successfully extended essential services to rural communities, providing them with urban-like opportunities. However, the implementation presents challenges, as some communities openly embrace the program and actively participate, while leftist sympathizers influence others.

(As Chief of Police of San Carlos CPS, assigned to the implementation of the National Task Force to End Local Communism and Armed Conflict in the Province of Negros Occidental, San Carlos City is a neighboring city of Guihulngan City Negros Oriental wherein known as CTG's stronghold area. The presence of CTG in our AOR is possible; my experience is that I saw some improvements project of the government in the far-flung areas, wherein the roads were already concrete, makes easy for the farmers to deliver their

products to the market, which is part of the program of ELCAC. I could dialogue with the community living in rural areas wherein most basic services were rarely implemented. Because of the program EO#70, the community living in secluded places enjoyed the same opportunities as those living in urban areas). (Participant 1)

(Overall experiences as Chief of Police in the implementation of the National Task Force to End Local Communism and Armed Conflict in the Province of Negros Occidental, I can say that it is very challenging because some communities welcome us with open arms; they are willing to listen and participate in the implementation. On the other hand, some areas do not welcome us. They replied that they were busy and had no time to listen because they wanted to go to work for their needs. Some of them are already sympathizers of the left group, and they are being influenced for that reason). (Participant 5)

(I have personally experienced close contact with former rebels as the COP of Himamaylan CCPS and Himamaylan City LGU, Philippine Army, spearheaded the programs and activities to assist the latter during their surrender. I also experienced supervision of thorough follow-up investigations for filing cases against the CTGs during armed encounters. I also experienced attending conferences with other agencies concerned with the development of programs and other actions in line with the implementation of EO #70. I have personally experienced facilitating the surrender of former rebels as well as the arrest of CTG members with pending warrants of arrest and all others). (Participant 7)

This emergent theme can be explained by using Institutional Theory, especially neo-institutionalism. This theory states that organizations imitate the norms and procedures set in society to obtain acceptance (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In the case of NTF-ELCAC, proper governance and leadership may have followed best practices in conflict management and public administration to deliver their success. The task force may have integrated best practices from other successful global conflict resolution initiatives (mimetic isomorphism), followed professional standards (normative isomorphism), and met regulatory requirements (coercive isomorphism) to effectively manage and accomplish projects that seek to address local communist armed conflict.

Similarly, in another study, Lim (2018) focuses on the cooperation between the state and non-state actors in the conflict affected areas of the Philippines in order to stress the role of community, government and NGO in the process of building peace. The study revealed that multi-stakeholder participation and compliance with institutional rules and regulations were important factors that led to positive results in infrastructure and basic services, which were vital for improving the quality of life in rural areas and gaining the support of the community, thus promoting sustainable peace and development.

4.1.1.2 Unleashing the Power of "We": Embracing Community Involvement.
Chiefs of police noted that there was an initial hesitation and distrust, but some communities are gradually becoming more willing to listen and participate in the program. However, other areas remain unwelcoming, often citing their need to work for their daily living as a reason for not engaging. These communities are sometimes known sympathizers of leftist groups, influenced or indoctrinated accordingly.

(Despite the initial hesitation and distrust, the same people are now gradually willing to listen and participate in the implementation. On the other hand, some areas are still adamant and unwelcoming. They often reply that they are too busy and have no time to listen because they need to go to work to earn their daily living. Some of them are already known sympathizers of the leftist group and are being influenced or indoctrinated for that reason). (Participant 3)

(I have personally experienced close contact with former rebels as the COP of Himamaylan CCPS and Himamaylan City LGU, Philippine Army, spearheaded the programs and activities to assist the latter during their surrender. I also experienced supervision of thorough follow-up investigations for filing cases against the CTGs during armed encounters. I also experienced attending conferences with other agencies concerned with the development of programs and other actions in line with the implementation of EO #70. I have personally experienced facilitating the surrender of former rebels as well as the arrest of CTG members with pending warrants of arrest and all others). (Participant 6)

The emergent theme can be easily explained by the Participatory Development theory, as proposed with the belief that people in the community should be involved in the planning, decisions and implementations for optimum utilization of knowledge, skills and resources in the local environment (Chambers, 1983). The NTF-ELCAC involves local communities as principals to enable them to help in the decision-making process and to direct their understanding and knowledge of conflict resolution and development. This shifts the power balance in the direction of a collective 'we', which defines the relationship between the government departments and the locals.

In her study, Atienza (2006) analyzed how participation in local governance can result in better and more inclusive development. The paper also stressed the role of community participation in governance to ensure that any development agenda aligned with

the needs and situation of the communities that would be affected. The study lends credence to the notion that if governance is to be inclusive, then both development must be participative, people empowered, and information shared, and then the unity and strength of a community can be harnessed.

4.1.1.3 Illuminating Minds: Cultivating People's Understanding through Effective Communication.

The chiefs of police expressed that community engagement was at first reluctant. Still, through continuous information dissemination, facts, rights, and comparing tactics with leftist groups, the people were empowered to fight against indoctrination. One of the chiefs of police narrated the coordination with the local government units and other organizations, eradicating local communism and armed struggle.

(At first, they were not interested, but as I went along explaining, we were able to convince them to participate. Information dissemination, presenting facts and truth of specific events, emphasizing their right, and introducing them the tactics in comparison with the manipulation of the leftist group empowered the people to deflect to be guidable with their grasp of indoctrination). (Participant 5)

(The rewarding experience for me as COP assigned in the implementation of the National Task Force to End Local Communism and Armed Conflict in the Province of Negros Occidental was that I was able to help educate people about the importance of EO# 70. I was able to relay the importance of the program to the people, especially those living in the far-flung barangays. From the start, they were not interested, but as I explained, we convinced them to participate). (Participant 6)

(The most rewarding experience I have encountered was when Himamaylan CCPS, together with the Himamaylan City LGU and other agencies concerned, spearheaded the ceremony for the Surrender of 26 CTG Members and had the opportunity to hear the testimonies of the latter on how they ended up the communist-terrorist group and why they decided to surrender). (Participant 7)

The Communication Theory of Participatory Development was relevant to the emergent theme, as it highlighted the importance of communication in the participation, understanding, and collaboration of development. This theory stated that the use of communication was crucial in the process of targeting the stakeholders, building the trust, and making sure that people understood the development projects and supported them (Servaes, 1999). Through the use of open dialogue, NTF-ELCAC sought to address the misinformation, gain the public's confidence, and establish a common ground on the government's approach to the insurgency. This approach made sure that the right information gets to the public and concerns raised were met, thus closing the comprehension gap for the benefit of the community against the counterinsurgency measures of the NTF-ELCAC.

Quebral (2006) conducted a study to determine the impact of communication in increasing participation and improving the understanding on development interventions within the context of the Philippines. It reveals how communication can help to overcome knowledge gaps, remove misconceptions, and increase trust among the stakeholders. By providing correct information, sharing experience, and answering questions, it can contribute to the formation of public awareness among the local communities, government organizations, and society.

4.1.1.4 Planting Seeds of Appreciation.

The study also shows positive experiences of chiefs of police as they effectively served a warrant on a CTG member with the cooperation of the local community and felt happy to see children and other members of the community free from CTG and its threats.

(The most rewarding experience I have encountered as COP assigned in the Implementation of the National Task Force to End Local Communism and Armed Conflict in the Province of Negros Occidental is when we served a warrant of arrest on one of the CTGs who happened to be seen in our AOR. The community where we implemented the program assists us in doing our task. Because of the program, CTGs seen before rooming in the area collecting for revolutionary taxes were seldom. It is because of the full cooperation of the community to report to the PNP or AFP if they were present in the area). (Participant 1)

(The most rewarding experience that I encountered was when people I saw people, most especially children, who were free from any influence of the Communist Terrorist Group. They can now live an everyday life away from any danger. People appreciate our sacrifices by saying thank you for what we did to them. I feel proud of contributing something to the community's common good). (Participant 2)

(Even though we risked our safety and suffered difficulties together, we overcame those challenges. I am happy and proud that my troops complied with our mandate to implement EO#70). (Participant 3)

The emergent theme can be analyzed through the lens of the Appreciative Inquiry theory, which is a model that looks for positive changes within a company or society and builds on those (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Through the conduct of community mobilization, public information and education, and activities that focus on the accomplishments and struggles of the security forces and peacekeepers, NTF-ELCAC nurtures a culture of appreciation. It not only improves the relationship between the community and those who are given the responsibility of protecting them but also provides support for the goals of peace and security. Thus, NTF-ELCAC, through the concept of Appreciative Inquiry theory, makes sure that these people will be appreciated for what they can contribute to society.

According to the study conducted by Martin & Davis (2015), it was established that public recognition and appreciation can, to a great extent, boost the motivation and performance of police officers. Thus, they discovered that the recognition of the role and the efforts made by security personnel not only enhances their morale but also their dedication to the work they are doing and also enhances their relationship with the public. The research findings indicated that participating in community policing, public education and outreach, and activities that showcased security organizations could create appreciation and comprehension among the public. This, in turn, enhanced the relationship between the community and the personnel in security and built a strong foundation for the support of continued peace and security measures.

4.1.2 Negative Experiences
4.1.2.1 A Badge and a Prayer: Risking All to Uphold Law in Mountain Lands.
A major negative experience of chiefs of police mostly revolves around the provision of services in areas with a high concentration of the CTG. Challenging geography and people's hostility posed challenges to convene and involve the residents. Chiefs of police noted difficulties in reaching out to communities to attend the emerging issues and needs that had not been met before.

(Implementing EO#70 was challenging, and sometimes, we encountered some difficulties with my troops. It was challenging because we went to far-flung areas, most especially areas wherein most presence of the Communist Terrorist Group was cited—the terrain we conquered to reach the area where programs of EO#70 could be implemented. We also encounter difficulties because some of the communities in the area are not welcome. We encounter difficulties asking for their time to gather and listen to the program. However, despite challenges and difficulties, I am happy that we implemented the program with positive results). (Participant 2)

(In my overall experience in implementing EO#70, I engaged people in the community who needed help from the government. Because of this program, I could dialogue with them about the problems they had encountered for a long time. I have experienced listening to them about government programs that could not provide them with fundamental services. It was challenging and risk-taking on my part and my troops who were with me in implementing the program. It was a heartwarming experience because I appreciated the program's positive result on the life of the community, we engaged in). (Participant 3)

The theory relevant to the emergent theme is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. This psychological theory, postulated by Maslow (1943), argues that human needs are organized in a hierarchy of needs, from the most basic physiological needs to the highest level of need, which is the need to achieve personal growth. As proposed by Maslow in the Hierarchy of Needs (1943), people are driven by needs that must be met in a sequential order, starting with the most basic physiological needs, followed by safety needs, social needs, ego needs, and finally, the need to achieve one's full potential. It outlines the different categories of needs that both law enforcement officers and the public have. Such officers risk their lives to enforce the law in various regions with the aim of protecting the lives and property of the people, thus meeting their basic and security needs while at the same time pursuing recognition and social status in their society. Their motivation also stems from their higher-order needs, which give them the opportunity to be heroic and selfless in their endeavors. Moreover, institutional and community support systems that enable these individuals to carry out their duties illustrate the role of meeting social and esteem needs since these officers draw their strength and encouragement from the community and the appreciation of their work.

Santos and Reyes (2017) focused on the specific difficulties that police officers experience when working in the field and in the mountains and explored how they dealt with the physical and psychological aspects of their work. In their study, Santos and Reyes (2017) noted that police officers in remote areas worked under severe weather and conditions, loneliness, and high risks from the insurgent groups. Nevertheless, the officers displayed a high degree of professionalism and tenacity in the face of adversity, which they derived from their sense of responsibility, public support, and religious belief. The study also stressed the fact that organizational support in the form of training materials, logistics, and psychological counseling can be of great help in managing the stress that comes with the job. Moreover, it emphasized the importance of social support systems in offering moral and emotional support to the officers, which helped them in the accomplishment of their tasks.

4.1.2.2 Echoes in a Chamber of Neglect to Government's Broken Promises.
Chiefs of police reported a negative perception of the community relations. They observed that some of the communities were quite hostile and did not want to be involved at all, especially when they said that they had to work. These communities comprised of sympathizers of left-wing groups who were convinced or brainwashed against the program.

(We also encounter difficulties because some of the communities in the area are not welcome. We encounter difficulties asking for their time to gather and listen to the program. However, despite challenges and difficulties, I am happy that we implemented the program with positive results). (Participant 2)

(On the other hand, some areas do not welcome us. They replied that they were busy and had no time to listen because they wanted to go to work for their needs. Some of them are already sympathizers of the left group, and they are being influenced for that reason). (Participant 5)

(Despite the initial hesitation and distrust, the same people are now gradually willing to listen and participate in the implementation. On the other hand, some areas are still adamant and unwelcoming. They often reply that they are too busy and have no time to listen because they need to go to work to earn their daily living. Some of them are already known sympathizers of the leftist group and are being influenced or indoctrinated for that reason). (Participant 6)

A theory that elucidates the emergent theme is the Expectancy Theory developed by Vroom (1964). According to the Expectancy Theory, individuals will work towards certain goals if they believe that certain behaviors will lead to those goals. This theory is based on three key components: expectancy (the belief that trying will result in performance), instrumentality (the belief that performance will result in a reward), and valence (the value placed on the reward). In the case of NTF-ELCAC, chiefs of police are likely to discharge their duties efficiently if they think that the actions they take will result in the realization of the government's goals and objectives. However, there are consequences when these promises are seen as being overlooked or not being met; that is, it affects their motivation and performance. The difficulties and disillusionment of these officers can be viewed as a failure of the government to meet the expectations set out in the agreements made with the representatives of the law enforcement officers, which underlines the need for synchronizing actions of the government with its declarations concerning the support of the police officers.

Martinez and Guevara (2018) focused on the investigation of the impact of unmet expectations from the government on the morale and productivity of policemen serving in conflict-prone areas. The researchers noted that perceived neglect and broken promises affected the officers' motivation and capacity to work, and, in turn, the officers became frustrated and less effective. The study also brings out the importance of government accountability and fulfillment of its pledges in the morale and productivity of police officers

4.1.2.3 Extending Olive Branches Across Battle Lines.
A drawback is the problem of non-cooperation, which was expected in CTG-supportive areas; however, the chiefs of police's persistence paid off with cooperation and acceptance of the program. They emphasized the importance of good conduct, awareness, and fostering good relations with the community through displaying trust and loyalty to regain the support of the community in the fight against terrorism and to reintegrate them into the government and society.

(One of the challenging experiences I encountered during the implementation of EO#70 was how to convince the community that they were known as supporters of the Communist Terrorist Group. However, despite the challenges, I always maintained hope in continuing the mandated task assigned in my unit. Little by little, I win the hearts of the community, and we gain their trust and confidence for the very positive outcome of the program, which focuses on their welfare). (Participant 1)

(Implementing the program EO#70 for those areas known as supporters of CTGs is the most challenging part. We anticipate that there was resistance on their part in terms of the implementation of the program. However, in the end, we try to convince them to cooperate with us and accept the program). (Participant 2)

(One of the challenging parts of my experience during the implementation of EO#70 was that the community where the program was planned to be implemented was known as a mass area or was infiltrated by the CTGs. I believe that we need to assert our authority of jurisdiction and education, especially with these kinds of areas, no matter how far they may be, so that we can resolve conflicts better and maintain the loyalty of the people since the police visibility and PCR in these areas are heightened, so as the trust that can be earned. Only that, the assigned personnel learn to be vigilant, behave in an exemplary manner, and, of course, worthy of trust and practice in the discipline of being civil and maintaining camaraderie with the community to establish a strong rapport

and eventually win the people and lead them back to the government as a high-functioning branch of society, especially against terrorism). (Participant 3)

The theoretical framework that can be utilized to understand the identified theme is the Conflict Transformation Theory by John Paul Lederach. This theory focuses on the requirement for the management of the root causes of conflict through changing the relations, interests, discourses, and structures that sustain the conflict. According to Lederach (1995), to attain sustainable peace, there is a need to encourage people to talk, embrace the other party, and work together. Most of the chiefs of police, who embrace democratic principles and encourage communication, fight against the ideological differences that cause local confrontation. They work with different stakeholders to foster democracy and create harmony, thus following this theory of peacebuilding, which entails identifying the root causes of conflict and changing relationships. This approach, therefore, makes way for the disarming of certain beliefs and supports the further achievement of sustainable peace in line with the mandate of NTF-ELCAC.

Similarly, in their study, Suarez and González (2017) examined how the concept of democratic policing has been used in Colombia to manage ideological conflicts and establish stability in areas that have been plagued by armed struggle. They noted that the involvement of local communities with democratic principles and the improvement of communication between the police and the public helped decrease tensions and increase reconciliation.

4.1.2.4 Navigating the Minefield.
One negative experience chiefs of police highlighted is those times when they had to expose themselves to danger in order to meet with the public in the areas where CTGs were most likely to operate. Armed confrontations made it challenging for chiefs of police to serve warrants and conduct investigations against CTG leaders.

(One of the challenging parts was that we went to far-flung barangays belonging to our area of responsibility, where we knew that the community presence of the Communist Terrorist Group was sometimes sighted. We risked our safety just to go with the people to discuss with them about the implementation of the National Task Force to End Local Communism and Armed Conflict). (Participant 4)

(Only that, the assigned personnel learn to be vigilant, behave in an exemplary manner, and, of course, worthy of trust and practice in the discipline of being civil and maintaining camaraderie with the community to establish a strong rapport and eventually win the people and lead them back to the government as a high-functioning branch of society, especially against terrorism). (Participant 5)

(As Chief of Police, the most challenging experiences I have encountered are serving warrants of arrest to identified CTG Leaders and conducting investigations and filing cases against the CTGs in line with the armed encounters between members of the Philippine Army and other law enforcement operations conducted in our Area of Responsibility). (Participant 6)

Trust-Building theory can be significant to explain the emergent theme which deals with the ways and means of developing and sustaining trust in relations, particularly in the context of conflict or post-conflict situations. According to the Trust-Building Theory, trust is a vital element for cooperation and effective interaction in societies that are characterized by conflicts and tensions (Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003). The chiefs of police need to understand that they have to come up with strategies to foster trust among the communities that have been affected by armed conflict. This entails open communication, recognition of past wrongs, and interaction with the people in the community. The theory, therefore, notes that for peacebuilding to be good, the local context must be understood, as well as the anxieties and desires of the people in the community.

O'Leary and McGarry (2015) argued that the key leaders in Northern Ireland's enforcement used different ways of gaining the confidence of the communities that were most affected by the historical conflict and division. The research identified that open communication, involving the community, and tackling past issues were important in enhancing trust and the relationship between the police and the community.

4.2 Addressing the Challenges Encountered by the Informants in the Implementation of NTF-ELCAC
4.2.1 Collaborative Policing for a Stronger Community.
Chiefs of police noted that having good relations and communication is vital in the enforcement of EO 70. One of the chiefs of police pointed out that it is essential to build a good working relationship with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the residents. Another chief of police mentioned that genuine principles and positive relations with the community are also stressed as some of the core practices that foster the effectiveness of the program.

(For me, the most valued weapon or practice in times of facing challenges as a COP in the implementation of NTF-ELCAC is to have a good relation and communication with our counterpart in the AFP who also do the same in the implementation of this program and to have a good relationship with the community where the program implemented). (Participant 1)

(The most valued weapon you can impart in dealing with the communities involved in education. Then ingrained with the knowledge is the wisdom of walking the talk. You need to be an example of genuine principles and standards in character and traits to earn the respect and trust of the community. Thirdly, the most overlooked and neglected aspect is building rapport with the population, understanding the network on which they act as a system or organization rather than random citizens in different walks of life). (Participant 2)

(The best, most valued weapon in facing these challenges is always to have faith in God, believing that everything I do is for the people to make their lives progressive and free from any oppression against CTGs. Second, establish a good rapport with the community, whether they sympathize or not). (Participant 4)

About the emergent theme, Community Policing theory best explains the policing strategy that focuses on the development of community relations. This theory holds that there is a need for cooperation between the police and other members of society to tackle problems within society and enhance safety and better living standards (Skogan & Hartnett, 1997). By working for the community and bringing citizens into the process of jointly solving problems, chiefs of police are deterring the culture of everyone being in it together. This approach is useful in establishing trust and respect, which are necessary qualities in conflict-solving and the achievement of order. The theory captures the aspect of partnership and cooperation between the police and society, which is in line with the concept of collaborative policing as seen in the NTF-ELCAC.

Murphy and Worrall (2011) analyzed the effect of community policing on the enhancement of trust and cooperation between the police and the inhabitants of urban areas. Murphy and Worrall (2011) identified that strategies that include community participation, problem-solving, partnership in policing, and community support enhanced trust and cooperation between the police and the community. The findings also highlighted the significance of the community policing concept in creating a strong and unified community in conflict-stricken regions.

4.2.2 Fortifying Security.
The chiefs of police indicate the significance of Police Community Relations (PCR) programs in order to gain the support of the community and avoid confrontation with the leftist organizations during the program's implementation. They emphasize the importance of program assessment and modification according to the needs of the community, ensuring safety, and creating a welcoming atmosphere. Some strategies include engaging friendly forces, improving security measures, and working on converting the areas rather than eliminating the CTG presence.

(Strategically implement the programs conceptualized through the earlier process, assess those that are effective and ineffective, and distinguish where and when they are not feasible, revise, and evaluate through feedback. The community needs the police as much as the police need the community. To become their utmost protector, the most important asset is the trust of these people. To attain their trust, they must know us, both extrinsically, internally, and finally, as is already a part of them, as the saying they trust their own. I have been using is through the programs implemented by Police Community Relation to win the hearts and minds of the community in the area where the program has been implemented, evaluate the feedback of the people and counteract any violent reaction, act upon recommendations, and deduct the whole picture to implement what is effective and what needs to be further revised or to innovate specific advocacy to strengthen trust and safety policy and procedures. We see to it that the safety of everyone involved is the main priority, and we implement the program smoothly without any conflict from the left group. However, the goal is conversion instead of aggressive eradication). (Participant 5)

(One of the strategies I have used was through Police Community Relations to win the hearts of the people in the area where the program has been implemented. We saw to it that all the people involved were safe, and we implemented the program smoothly without conflict from the left group. We strengthen our security measures and intelligence network by addressing the challenges encountered while implementing the NTF-ELCAC. Try to win the people's hearts in the community where we engage. Coordinate with the other friendly forces near the area in case of CTG's presence). (Participant 6)

(I have been using is through the programs implemented by Police Community Relation to win the hearts and minds of the community in the area where the program has been implemented, evaluate the feedback of the people and counteract any violent reaction, act upon recommendations, and deduct the whole picture to implement what is effective and what needs to be further revised or to innovate specific advocacy to strengthen trust and safety policy and procedures. We see to it that the safety of everyone

involved is the main priority, and we implement the program smoothly without any conflict from the left group. However, the goal is conversion instead of aggressive eradication). (Participant 7)

The theory that can be elaborated to explain the emerging theme is the Situational Crime Prevention Theory. This theory states that it is possible to prevent crime by controlling the circumstances under which crime occurs, such as by controlling the environment, making it difficult for criminals, and making the efforts of criminals less profitable (Clarke, 1997). Situational crime prevention theory entails the strategies that are used to prevent crimes from being committed and, at the same time, make it difficult for criminals to escape. Through the improvement of security and intelligence, chiefs of police attempt to reduce situations that promote activities related to local armed communist conflict. They have adopted strategies in security, intelligence, and cooperation with other actors to limit space for the insurgents, raise the costs of insurgency, and lower the gains from it. The theory thus stresses that there is a need for strategic and context-based actions in the creation of a secure society, a move that is reflected in the actions of chiefs of police in NTF-ELCAC.

Hernandez and Ramos (2016) reviewed the strategic security procedures and intelligence operations of police forces in conflict areas of the Philippines to find out the efficiency of these measures in controlling insurgent activities. The findings reveal that improved security measures, efficient intelligence, and strong cooperation with the local populace and other partners played a crucial role in increasing security in conflict-prone regions.

4.2.3 Effective Community Partnerships.
The chiefs of police stressed that trust and support of the community is crucial in attaining their goal to implement EO #70. They focus on Police Community Relations (PCR) to foster good rapport, assess the community's perception, and modify the program accordingly. Safety is an issue to consider to avoid complications and ensure that there is no confrontation with the leftist groups. Therefore, the idea is to weaken and change rather than eliminate the influence of the CTG.

(As a leader, I addressed challenges by motivating myself that this program could help the community, most especially those already infiltrated by communist terrorist groups. Winning the hearts of the people was the best strategy that I used to gain their confidence and acceptance in the implementation of EO#70). (Participant 1)

(I have been using this through the programs implemented by Police Community Relation to win the hearts and minds of the community in the area where the program has been implemented, evaluate the feedback of the people and counteract any violent reaction, act upon recommendations, and deduct the whole picture to implement what is effective and what needs to be further revised or to innovate specific advocacy to strengthen trust and safety policy and procedures. We see to it that the safety of everyone involved is the main priority, and we implement the program smoothly without any conflict from the left group. However, the goal is conversion instead of aggressive eradication). (Participant 5)

A theory that explains the emergent theme is Social Capital Theory, which emphasizes the value of social networks and the relationships within them. Social capital is seen as a resource derived from trust, reciprocity, and cooperation among individuals and groups, which can be leveraged to achieve collective goals (Putnam, 1993). This theory posits that strong social networks and community ties enhance cooperation and problem-solving capabilities. Chiefs of police, by fostering collaborative relationships and engaging with the community, build social capital that can be utilized to address local issues and enhance public safety. Their efforts to build trust, engage in joint problem-solving, and leverage community strengths reflect the core elements of social capital. This approach helps to create resilient and supportive relationships that contribute to the success of NTF-ELCAC's mission, demonstrating the importance of social networks in achieving collective security and peacebuilding goals.

Tyler and Huo (2002) explored how community policing strategies contribute to building trust and social capital between law enforcement agencies and communities. Tyler and Huo (2002) found that initiatives involving active community engagement, transparent communication, and collaborative problem-solving significantly enhanced trust and cooperation between police and community members. The study highlights the effectiveness of community policing strategies in fostering strong social networks and community ties, which are essential for addressing local issues and enhancing public safety.

4.2.4 Embracing the Storm with Resilience.
Chiefs of police deal with psychological and social stress by having faith in the program's success and the achievement of peace. They get their motivation because they have a noble responsibility of safeguarding people from oppression and ensuring they live in safe societies. These efforts in implementing EO #70 have also paved the way for the communities supporting the CTCs to regain their confidence in the government. These coping strategies underline the significance of resilience and commitment to achieving the program objectives.

(Mentally and emotionally, I was able to cope with these challenges by believing that this government program will give a good result in the future and attain peace in this country). (Participant 2)

(Mentally and emotionally, I coped with the challenges by motivating myself that as a police officer, I must protect people against any oppression and provide them with a safe environment, by facing challenges in implementing EO#70, the community that before supporters of CTGs was returning their trust in the government). (Participant 4)

The emergent theme resonates with Resilience Theory which posits the ability of people to cope, adapt to, and bounce back from stressors. The concept of Resilience Theory asserts that resilience is a process that involves the ability of an individual to thrive in the face of certain adversities (Masten, 2001). It emphasizes the factors that are considered to be the buffers, like coping strategies, support networks, and other positive ways of functioning, which enable a person to continue functioning effectively despite adverse situations. The chiefs of police, therefore, use coping mechanisms, adaptive leadership, and personal philosophy to show their strength in their positions. Thus, their capacity to manage the requirements and the obstacles associated with their tasks and duties while still remaining focused on the vision and mission is the definition of resilience. This approach enables them not only to survive but also to grow well in the face of adversities, which, in turn, plays a very important role in the accomplishment of the objectives of NTF-ELCAC.

Paton & Violanti (2008) work on the psychological factors that affect the resilience and well-being of law enforcement officers while working on the strategies that help them manage work-related stressors. The study revealed that the use of adaptive coping strategies, socially supportive relationships, and efficient leadership practices enhance the resilience and well-being of officers working in high-risk professions.

4.3 Aspirations to Improve the Implementation of National Task Force to End Local Communism and Armed Conflict
4.3.1 Harmonious Police Force Collaboration.

Chiefs of police aspired to stress the need to gain the people's confidence by offering fundamental needs for economic reasons to prevent communities from supporting leftist groups. Enabling the communities to be sustainable makes them independent and able to make their own decisions, especially with young people who depend on their parents for direction. The success of these programs depends on the understanding that every community is different; officers should be provided with training and personal development, and they should not be assigned other activities. Strategic planning and coordination at all levels are essential and continued and successful implementation requires adequate resources and funding.

(The aspirations of the informant would intrinsically be trusted. Knowing the truth and facts blinds them through manipulation and black propaganda. The extrinsic essential step in forging this alliance is providing them with the first necessary aid in their daily living since their reasons for apathy and support with these groups are mainly economic. As the guardians of their safety, we need to help look for ways in which they can also provide for themselves. Therefore, they can think and act for themselves and, thus, practice their ultimate freedom of choice towards the straight path untainted with principles of leftist ideals, especially the youth, who are looking through the guidance of their parents, thus spring the social awareness and discernment that will empower them not to be guidable. NGOs: other uniformed personnel to stabilize and develop this necessary structure for the community). (Participant 3)

(Implementing these programs needs to be focused on, especially considering that every community is unique and varies from different communities. Though the basic principle is the same, the superiors must equip the subordinating officers with training and personal enhancement programs to empower them with any conflict, obstacles, or challenges they may encounter upon infiltrating these communities, especially the most terrorist-infested areas. The strategy must be analyzed, and this fundamental wisdom should be imparted to even the lowest officer so that the synchronization and effective operation to achieve these goals shall be cemented carefully despite the changing variables. The appointed person should also have a point of focus rather than be dumped with different assignments since these programs need total concentration and not be fully loaded with compliance by other concerns. Sustenance can be achieved if the resources are well provided to maintain the implementation of the programs due to low budget and depletion of funds). (Participant 6)

The Interorganizational Collaboration Theory is significant in understanding the emergent them since this theory deals with the processes and results of collaboration between different organizations. This theory holds that collaboration entails the provision of resources, knowledge, and capabilities to work towards common objectives and solve multifaceted problems that cannot be solved by a single organization (Gray, 1989). These are trust development, communication, and the identification of the interests that both parties stand to gain. Chiefs of police, through partnership and cooperation in operations, endeavor to synchronize activities and come up with strategies that can be used in solving conflicts. The accounts of how they developed and maintained collaborative relationships depict the key features of inter-organizational collaboration. Thus, this approach contributes to the

development of synergy and improved efficiency of the law enforcement activities within the NTF-ELCAC and shows the significance of collaborative leadership when dealing with multifaceted security threats.

Clarke and Newman (2016) provided a review of inter-agency cooperation in policing, where the authors analyze the strategies used in collaboration and the results that have been achieved through joint efforts by different police agencies. In their research, Clarke and Newman identified some of the factors that enable successful collaboration between agencies, including clear leadership, proper communication, common agendas and objectives, and trust. The study emphasizes the need for trust, effective communication, and mutual gains in the improvement of collaboration.

4.3.2 Sharpening the Spear: Building Resilient and Effective Officers.

Chiefs of police stress that the Philippine National Police (PNP) should build closer relationships with leaders of other concerned agencies and come up with realistic interventions for the remote and directly affected communities. Chiefs recommend sustained and regular interaction with the communities to regain their confidence and trust in government, recommending collaboration with LGUs, NGOs, and other uniformed personnel to strengthen community structures. They also demand more resources, personnel, and better police-community relations to win the people's confidence and fight against local communism and armed struggle, stressing the importance of youths and the need for cooperation between the police, military, and other government departments.

(To improve the implementation of the NTF-ELCAC, I recommend that the PNP should focus on establishing a stronger bond with leaders of other agencies involved in these efforts and develop more practical and applicable programs that would benefit the people, especially in the hinterlands and remote areas identified as directly affected communities). (Participant 1)

(We must aspire for something tangible, sustainable, and at the same time consistent visibility, interaction, and cooperation, not just a mere implementation of the programs for the sake of compliance but to immerse in the community in bringing these people, especially those that are brainwashed to convert them back and believe again to the government that had always cared of them. The police should also aspire to forge a union with the LGU, NGOs, and other uniformed personnel to stabilize and develop this necessary structure for the community). (Participant 5)

(The PNP should provide more resources and widen its scope in program implementation. Provide adequate personnel to focus on the program. Strengthen the police-community relations to gain trust and confidence with the community in implementing the program. I aspire that people in the community will fully support the program to end this long-term problem of Local Communism and Armed Conflict. Many lives are being wasted, and most victimized are youths. Now is the proper time to end this problem. Law enforcement agencies, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and other Government agencies concerned, together with the community, should work hand in hand to implement NTF-ELCAC). (Participant 7)

In this case, the theory that can be used to explain the emergent theme is the Transformational Leadership Theory, which highlights the importance of leadership in encouraging employees to go the extra mile and deliver more than what is expected of them. Transformational leaders are more concerned with how to effectively enhance the followers' development through individualized consideration, providing them with the needed resources for mental stimulation and ensuring that they have a clear and appealing vision to follow (Bass & Avolio, 1994). These are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Chiefs of police, thus, occupy the role of transformational leaders who put strategies, training programs, and supportive measures into practice to increase the resilience and productivity of their teams. These include professionalism, mental health, and adaptive leadership, which are the components of transformational leadership. This approach assists in building the capacity of officers to deal with the challenges that come with conflict resolution, as they can cope, be flexible, and work to the best of their ability in difficult conditions.

Johnson et al. (2018) examined the relationship between transformational leadership and the performance and well-being of police officers to establish the leadership's contribution to resilience and effectiveness. The research discovered that the aspects of transformational leadership, like individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational leadership, enhanced the coping and effectiveness of the police officers.

4.3.3 Like a Well-Oiled Machine: Ensuring Smooth Ammunition Supply and Combat Preparedness.

Chiefs of police pointed out that the Philippine government should enhance inter-agency cooperation and armed personnel, diplomacy, and conversion programs alongside combat effectiveness. More resources and continued support must be put into the peace process to ensure sustainable peace. They shared that eradicating CTG presence requires more funding, longer-term interventions, and more military and police forces to protect the communities. Active support from local government units,

together with sufficient personnel and resources, will strengthen the security measures and show positive results of the program to communities.

(The Philippine government should strengthen the coordination in implementing these programs through a widened network of coordination with other branches of government and armed personnel that are often neglected; instead of solely focusing on ammunition and combat readiness, we need to also counterattack with diplomacy and programs for conversion, sustainability, and consistency. This is not just for the NTF-ELCAC but also true with other programs). (Participant 3)

(To improve the implementation of NTF-ELCAC, the government should continue to support and provide more resources to this program to achieve its goal of a peaceful country). (Participant 1)

(The government will set aside more budget for the continuity of the program. Long-term programs will also be implemented until the presence of CTGs is eliminated. More military and police units will be installed so that people can seek help when they need assistance against any harassment of CTGs). (Participant 2)

(The government should provide additional personnel and resources. Increase the annual budget of the PNP and AFP for the sustainable implementation of EO#70. Local government units should be encouraged to actively support the PNP and AFP by providing resources and other needs). (Participant 4)

(The Philippine Government should strengthen its coordination with other agencies to implement the program. Provide enough personnel and resources to focus on the program's implementation. Strengthen the security measures by providing more police and military personnel that are being controlled/sympathizers of the Communist Terrorist Group. Provide an extended strategic plan/ program so that people can see and feel the excellent effect of the program in the community). (Participant 6)

The theory that best describes the identified theme is the Resource Management Theory, which deals with the efficient and proper utilization of an organization's resources at the right time. This theory holds that in order to succeed in operations, especially in sensitive organizations such as the police, there is a need to efficiently manage resources and their distribution (Barney, 1991). These are resource planning, resource allocation, and logistic management. Thus, chiefs of police, through controlling the procurement of goods, training personnel, and providing logistical support, guarantee that resources like ammunition and equipment are available and properly allocated. Their leadership in the management of resources for the police units and formations makes them well-equipped and effective in the execution of their conflict-solving tasks.

Walker and Kelling (2014) examined the strategies and techniques used in police agencies to manage resources and logistics for effective and efficient operations. In their study, Walker and Kelling (2014) revealed that effective logistics planning, proper utilization of resources, and suitable training programs enhance the effectiveness and combat readiness of police units. The study emphasizes the significance of strategic resource management in the context of having a capable and ready force, proving that proper logistics and resource management are essential to combating the issues associated with war.

4.3.4 Undeterred Determination: A Chronicle of Unwavering Commitment to Serve and Protect.
The chiefs of police stressed the need to be persistent and to ensure that the message is well delivered as more explanations and more efforts may persuade communities to engage. As a leader, one must lead by example, be optimistic, and ensure the involvement of several agencies to overcome the program's challenges. Raising the spirit, encouraging cooperation, and developing unity and mission orientation among officers is critical for leadership and engagement with the public. They argued that achieving the objectives of NTF-ELCAC programs requires a holistic, sincere, and dedicated effort.

(I also learned that even though we encountered difficulties from the start, I always continued explaining to the people what the program's real purpose was; at the end, I tried to convince them to cooperate). (Participant 2)

(The most important lesson I learned is that despite the difficulties, my personnel never lost hope—the will to win the battle against the CTGs by implementing EO#70. As a leader, I lead by example and am always optimistic about the program's results. I cannot do this alone without the intervention of a multi-agency approach. Even with a lot of challenges and difficulties, we encounter little by little, by helping and cooperating, it is not impossible to attain the very purpose of EO# 70 to free the whole community from the hands of Communist Terrorist Groups). (Participant 3)

(It would help if you boosted the morale of your comrades, ready to face war anytime, to combat any difficulties through teamwork. Hard work is never the question; you need to define your purpose and, by that, work towards it in motivation. You need to have the internal drive to understand why you have chosen to become a police officer and how to be not just good but the best police you can

be. Developing an inner sense of peace and identity will gradually radiate towards your companion and eventually spread throughout the community to which you belong. Make a mark, not just compliance. Lead towards self-growth, and the harvest shall soon follow). (Participant 5)

(The most important lesson I have learned is that the efforts must be holistic, sincere, and with much dedication so that the programs of NTF-ELCAC can be carried out effectively and successfully). (Participant 7)

The theory that can best account for the emergent theme is the Servant Leadership Theory, which posits that the leader is a servant who focuses on the needs of the team and society. This theory states that genuine leadership is built on the passion for serving people, and the best leaders get things done by attending to the development of their followers and the society at large (Greenleaf, 1970). The main elements are empathy, listening, guardianship, and people development. The chiefs of police, through the display of resilience, the act of giving, and the tenacity in the fulfillment of the chiefs of police's mission, depict servant leadership. It is about this that the two entities have remained focused on serving and protecting their communities despite the enormous difficulties that they encounter, which are consistent with the principles of servant leadership. This approach assists them in overcoming challenges and providing leadership to their teams with the sole aim of serving the public, especially in communities affected by armed conflict.

Stone et. In the article by Allen (2004), the author investigated the correlation between practices of servant leadership and organizational commitment and resilience in police officers with the view of determining how leadership affects the attitude of law enforcement officers towards their work. The authors identified that the willingness to servant leadership practices, including officers' needs, support, and unity, positively influenced the commitment and morale of police officers. Thus, the researched work underlines the significance of servant leadership in the maintenance of the officers' commitment and motivation, which proves that the strategies of servant leadership are crucial for the sustainability of the officers' resilience and commitment in difficult conditions.

5. Conclusion

This qualitative research, which explored the work life of chiefs of police in the implementation of EO 70, has identified sixteen (16) emergent themes, examining both positive and negative aspects of their duties. The positive experiences showed a deep sense of satisfaction and pride over the successful implementation of the program through community outreach programs and information drives. Conversely, negative experiences presented the challenges of reaching out to the far-flung areas, which had already been infiltrated and influenced by the ideologies of the communist party and had become, in turn, their sympathizers. Despite these challenges, the findings revealed that the resilience of the chiefs of police played a vital role, and the extensive support from the community and partnership with other civic organizations promoted and coped with the issues faced during its implementation. Moving forward, their aspirations for better support, adequate resources, specialized training, and physical fitness underscore their dedication to enhancing the quality of their service and ensuring the effectiveness and successful implementation of Executive Order No. 70.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) should introduce specialized training courses on counterinsurgency, relating to the community, and leadership. This means that chiefs of police will be adequately equipped to deal with the dynamics of the positions they occupy. Also, it is recommended that effective physical fitness and mental health programs be developed to ensure the health of chiefs of police through routine medical examination and wellness activities. The PNP must guarantee that chiefs of police are provided with sufficient resources such as modern equipment, transportation, and communication tools that will help them in the implementation of the NTF-ELCAC program. There should also be sufficient funding for operational needs and community relation projects to ease the work of chiefs of police and increase the impact of the programs.

The DILG should address the interference in the operational decisions of chiefs of police by politicians to ensure that they perform their duties as professionals and not as political appointees. Improvement of communication between the PNP and other government institutions is important to avoid miscommunication and achieve cooperation. Moreover, regular community meetings and feedback between chiefs of police and the public will enhance accountability and increase trust between the chiefs of police and the communities. Political leaders should be able to understand the causes, environment, requirements, capabilities, and approaches to counter-insurgency. They should further express their support for the NTF-ELCAC program and provide strong political backing both at the national and local levels. The DILG should also involve civil society organizations in the implementation of the NTF-ELCAC program to augment the resources and solutions to the complaints raised by the communities. The whole-nation approach to address the issue of the communist insurgency that involves all sectors of society will guarantee efficient and long-standing solutions.

5.1 Study Limitations and Future Research
The major constraint of this study is the geographical and organizational context since the participants are the chiefs of police in certain localities of Negros Occidental. This approach may not have captured all the practices, challenges, and experiences that the chiefs of police in other parts of the country face. Thus, the results cannot be transferred to the chiefs of police working in other provinces, where there may be different tactical guidelines, material support, and conditions.

The recommendations of this study may be valuable for future research to enhance the productivity and health status of chiefs of police. Because the nature of insurgency and law enforcement issues is rather vast and dynamic in the Philippines, it is crucial to examine the ways that could contribute to the improvement of the work-life balance of chiefs of police. It may be useful for future research to examine how policies and practices can be put into place to assist chiefs of police in managing their work-life balance and, thus, decrease stress and increase job satisfaction. Further, comparing the effects of logistical support and availability of specific equipment on operations' effectiveness and safety could help chiefs of police and their units understand how resources should be distributed.

Furthermore, the study also implies that there is a need to deal with the political influence and proper coordination within the organization. Future research could examine the degree to which political factors influence the work of chiefs of police and the ways to prevent such influence so that chiefs can do their job efficiently and without pressure. Furthermore, analyzing the training courses and the ongoing professional development programs can also help identify ways of ensuring that chiefs of police are adequately prepared for high-risk conditions. Therefore, future research should focus on identifying possible sources of support, which can include counseling and workout regimes and their impact on the readiness and resilience of police commanders. Thus, future research can help in providing a better environment for chiefs of police in the Philippines in terms of efficiency and support.

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