



**THE INFLUENCE OF CHINA ON PHILIPPINE
FOREIGN POLICY: THE CASE OF DUTERTE'S
INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY**

BY

MR. NATHAN DANIEL V. SISON

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN ASIA PACIFIC STUDIES
COLLEGE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC YEAR 2017
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THESIS

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ENTITLED

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was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for
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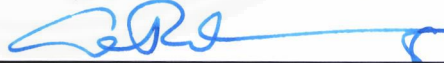
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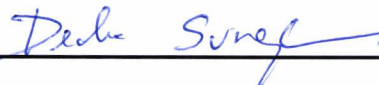
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ABSTRACT

Since the start of his administration, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte has pursued a foreign policy which has been in contrast with the containment policy of the Aquino administration towards China. The new leader immediately pushed forward for a true practice of independent foreign policy which denotes that the country will seek closer relations with China and Russia as it distances itself from its traditional ally, the US. The policy shift of this administration is also understood as a “Pivot to China,” which explicitly demonstrate a change in the normal pattern of the country’s strategic diplomacy with aims of diversifying options and improving relations with other countries. However, Duterte’s desire to move closer with China while downplaying the South China Sea dispute attracted disapprovals and was immediately dubbed as a “national tragedy” by former Philippine foreign secretary Albert del Rosario.

This research seeks to identify and analyze the reasons behind the shift in foreign policy by looking at China as the main factor. The study employs Gideon Rose’s neoclassical realism as a lens of foreign policy analysis. With that, this study offers as systematic explanation of the action taken by the new administration by examining the series of events in the revitalizing Philippine- Sino relationship. Moreover, this research also provides insights on the positive and negative implications of it. It delves into the perceptions of the Philippine foreign policy

decision-makers, particularly of President Duterte towards China's intentions and its chosen foreign-policy response as engaged by his administration. This thesis argues that China's support and compatibility to Duterte's national priorities feeds in Duterte's perception of perceiving it as the best partner for his government among the different state actors in the international system, thus ushering the shift in Philippine foreign policy.

Keywords: foreign policy, Duterte, China, neo-classical realism, South China Sea



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
DDB	Dangerous Drugs Board
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
DOT	Department of Tourism
EDCA	Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
FSI	Foreign Service Institute
IR	International Relations
ISEAS	Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
NEDA	National Economic and Development Authority
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PCA	Permanent Court of Arbitration
PDEA	Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency
PNR	Philippine National Railways
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
US	United States
SONA	State of the Nation Address

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Since the start of his administration, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte has pursued a foreign policy which has been in contrast with the containment policy of the Aquino administration towards China. The current government apparently chose to repair the dented Philippine-China relationship endured by the preceding administration by employing a foreign policy that is observed to be friendly and open towards its former enemy. In the context of Philippine foreign policy decision-making process, the Philippine President plays a huge role as he is considered as the Chief Architect of foreign relations. This means that any Filipino President can certainly redefine the country's priority, set the direction, stance and, personally, dictate the diplomatic course towards other countries. However, such power does not always guarantee an absolute change as there will be several constraints in altering foreign policy which may include the considerations from the Philippine Constitution, existing international treaties and international law obligations (Baviera, 2016).

During his predecessor's term, Benigno Aquino III, foreign policy was focused on protecting the nation's territory from an aggressive China which entailed the necessity to modernize the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and further strengthen the Philippine-US security relations (Sonsri, 2015). This is what scholars call containment or balancing China approach which aims to contain China's maritime expansion (De Castro, 2016). One notable outcome of this foreign policy is standing up against the giant bully by bringing the disputed case to the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in 2013 in which subsequently resulted in a favorable outcome for the complainant after considering both Philippines' legal jurisdiction on the area and China's nine-dash line claim unlawful. This victory sends a message to the region that a relatively less powerful country in terms of economy and power can resort to a rules-based approach in solving disputes. Although its pragmatic impact has not been realized due to the lack of proper enforcement in an anarchic international state-system. Moreover, China has unrelentingly stated its non-

acceptance of the international court decision which postulates further the problem of enforcement given the uneven balance of power between China and the Philippines.

Despite the bold move which the Aquino administration has conducted, the Philippines continues to receive much attention worldwide through its dramatic shift of foreign policy from that of containing (Aquino's foreign policy) to being open and closer to China (Duterte's foreign policy). Upon assuming Presidency, he immediately pushed forward for a true practice of independent foreign policy which denotes that the country will seek closer relations with China and Russia as it distances itself from its traditional ally, the United States (Merez, 2017). This foreign policy shift by the new administration is understood as a "*Pivot to China*," which explicitly demonstrates a change in the normal pattern of the country's strategic diplomacy with aims of diversifying options and improving relations with other countries (Kraft, 2017). As the new administration pushed for an independent foreign policy, the Philippine – US alliance had been threatened and disturbed, signaling the possibility of cutting their 70 year-old military alliance.

1.2 The Philippine – US Alliance

The Philippine – US alliance was somehow a positive outcome of the American invasion. The tortuous journey of the two countries started off when the Americans conquered the Philippines back in 1898 during its colonial expansion period. However, when the Philippines gained independence on July 4, 1946, American military presence remained under the Military Bases Agreement of 1947 (Lande, 2001). This paved way to the so-called "special relationship" between the countries where interests of both nations are best believed to be benefitted.

During the Pre-Cold War era, the US' interest in maintaining alliance with the Philippines was to make its presence felt in the region as it sustains itself as a hegemonic state (Grunder & Livezey, 1951). Whereas the Philippines on the other hand benefitted from US presence in its territory for security protection and economic funding and aid assistance (Bancho, 1987).

As the MBA of 1947 expired in 1990, the Pact of 1991 was introduced which was a new military accord to replace the former treaty. However, in September

1991, the Philippine senate voted against the pact only by a 12 against 11 decision, resulting to a cool-off phase of the special relationship and withdrawal of US presence from the island nation. (Lande, 2001) (Sanger, 1991).

When the US military withdrew from the Philippines in 1992, China aggressively increased its military presence in South China Sea, resulting to a threat in the security of the Philippines and the ASEAN region. The security relationship between the Philippines and US was then revived in the late 1990's due to the developing "China Challenge". The Philippine government realized the instant need to revitalize the alliance with the US for the protection of its sovereignty. The Americans also understood the essence of a quick revitalization of security relations with its former ally due to its self-interests in the region which could undermine its hegemonic position if left ignored (Lande, 2001).

As a comeback of the Philippine – US military alliance, the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) which is also known as Balikatan (shoulder-to-shoulder) was signed on February 11, 1998 during the Estrada Administration. This new agreement which came into force on May 1999 provided a legal framework in conducting combined and joint military exercises in the island nation between Filipino and American troops. This contributed to the advancement and modernization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). At the same time, this agreement helped in accomplishing the forward-presence mission of the US by being allowed to occasionally deploy its naval ship in the island nation (Velasco, 2015).

The Arroyo administration continued to foster the revitalized relationship with the US. In fact, after the 9/11 terrorist attack, the Philippine government offered the Clark Air and Subic Naval Base for American usage. More so, the two countries agreed on a coalition against global terrorism in which President Arroyo established a 14-stage counterterrorism program. The Bush administration was pleased by its Philippine counterpart and with its response is an assurance for a greater US involvement in Basilan, Mindanao where the purpose was to counter the Abu Sayyaf group which is linked to Al Qaeda network.

Although this American comeback was not fully welcomed by some members of the Philippine public. On January 2002, protests against American presence in the country arose in which American intervention in the insurgency in

Mindanao was believed to cause more harm than good. The fear about the direct US intervention was that it might create a new conflict with other Muslim rebels which could prolong the crisis. The Arroyo administration was required to balance the need of US alliance without disappointing the nationalist ideology of the Filipino people. As a result, conditions were made clear by both the Philippine and US government where American intervention would be limited to upholding a supporting role only. The supporting role prohibits American troops from engaging in combat rather it only allows them to provide military intelligence to the AFP. Jane Perez's article (2002), "Manila Is Still Uneasy Over American Troops," described the VFA agreement as a Filipino military maneuver with American advisers rather than a joint operation.

Following the VFA was the creation of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) which is a supplemental agreement that aspires to promote peace and security in the region and was signed on April 28, 2014. This agreement which was implemented under the Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III administration permits the US to rotate troops into the country and allow them to build and operate facilities on Philippine bases temporarily (Diaz, 2014). Evan Medeiros, the U.S. National Security Council's senior director for Asian affairs mentioned in one of his interviews that this new agreement is the most significant defense agreement that the US and Philippines have concluded in decades (Eilperin, 2014).

Today however, the Philippine – US alliance is once again being put to a test under the Duterte administration where the President himself vocally expressed his Anti-American sentiment during his first couple of months in office back in 2016. President Duterte even threatened to discontinue and open the possibility of revising EDCA as his admin choose to cut military ties with the US as it forwards a Pivot to China kind of policy (Avendaño, 2016). The current situation seems to bring back the ambiguities of the Philippine-US alliance in 1991 due to the changes in the country's foreign policy.

Foreign policy is defined as the totality of a country's policies toward and interactions with the environment beyond its borders (Breuning, 2007). Specifically, in the context of realism, it is what a particular country tries to achieve in the international system in order to forward their self-interests both domestically for its

own government and internationally for the state itself. It could be argued that one's foreign policy could make or break one's presidential term depending on its outcomes and trade-offs. Hence, foreign policy decisions, especially of a new government has to be studied. One way of effectively looking at this aspect is to delve into how foreign policy is being conducted in the Philippines.

1.3 The Philippine Foreign Policy decision-making process

Before a country employs a particular foreign policy, it will certainly undergo various stages of decision-making processes. Every country has its own way of conducting, employing and implementing foreign policy. All in which will vary depending on its government structure, state priorities and status in the international system, bureaucratic and institutional politics, culture, etc. Thus, in order to have a better understanding of this study, it is very important to clarify and elucidate the process of Philippine foreign policy making.

The Philippines is a unitary state governed by a Presidential system. With that, the President, being the head of state, has a huge influence on the country's foreign policy choices and decisions (Jacobini, 1961). In fact, the President is considered as the Chief Architect of foreign relations (Baviera, 2016). Under the President in the executive branch is the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) which is the main institution responsible for the promotion of the country's national interests through its foreign policy. The formation of the department dates back to as early as the Malolos Republic in June of 1898, which is the first independent Philippine government led by the revolutionary leader Emilio Aguinaldo. This makes the department as one of the first institutions established by the Philippine government. However, the Aguinaldo government was captured by the Americans in 1901, which started the US colonization period lasting for about 40 years followed by a three-year occupation of the Japanese since 1942. It was only on July 4, 1946, during the Commonwealth era, when the country was able to formally establish the DFA when it regained its independence through the passage of the Commonwealth Act No. 732. President Manuel Roxas immediately followed up with the department by signing the Executive Order No. 18 which allowed the DFA and the Foreign Service to operate

(Department of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). Ever since its formation, it can be observed in the past how Philippine leaders have directed the course of the Philippine foreign policy.

Throughout the years, the Philippine foreign policy underwent a series of developments resulting to various changes in priorities depending on the administration. Nonetheless, its purpose remained the same – to promote the country's national interests. Today, the DFA has identified three core pillars of Philippine foreign policy through the Republic Act No. 7157 signed in 1991. The three pillars include: (a) Preservation and enhancement of national security, (b) Promotion and attainment of economic security, and (c) Protection of the rights and promotion of the welfare and interest of Filipinos overseas. Ideally, the three pillars must be promoted equally where none would be prioritized more over the other (Department of Foreign Affairs, 1991). However, substantive historical evidence has shown that this idealism would not always be the case when it comes to its application in the real world.

In hindsight, Philippines leaders have realized the need to put more priority on one pillar than the other. However, this is said to be conducted unintentionally, as such prioritization is just a natural response of the state, particularly of the leaders' perception towards the changes happening in its international environment. Because of that, changes and shifts in the country's foreign policy should be treated as a normal occurrence. Nonetheless, the Philippine foreign policy has apparently remained consistent as it has mostly remained aligned with the US given the existing mutual defense treaty and converging national interests it shares with America. However, there had been instances wherein the country has been placed in jeopardy due to the changes conducted by the President perhaps due to various reasons such as self-interest, political-party interests, domestic pressure, and miscalculation. Hence, this paper suggests that given the huge influence of the President on the Philippine foreign policy decision-making process, the leader and its perception towards the state and the international system is very important to understand.

Given the structure of the Philippine government and culture of its politics, it can be seen that the country has employed foreign policies that placed the country in danger such as the closing of the US military bases in 1991 which gave

China the opportunity to maneuver in the South China Sea as discussed above. Similarly, it is more likely that the Duterte administration is placing the country under the same scenario with its recently concluded foreign policy decision. Hence, extra attention must be put in place in pursuance of understanding the various underlying causes. As far as foreign policy analysis (FPA) is concerned, these shifts are caused by numerous factors which either derives from the domestic or international factors or both congruently. And by considering these factors, this study will conduct the analysis by placing importance on perceptions of the foreign policy decision-maker in which in the Philippine case depends mostly on its Presidents.

1.4 The Aquino administration and its Contain-China Policy

Upon his election in 2010, the Aquino administration started with a clear focus on good governance and curtailment of corruption. He won the highest seat in Philippine government under the campaign slogan of “*Kung walang corrupt, walang mahirap*” (*If there is no corruption, there is no poverty*) (NoyTV, 2010). Under this political agenda, the government aspired to foster inclusive economic growth by attracting foreign investors, facilitating infrastructure development and assist in capital mobilization. The Aquino administration adopted an economic policy that was known as the Philippine Development Plan which strengthened the economy of the country as it required transparency and accountability in governance. This resulted in an improvement in the competitiveness of the country’s local industries (Sonsri, 2015). By the end of 2014, the Philippines became the second-fastest growing economy in Asia which places itself just a little behind China with a growth rate of 6.1 percent in the last four quarters (Dancel, 2015). This growth was accompanied by a continuous influx of overseas remittances coming mostly from the United States, Middle East, and Europe. Moreover, much of the economic success of the Philippines during this time can also be attributed to the strong economic partnership the Aquino administration had with Japan. During Aquino’s entire term, Japan generally accounted for 15 percent of the country’s total trade which makes it the largest trading partner (Gavilan, 2016). Moreover, China has also played a significant role in terms of

trade by being the country's largest importer in 2015 despite the on-going conflict in the South China Sea (Tupaz, n.d.).

In terms of foreign policy, the Aquino administration was prompted in its second year in office to adopt a contain-China policy due to China's aggressiveness in the South China Sea. At this moment, the administration upheld one of the Philippine foreign policy core pillars which was to protect the country's national security. In his 2011 SONA, Aquino proudly uttered, "*Ang sa Pilipinas, ay sa Pilipinas,*" (*What belongs to the Philippines, belongs to the Philippines*) pertaining to the country's stance with regards to the South China Sea dispute under his administration (AP Archive, 2015). The Aquino administration opted for a rule-of-law approach in solving the dispute with China in which it had to rely heavily on ASEAN (Sonsri, 2015). In 2013, the Aquino government finally filed a case against China at the PCA in The Hague, Netherlands which resulted in a favorable outcome. However, the international ruling was not accepted by the Chinese and its enforcement is somehow challenging given the asymmetry of economic and military power between the two countries. Because of that, the Aquino government was pressurized to set out efforts in modernizing its military and reinforce the Philippine-US alliance.

In early 2014, the Aquino administration was able to complete 36 military modernization projects worth P41.2 billion through the enhanced Armed Forces Modernization Act. This has permitted the AFP to acquire military equipment from the United States such as armored vehicles, assault rifles, naval helicopters, amphibious vehicles, trainer aircraft and combat utility helicopters (Mangosing, 2014). On April 28, 2014, the Philippines signed the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) which allowed the rotational presence of US military in the Philippine territory in order to meet the demands of security challenges in the 21st century like terrorism and natural calamities. However, it is made clear in the agreement that the country does not give the Americans permission to build permanent military bases in its territorial sovereignty.

EDCA is a collaborative endeavor between the two countries that shared converging national interests in the South China Sea. For the United States, this was part of Barack Obama's Pivot to Asia which calls for the principle of freedom of navigation. Auspiciously, the America's Pivot coincided with Aquino's balancing

policy which primarily aimed to counter China on its aggressive expansion in the maritime domain (Office of the Press Secretary, 2014). Overall, the employment of US foreign policy in Asia and the perception of China as an external threat principally constitutes the contain-China policy of the Aquino administration. It was a policy that was essentially needed for the purpose of resisting China's belligerence in the disputed South China Seas resulting to the deterioration and souring of the Philippine-Sino relationship.

1.5 The Coming of Duterte and his Pivot to China

Ironically, upon the election of Duterte in mid-2016, he vocally expressed his move to take a step backward from the efforts conducted by his predecessor in order to pursue closer relations with China. The new government has chosen to redirect the country's foreign policy with China which immediately earned the name "Pivot to China," a part of his so-called independent foreign policy. This policy obviously exemplified a direct contrast with the containment policy of the Aquino administration as it became more open and friendly towards China. Such policy was instantly dubbed as "national tragedy" by former Philippine foreign secretary Albert del Rosario who served in the Aquino administration (Esmaguell II, 2016). This move by the new administration sends a signal of an immediate revitalization of the Philippine-Sino relationship which was damaged during the Aquino administration.

This shift was fully realized when Duterte along with hundreds of Filipino businessmen visited Beijing in October of 2016 where he also announced his desire to cut-off ties with Washington. Moreover, the new leader has also downplayed the South China Sea dispute (Blanchard, 2016). Furthermore, the tough-talking leader acknowledges the fact that the Philippines is no match with China in terms of waging war, hence dealing with the Chinese diplomatically is the best way forward. However, Duterte's favorable stance towards China has indirectly allowed it to continue building facilities in Scarborough Shoal and has also granted them the permission to conduct marine scientific research in Benham Rise (Heydarian, 2017). As a reward, President Duterte was able to gain big economic deals with Beijing amounting to \$24 billion worth of investment and financing agreements (Romero & Mercurio, 2016). But this

trade-off has raised concerns not only in the National Defense ministry but among the Philippine public in general. This has provoked one lawmaker to file a supplemental impeachment complaint against the President on the grounds of not being able to protect the country's territory (Cepeda, 2017). Later that month, on April 22, 2017, the President was compelled to retaliate against China by sending the country's defense and chief military officials to visit the disputed islands. The Duterte government has also expressed future plans of constructing facilities in the disputed territory as a sign of assertion (Marquez, 2017). This particular event has demonstrated how domestic pressures can truly affect the actions of the President. However, it is not guaranteed that it will always work.

With domestic constraints present, his earlier remarks about the separation with the United States and opening the possibility of revising and even discontinuing EDCA (*Philippine Daily Inquirer* 03 October 2016), may be perceived as pure rhetoric. Furthermore, a total separation with the United States is difficult, if not impossible due to existing treaties such as the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty which is currently existing that must be sustained by both the Philippines and the United States (Sonsri, 2015). Despite these institutional and domestic constraints, the Duterte administration can still be observed as pro-China which will be comprehensively discussed in Chapter 4. As a prelude, on April 29 this year, President Duterte and his government have chosen to keep silent in regards to the country's dispute with China during the 30th ASEAN summit held in Manila. In his opening speech, Duterte did not directly mention matters concerning the maritime dispute between China and the ASEAN region. Moreover, the following day on April 30, the final communique issued by the Duterte government had no strong statement towards China as well. The 25-page statement did not mention the focal concern of the region over the militarization of China in its artificially built islands in the disputed South China Sea (Associated Press, Duterte Drops Mention of South China Sea in ASEAN Statement, 2017). Thus, the friendly approach of the Duterte administration towards China remained evident.

President Duterte's desire to move closer to China while maintaining a cold stance towards the United States demonstrated a direct contrast to that of Aquino. In fact, President Duterte had openly declared his government's foreign policy

realignment, *“I have nothing against America, we are perfectly alright. Trump is my friend. But my foreign policy has shifted from that of pro-Western. I now have this working alliance with China..,”* (R. Duterte, television interview, May 22, 2017). Looking in-depth at the foreign policy shift that has transpired during Duterte administration certainly composes of various reasons that need to be identified and examined.

The decision of the administration to push for a true independent foreign policy at this point of time where the country has just won an international court ruling in favor of its territorial claims raises the central question of *“Why did the Philippine foreign policy shifted during the Duterte administration in favor of China?”* This research seeks to identify and analyze the reasons behind the shift in Philippine foreign policy by looking at China as the main factor. The study employs Gideon Rose’s (1998) neoclassical realism as a lens of foreign policy analysis. With that, this study offers a systematic explanation of the action taken by the new administration by examining the series of events that serve as empirical evidence in the revitalized Philippine-Sino relationship. It delves into the perceptions of the Philippine foreign policy decision-makers towards China’s intentions and its chosen foreign-policy response as engaged by the administration.

1.6 Problem Statement

One of the achievements of the Aquino administration is having been successful in the South China Sea arbitration with China which was initiated by his administration after filing an international legal case at the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague, Netherlands last 2013. The PCA rendered a favorable award to the Philippines on July 12, 2016 (Permanent Court of Arbitration, 2016), two months after President Duterte took office. Ironically, instead on capitalizing on the efforts of his predecessor, which logically calls for the necessity Strengthening US security relations and further asserting rights in its territory (West Philippine Sea), the new leader, instead, took an opposite approach, embracing China as it drops the US as an ally (Heydarian, 2016).

The particular decision has raised concerns not only in the executive level and academia but also in the general public, especially in the Philippines. In fact, most observers and analysts view Duterte's move with much skepticism given the potential risks of playing two major power against each other (Huang, 2016). Nonetheless, such move was expected from the new leader since during his presidential campaign, Duterte has always been very vocal about being pro-China. The new leader has also expressed openness in changing the direction of the country's diplomatic strategy and even stated that if China was willing to help his administration in its transportation and commercial infrastructure development plan, then he will "shut up" in regards to the territorial dispute (Robles, 2017). A Western Historian, Alfred McCoy (2017), said that Duterte is playing a very dangerous game with this move, asserting that it will only benefit China as it uses the Philippines to undermine US hegemony (McCoy, 2017 in Robles, 2017). This move may contribute to the classic potential risk of falling into a Thucydides trap, where it is stated that war will most likely to emerge in a situation where a great or rising power threatens to displace a current world hegemon (Allison, 2017). Hence, undermining American power posits future problems for the region's security and stability which requires a comprehensive understanding and attention.

If a foreign policy shift caused by an individual like Duterte has the potential of creating a massive problem and concern for the region, then it is necessary to understand and identify the reasons behind it. Such dynamic phenomenon requires a simple yet systematic explanation in order to comprehend the problem as presented in the preceding paragraphs. The problem presented in this thesis is best examined through a foreign policy analysis which would require a pragmatic theory to complement it.

1.7 Research Objectives

This research seeks to identify and examine the reasons behind the shift in Philippine foreign policy from Aquino's contain-China policy to Duterte's independent foreign policy which involves the so-called Pivot to China by looking at

China as the central factor that precipitated this shift. Thus, the research objectives of this study include the following:

- *To explain the shift* – By looking at the relationship between the two countries at this time period, this study aspires to give a comprehensive explanation for the concluded foreign policy decision of the Duterte government. Furthermore, as a novelty research, it also hopes to simplify this dynamic phenomenon in order to provide a foundation for future researchers that seeks to expand on this topic.

- *To identify the implications of Duterte’s foreign policy* – Aside from giving an explanation to shift, this study will also provide insights on the positive and negative implications of the government’s chosen foreign policy.

- *To contribute to the existing debate* – As an on-going phenomenon, one of the most important objectives of this study is to contribute to the current global discussion in regards to this matter with the aim of providing further analysis and a more in-depth understanding of the shift Philippine foreign policy.

- *To fill the gap in the existing literature*– Lastly, this research aims to fill in the gap found in the existing literature that approached the study in a “top-down” or “inside-out” framework.

1.8 Scope of the Study and Limitations

It is essential to place emphasis on the Duterte administration given that the primary purpose of this study is to explain the shift in Philippine foreign policy, specifically the employment of Duterte’s independent foreign policy that has drawn much attention from leaders on the regional and wider international stage. Hence, this study analyzed the relevant events that concerned the Philippine-China relationship since the time President Duterte took office, which was on the 30th of June, 2016. Moreover, the study also included some important events during the transition period (April and May 2016) and Philippine Presidential elections as it was at this time where the shift in foreign policy started to emerge. However, this study limits the scope up to the month of July 2017 during Duterte’s second Speech of the National Address (SONA). Nonetheless, the research has also touched upon one particular

event that has taken place during the Aquino administration which is the South China Sea tribunal.

1.9 Hypothesis

Based on a neoclassical realist perspective, the shift in Philippine foreign policy is influenced by the Philippine foreign policy-decision makers' perception of the international system and its relative power towards China.

Specifically, this study assumes that China's support and compatibility to Duterte's national priorities feeds in Duterte's perception of perceiving it as the best partner for his government among the different state actors in the international system, thus ushering the shift in Philippine foreign policy. Hence, the new administration views China as a viable partner for its economic and political aspirations, intentionally overlooking it as a threat which was perceived by the previous administration resulting to an "underbalancing" effect.

This thesis argues that because of this, the South China Sea dispute has been downplayed by the Duterte administration which in turn has allowed China to militarize the area, posing future long-term threat to the security of the Philippines and the region.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of two parts: theories explaining the shift in Philippine foreign policy during the Duterte administration and the neoclassical realism as a theory of foreign policy analysis employed in this study. The first part gives the overview of the different competing arguments raised by scholars in attempts to explain the shift in Philippine foreign policy that has occurred during the Duterte presidency. This research was able to discover few theories in which the author engages with by scrutinizing their gaps, strengths, and weaknesses. With that, it builds upon those prior studies which have paved the way for the acquisition of the chosen theory employed in this research. The second part of this chapter is solely dedicated to the neoclassical realism theory in which the approach of the research was based on. The author would like to assert that this section is necessary in order to establish a foundation that would set the expectations and limitations of the explanation offered by the study. In summary, this chapter provides an insight into the competing theories, the theory choice of the study, and a preview for the study's methodology.

2.2 Theories on the shift in Philippine Foreign Policy in the Duterte Presidency

With just a year in office, President Duterte's foreign policy redirection has already attracted different scholars who provided different perspectives and arguments. So far, asymmetric relations, structural-realism, and rational-actor are the theories that were used in the existing debate. Hence, it can be realized from this section that the analysis on Philippine foreign policy analysis is defined by a debate between the realists and the constructivists. However, the realists are undeniably seen as the most dominant within the literature.

Mico Galang (2017) asserted in his article that the sudden shift in Philippine foreign policy is a conciliatory approach that was opted by the new

government amidst the country's victory in the South China Sea dispute. He argued that the Duterte administration is pursuing a hedging approach in its overall diplomatic strategies which includes the option for the South China Sea. The hedging strategy meant that the government seeks to gain as many benefits from different superpower states like China and the US under a highly uncertain situation of the international environment today. In order to prove his argument, Galang utilized the televised interview of the new Philippine ambassador to China, Jose Sta. Romana whom provided a detailed explanation about the administration's pursuance of the independent foreign policy. The article noted that in the interview, the ambassador identified three major elements that cleared the speculations in regards to its ambiguities.

First of those elements was dedicated to clarifying the misconception about the policy itself. Galang stated that Duterte's foreign policy did not mean a total separation from the US which was presumed by most scholars. Instead, the foreign policy that was employed by the Duterte government just aimed to position the country in being less dependent on Washington while maintaining its historic alliance with it. The second element consisted of the expected outcome of the policy. It is said that through this independent foreign policy, the Philippines seeks to restore and improve relations with China which have suffered during the previous administration. Moreover, it was followed by the third element that aside from China, the Philippines aspires to overall improve its relations with non-traditional partners like Russia, Japan, and India as well. All of these elements are considered in Galang's analysis that basically discussed the context of the international system having a rising China as a major regional power and the declining US being evident today. With that, he argued that the security landscape nowadays consists of short and long-term risks due to its complexity which makes it difficult for countries like the Philippines to have a "clear-cut" strategic alignment with one country like it has been used to. Nonetheless, the article noted that the objective of the hedging approach is to save the country from investing in short-term risks. With the considerations of the three elements identified, Galang reasoned that by pursuing an independent foreign policy, the country is resorting to a hedging strategy in order to maximize the country's national interests. He further argued in his article that the Duterte administration does not intend to

totally pivot to China as this would not mean hedging but renewing alliances. Thus, he concluded that even the revitalizing of Philippine-Sino relations is emerging under the Duterte administration, the alliance with the US will remain unchanged. Moreover, Galang was also optimistic that through the independent foreign policy, the relations with countries like Japan and ASEAN will also improve (Galang, 2017).

Galang's article provided a simple yet straightforward explanation of the shift in regards to Duterte's foreign policy. Basically, the article is more of an overview of the independent foreign policy in which he categorized it as a hedging strategy used by the Duterte government in dealing with other states in the international system. Given that the article argued in the context of the international system, the author assumes and would like to classify that the applicable level of foreign policy analysis is the third level in which the focus was on the outcome of the policy - hedging strategy. According to Breuning (2007), the third level of FPA, also known as the system level of analysis focuses on the interactions between states in the international system. The interaction is highly influenced by the differences in size, power, and wealth which affects the behavior of different states as they interact in the global stage. The state's behavior is highly influenced by its perceived national interest in which it desires to achieve. However, national interest is not straightforward and thus requires a detailed definition of what it is foreign policy analysis on a case by case basis. Going back to Galang's article, he argued that the shift is due to the ambition of the Duterte administration of maximizing the benefits in order to achieve the country's national interests. However, the article only provided a general notion of what the hedging strategy aspires to pursue. Moreover, Galang has failed to contextualize and specifically identify which particular national interests the Duterte administration seeks to achieve in employing the independent foreign policy. Nonetheless, Galang's work is still important given that it has clearly established the notion that Duterte's foreign policy shift is a progression in order to maximize the benefits for the country which fits under the realist prism.

Following up on the first article is an expanded version that is written in a thesis form that offers a theoretically based assumption in explaining the shift. Jeremy Chiang (2017) argued in his research that the Philippines has fallen into a "Double-Asymmetric Structure" which makes the country vulnerable to foreign policy shifts

due to unequal relations it has with China and the United States. He analyzed four administrations starting from the Estrada administration up to the Duterte government. Chiang used Aquino's policy of containing China's maritime expansion by pushing for the South China Sea arbitration to Duterte's reapprochement with China as a specific situation to clearly demonstrate the shift. This situation was the basis of his study's analysis in which he argued that there is a growing influence of the asymmetric structure itself that is present in the Philippine relation with the US and China which has triggered the shift in foreign policy.

By using the Asymmetric Relations theory, he looked at the bilateral relationships of the Philippines with the United States and China. In analyzing the Philippine-US relations, Chiang explained that the Philippines only accounts for a small segment in US' strategy in Asia. Therefore, the Philippines being a small power is susceptible and is easily affected by the existence of the United States. This in turn causes Manila to place high considerations in its foreign policy to accommodate Washington's interests aside from its own. On the other hand, the US's attention towards the Philippines is not the same given that as a major power and a global hegemon, it is occupied by other important matters linked with its other relations with other states in the international system. With that, the only time that the US will pay attention to the Philippines is when its interests are being affected or threatened. Thus, this notion creates a possibility of distorted perceptions such as mistrust and unreliability from the people and leaders of the Philippines. Given this fact, the Philippines has a high potential to actually resort to employing antagonistic foreign policies towards the United States. Nonetheless, when both countries are in normal situations and the international system is stable, the two nations respect each other's existence where the United States respect the Philippines whilst Philippines respecting the US without questioning the asymmetry. In case that the relationship between the two states deteriorates underlined by the asymmetry, the Philippines may take this opportunity to seek support from a third party thus depicting an external balancing strategy in which caused the shift in foreign policy. This is said to be the case during the Duterte administration where it has shifted to China.

Chiang analyzed four factors in his study which are; territorial dispute, nationalism, domestic imperatives and international context. In the first factor, the

territorial dispute proved to be a concerning matter for both US and China. The Philippines and China had on-going tensions in the area, especially during the South China Sea arbitration pursued by the Aquino government. With that, the US had to intervene in the dispute given its own interests in the area as it is considered one of the most important trading area in the world. Next factor is nationalism which truly plays an important role in Philippine foreign policy formulation. The American colonization period is known to also comprise a dark narrative which can be used as a tool by the government in retaliating against the US once the Philippines is being aggravated. Chiang noted in his study the rejection of the renewal of US military bases in 1991 as an example in proving this point. The third factor is domestic imperatives which include the country's economic concerns, disaster preparedness and terrorist and communist insurgencies. Given these imperatives, the country is susceptible to ask for foreign assistance in order to resolve them. In fact, "Development

Diplomacy" is integrated into the pillar of Philippine foreign policy (De Castro, 2010 in Chiang, 2017). Lastly, the international context corresponds to the anarchic international system which has undeniable effect to the diplomatic decision of small states like the Philippines. He stated that hedging strategy would be the viable option for a developing Philippines in the reality of a rising China.

After analyzing those factors that were present in the past four administrations, Chiang concluded that the Philippines has always struggled with a double asymmetric relationship with the United States and China. As a result, the two superpower countries also struggle to influence and control the direction of Philippine's foreign policy in assuring it to side into their regional interests. He further concludes that the Philippines in an uncertain situation will be prompted to act independently, in which it does not take sides when the four factors are present. Hence, these factors are important indicators to look at when concerning the changes in Philippine foreign policy. In the case of Duterte's reapproachment with China, it can be observed that the new administration revives anti-American sentiment as it redirects the country to be closer to China downplaying the territorial dispute. He argued that domestic imperatives interplaying with the nationalism are the evident factors in the Duterte case. With that, the research mainly concluded that strategies

such as foreign policies choices are triggered and influenced by these four factors. Thus, the policy of the Philippines towards great power countries is prone to possible changes given the double asymmetric structure environment that it is placed in (Chiang, 2017).

Chiang's research is very useful in a sense that it has provided four factors to analyze. This research will accommodate some of the four factors identified in his study. Aside from identifying and establishing four factors that can be used in analyzing the Philippine case, the study was also able to theoretically ground that there is an actual shift in the country's foreign policy during the Duterte government which requires further explanation. This study would build upon Chiang's study and look more closely at the Philippine-China relationship and discuss the things that were left unexplored. Chiang's research placed much emphasis on the state and was only able to give an explanation of the shift in terms of the international environment the country is in. However, it did not touch upon the existence of Duterte as a leader in this situation. Moreover, the implications such as the gains and losses of the country in this foreign policy shift is also a gap in Chiang's study which this research would like to address.

The theories presented by Galang (2017) and Chiang (2017) obviously belong to the realist camp. According to Wivel (n.d), "Realists explain foreign policy in terms of power politics." It operates on a top-down approach looking first on the anarchic nature of the international system and how it affects the domestic politics of a country which includes foreign policy decision- making. In the shift in Philippine foreign policy of the Duterte administration in which it was perceived to favor China, some scholars have resorted to the realist lens in explaining this development (Wivel, n.d). Thus, with the support of Wivel's comment, the author of this study seeks to incorporate the first two theories under realism. In Galang's article, even though he did not associate his analysis under a specific theory, it can still be observed that his analysis falls perfectly under the realist paradigm as it has considered the nature of international system first in how it influenced the shift. In Chiang's article, on the other hand, the international system is also present. Although this study has primarily looked at the state structure itself in which he has contextualized the Philippines as a small state compared to that of the US and China. Moreover, it is also evident in both

studies that the states are the main actors in their analysis which fits under the core assumption of the realist theory coming from the idea of groupism. Groupism states that in order to survive, individuals create groups in a form of nation-state in which in turn collides and confronts another group causing conflict. Moreover, as seen in the two studies, both of them share the idea that China's rise in the international system is a turning point for the Duterte administration to side with it. Thus, this identifies under the theory of realism which is called as power-centrism that means power is a fundamental feature of politics that can be divided into two; social influence or control and resources (Wohlforth, 2012). The purpose of the author for classifying the two studies under realism is to provide a justification that the current academic discussion in relation to shifting in Philippine foreign policy is dominated by this camp. Moreover, this will also provide a strong support for the chosen theory that is employed in this study.

The realist argument continued to gain prominence in the debate where various scholars that have attempted to explain the foreign policy shift under the Duterte administration attributed their arguments under this theory. The Director of Defense Studies at the Center for the National Interest, Harry Kazianis (2016) reasoned that Duterte's decision of revitalizing ties with China while severing that of the United States fits within the realist prism. He argued that upon considering the influence of both China and the United States today, Duterte has already calculated that the best option for the Philippines is to side with China. He cited China's undeniable rise and the uncertainty of Washington to respond in a Manila-Beijing stand-off concerning their territorial dispute as two major reasons for the shift. In his article, he raised the idea that Duterte's anti- American sentiment is predisposed as a way to shift the country's foreign policy given the perceived circumstances of the new administration. He concluded that Duterte was being pragmatic in this situation given that the President perceives the Philippines being caught between a rising China and a declining US scenario (Kazianis, 2016).

Similar to Galang, Kazianis' article also provided a general assumption of the shift in which he argued that China's economic and military expansion are the primary factors that have influenced the Duterte administration in shifting the Philippine foreign policy. Kazianis' article did not identify the specific level of

analysis, although the author of this research would like to associate it with the first level of FPA. This is due to the fact that his analysis encompassed the perceptions and responses of Duterte as an agent of driving the country's foreign policy. The first level of FPA, also known as the individual level of analysis focuses on leaders and decision-makers in order to explain the country's foreign policy choices (Breuning, 2007). However, Kazianis was only able to give a general notion of how Duterte influenced the shift. He could have engaged more by analyzing Duterte's personality and ideology in order to strengthen his claim in his article. Nevertheless, Kazianis thesis establishes the notion that aside from the state structure itself, the perception of the leader on the international system is also essential. Thus, this study serves as a suggestion that the next step to the top-to-bottom approach, is to look at the individual level of analysis.

The realist argument of Kazianis was echoed by Filipino scholar Richard Heydarian (2016) in which he argued that Duterte's shift in foreign policy resulting in an equi-balancing approach, is due to the leader's geopolitical realist strategy. His article articulated that the President's willingness to cooperate with China in maritime security will secure the administration an influx of potential Chinese investments. This is perceived to be an effort of the Duterte government to move away from the losing side that the country has endured during the Aquino administration. The losing side that he pertained to is the time where the country has opted to strengthen security alliances with the United States and Japan while encouraging ASEAN to go against China as the Philippines took the South China Sea dispute case to international court implying that it was not practical. He concluded that the priority of Duterte's foreign policy is geared at maintaining a balanced relation with China and the United States which is what the country truly needs as of the moment (Heydarian, 2016).

In relation to the shift in foreign policy, Heydarian leans towards Duterte of being a geopolitical strategist in explaining the shift. Thus, his article can be attributed to the first level of FPA which is similar to Kazianis. Although, in Heydarian's article, the local perception of the leader was socially constructed due to leader considering the past failure of the previous administration rather than just relying on the China factor alone. It can be understood from his article that the reversal of Aquino's contain-China policy is pragmatic in a sense that Duterte is now

observing at hindsight in which the President acknowledged the losses of the country during the souring of Philippine-China relationship and the better gains it could have given its revitalization. Hence, the author would like to argue that in Heydarian's article, President Duterte's geopolitical realist strategy was socially constructed. Overall, the article of Heydarian also establishes the notion of paying importance on the leader's perception in analyzing the country's foreign policy choices.

Even though the debate concerning this topic is primarily dominated by the realists, other scholars have offered alternative explanations. American conservative scholar, Boot (2016) contended the realist assumption and specifically attacked Kazianis who argued that the shift in Philippine foreign policy is due to President Duterte being pragmatic after considering the international system. In fact, Boot was very aggressive in discrediting the realist assumption and even called such argument a disaster. Boot noted that ideology and domestic politics are not relevant to realist thinkers given that they only place importance on factors such as geography, demography, and economics as the influencing factors in shaping foreign policy. He argued that such assumption is misguided if only these factors were taken into the analysis of a realist perspective. Thus, Boot in his article tried to go through the various factors that realists thinkers mostly consider in order to show that arguing only based on these is not sufficient.

First, in terms of geography, Boot reasoned that despite the Philippines being far off from the United States, the two countries are known to be one of the strongest and oldest ally in the world which is being sustained by the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty which is still in effect today. Furthermore, the Philippines hosted American bases and troops in the country upon its independence until it was stopped in 1991. Nonetheless, under the Aquino and Obama administration, the two countries signed a new pact that would allow rotational United States military presence, access to bases and joint military training. Second, in terms of demography, the Philippines remains to be a pro-American nation where it has continuously enjoyed a high approval rating from the Philippine people. Moreover, in terms of bureaucratic institutions such as the military, the Armed Forces of the Philippines had many decades of cooperation with America which makes Duterte's shift in military alliance disastrous given the differences in ideology with that of the Chinese army. Lastly, in terms of economics,

he argued that China even though is the second largest trading partner of the country is no match with the combination of Japan, United States, South Korea, and ASEAN which makes it illogical to downplay its territorial claims for the economic benefit that it gets from the Chinese. He further concluded that Duterte's geopolitical realignment with China is worrying and is a product of nothing else but of his peculiar psychology (Boot, 2016).

Boot's argument is supported by Mesquita's (2014) claim in which he asserted in his book that scholars should place utmost importance on individual leaders in order to understand a country's foreign policy. He mentioned that in order to understand a country's foreign policy choices, individuals or leaders must be the focus of analysis through evaluating their decisions (Mesquita, 2014). Thus, this approach requires analyzing domestic factors such as ideology which coincides with Boot's argument which focused on Duterte's personality. In the first level of foreign policy analysis, scholars must assume that leaders are rational regardless of the perceived outcome or actual result of their chosen foreign policy (Tetlock, 1992 in Breuning, 2007). Thus, the author of this study identifies Boot's argument belonging under the first-level of foreign policy analysis.

Another literature that has value in this study is Brantly Womack's (2006) thesis on China- Vietnam relations which inspired Chiang's research as discussed above. However, unlike Chiang's work who placed emphasis on state structure and power politics in explaining the shift in Philippine foreign policy resulting in a Double-Asymmetry thesis, Womack analyzed the perception of state leaders through the Asymmetric Relations theory has been applied in an attempt to explain specifically the shift in Vietnam foreign policy caused by China. This theory is useful in studies that aim to explain how states with unequal power in terms of military and economy interact in an archaic system. According to Womack, this theory argues that the differences in power and influence among states have always been the status quo in the international system. With that, states are prone to face and experience hostilities and conflicts with one another. The theory aims to provide a new perspective in understanding how states with different perception in their bilateral relation interact thus changing their priorities through the deployment of their foreign policies (Womack, 2006).

The theories above all share important value in this study. Generally, it can be concluded that the theories presented above can be categorized under the two traditional international relations theories; realism and constructivism. Although it is evident that the former dominates the debate which highly influenced the theory chosen for this research. Moreover, the author was able to also identify gaps in the existing studies where the previous studies conducted were approached in either in a “top-down” or “inside-out” framework.

Galang (2017), Chiang (2017) and Kazianis (2016) has employed a “top-down” approach mainly focusing on how the international system has influenced the foreign policy shift, whereas Heydarian (2016), Boot (2016) and Womack (2006) used the “inside-out” frame of analysis in which Heydarian and Womack focused on the leader’s perceptions, particularly the former on the failure of the Aquino administration. Whereas Boot as a constructivist highlight the importance of Duterte’s psychology as the main drivers of the foreign policy shift. The gaps found in the existing literature requires future researchers in building upon it by employing new theories of foreign policy analysis that can merge the strengths of the competing theories identified in this chapter.

With that, this study builds on these disconnected factors and sees an opportunity to further develop the analysis by employing a theory of foreign policy under a realist framework. Hence, this study uses Gideon Rose’s (1998) neoclassical realism which is an approach to foreign policy analysis that combines classical realist and neorealist theory.

2.3 The Neoclassical Realism to explain Foreign Policy

Ever since the beginning when states started to interact with one another, foreign policy has always played a major role in which it primarily functioned as an indispensable tool for diplomatic negotiations. The term has been defined in numerous ways by scholars in which Breuning (2007) had pooled in order to give a comprehensive definition in his book that goes as “the totality of a country’s policies toward and interactions with the environment beyond its borders” (p. 5). Since then, foreign policy had been widely discussed as an important subject matter in the field of

international relations (IR). Hence, traditional IR theories such as Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism had to also evolve and continuously develop in order to fit and satisfy the demands of the new realities and phenomenon happening the world. This has paved a way to the advent of Foreign Policy Analysis.

The neoclassical realism emerged as a theory coined by scholar Gideon Rose in 1998 that specifically caters to studies concerning the analysis of foreign policy. This comes after theories such as neorealism and its critics who both formerly known to have dominated the debate about international politics, were perceived by Rose as insufficient and needed further development. Rose argued that in such analysis, foreign policy outcomes would vary per state. Hence, the suggestion was that it would be better to treat a foreign policy study based on a specific case rather than comparing a foreign policy outcome with other states or looking at repeating patterns which what neorealist usually do. The neoclassical realism developed as the fourth school of thought which incorporated three former theories: Innenpolitik, Offensive realism, and Defensive realism. The Innenpolitik theory gives importance on the influence of domestic factors on foreign policy. Whereas Offensive realism, on the other hand, stresses more on systemic factors having the utmost influence on foreign policy and state behavior. While Defensive realism shares the notion of Offensive realism, its assertion is in a lighter scale as it only argues that only some of the systemic factors drive the behavior of state and not all. With that, Rose determined the strengths and weaknesses of these theories in explaining foreign policy and found insufficiency citing that the former frameworks were one-sided approaches. Thus, he began developing a systemized framework for foreign policy analysis.

Rose's theory argues that foreign policy is an outcome of leaders' perception. However, these perceptions are also shaped by the international system. Hence, neoclassical realism theory delves into two factors, the cognitive variable which is the leader's perception and systemic factors which are influenced by the state's external environment. The former making up the internal and the latter the external factor.

2.3.1 The Systemic Factors (External)

Synthesizing both Offensive and Defensive realism, neoclassical realism acknowledges that systemic factors are important shapers of foreign policy. In fact, the theory asserts that relative material power of states may provide a primary basis for foreign policy, however, this is seen as incomplete. Rose argues that emphasizing solely on material power's influence is insufficient and therefore would not constitute to a comprehensive explanation of foreign policy and state behavior. According to Rose (1998):

It explicitly incorporates both external and internal variables, updating and systematizing certain insights drawn from classical realist thought. Its adherents argue that the scope and ambition of a country's foreign policy are driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material power capabilities. This is why they are realists. They argue further, however, that the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level. This is why they are neoclassical,

(Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy, p. 146)

Rose argues that there is no clear linkage between material capabilities and foreign policy behavior. With that, the neoclassical realism added another component that will help in better explaining a country's foreign policy- foreign policy decision-makers perception.

2.3.2 Leader's Perception (Internal)

One of the most important aspects of the Neoclassical realism theory is placing much emphasis on the cognitive variable which is the perception of leaders. In fact, this is the theory's major contribution to the field of foreign policy analysis which was mostly understated in the former schools of thoughts. Rose contends that in order to fully understand the employment and development of certain foreign policies, analysts must pay attention and delve into the perception of foreign policy decision-makers. With that, the perception of leaders is best understood through their national interest priorities. Rose writes:

Foreign policy choices are made by actual political leaders and elites, and so it is their perceptions of relative power that matter, not simply relative quantities of physical resources or forces in being.

(Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy p. 147)

In relation to the external factor in the preceding paragraph, one must look at how leaders perceived these systemic factors. Particularly, how leaders view the country's position in the international system with the consideration of their perceived material capabilities. However, Rose also cautioned that there are instances wherein leaders and elites does not have the complete freedom to direct foreign policy as there are various intervening factors that may constrain them and thus must be needed to be taken into account. Hence, a comprehensive foreign policy analysis must acknowledge the limitation of leaders in a particular country wherein the state structure through power analysis must be considered.

Basically, this theory seeks to explain states' behavior through its foreign policy, particularly delving into what states try to achieve in the international system and when they try to achieve it. In order to understand states' foreign policy, it is essential to look at the goals and national agenda set by its foreign policy decision-makers in relation to their perceptions on systemic pressures and of the state. Hence, the perception of foreign policy decision-makers, mostly of leaders, form the basis of foreign policy where the perception is also influenced by systemic pressures. Overall, the neoclassical realism is basically a convergence of neorealist and classical realist thoughts.

The framework of the neoclassical realism entails the analysis to start first through a neorealist lens. This is done by looking at the country's position in the international system through the perception of leaders in order to understand what influences the scope and ambition of its foreign policy choices. By doing so, the country's relative material power capabilities as perceived by the foreign policy decision-makers should be taken into consideration, thus translated into "perceived capabilities" rather than a realistic state material capabilities. Primarily, the analyst must distinguish between the country's power resources and foreign policy interests as the systemic pressures are being taken into account. However, each foreign policy case may experience limitations and constraint when it comes to employing a

particular foreign policy due to prevailing intervening factors which may be present and will depend on a particular state structure and overall power of leaders. These intervening variables must, therefore, be identified and analyzed through a unit level in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of a particular foreign policy decision.

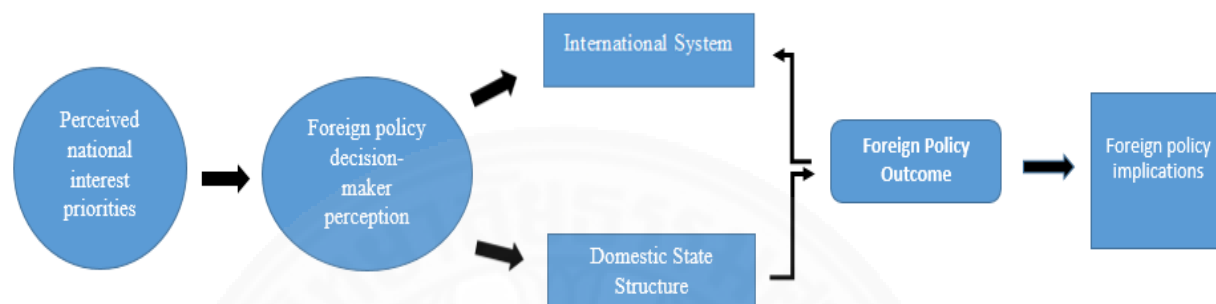


Figure 1. Diagram of Gideon Rose's Neoclassical Realism.

It can be seen in figure 1 that the neoclassical realism paradigm starts with the recognition of the state's national interest priorities as set by its leaders that gauges its perception. This is followed by analyzing the perceptions of the foreign policy decision-makers in regards with the influential actor in the international system and its state's structure with the consideration of its perceived material capabilities. At this point, intervening variables that appeared in a particular case study as distinctive due to the structure of the state will be discussed. The foreign policy outcome will, therefore, follow suit in which its implications is tackled.

On the other hand, the figure below presents the actual application of the theory to the specific case of this thesis. It can be seen that the perceived national interest priorities of the Duterte administration are the urged for economic development and demand for the war against illegal drugs. Moreover, this is followed by the perception of President Duterte on the international system and domestic structure of the country, as in the context of Philippine foreign policy decision-making, the President is the most powerful and dominant actor. In this thesis, President Duterte, with his consideration of the country's domestic structure which includes the perceived material capabilities, views China as the most influential actor

in the international system, thus affecting the government's foreign policy shift. Thus, the foreign policy shifted from contain- China foreign policy to a truly independent foreign policy or a "Pivot to China" type despite the intervening variable identified in this study which is the Marawi terrorist crisis in Mindanao. The main implication of this foreign policy shift resulted in a so-called underbalancing effect.

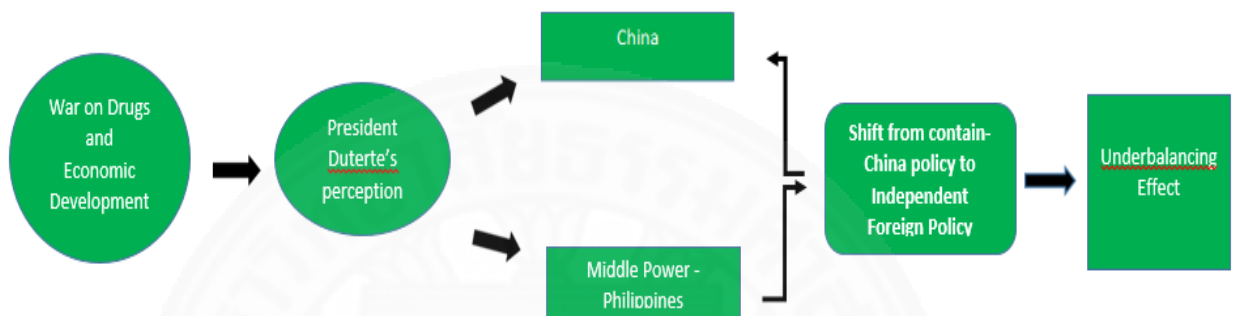


Figure 2. Application of Neoclassical Realism to the thesis.

In summary, this theory explains the way states respond to the continuously developing and uncertain international environment in which the preference is placed on the perception of relevant political and social actors with the consideration of the unique structural characteristics of a particular government. Thus, it is through the perceptions of these relevant actors, specifically, the foreign policy decision-makers that constitute the actions of foreign policy choices and outcomes. Moreover, this theory asserts that it is essential to establish a connection between perceived power and policy which requires a close examination of the perceptions of the foreign policy decision-makers in a particular case where foreign policies are developed and employed. With that, this theory and its framework will be employed and operationalize in this study which is explained in greater detail in Chapter 3.

2.4 Methodology

2.4.1 Research Method

This study has employed the qualitative method. Qualitative method is used in researches which aims to explore and understand reasons, opinions, and motivations of a certain phenomenon (Wyse, 2011). Since this research seeks to explain Philippine's shift in foreign policy with China, this method is believed to be the most appropriate. Under the qualitative method, this research used an exploratory research design. An exploratory design is desirable when the research problem has few or no earlier studies. More importantly, it intends to provide an understanding of a developing situation with the purpose of exploring new insights and generate first-hand knowledge in order to lay a foundation for future studies concerning this topic (Lynn, 2015). Due to the shift of the Philippines foreign policy being very recent, it is safe to assume that there are less studies that delve into describing and explaining it. Thus, the exploratory design is taken as the design of this research.

In order to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in this study, a single source of data is seen insufficient. With that, triangulation is chosen as an effective tool for this study in order to satisfy such concern as it pursues and gathers explanations from various sources such as written records, news reports or articles, autobiographies, and personal interviews, in order to offer an efficient corroboration of such a dynamic political event (Pierce, 2008). Specifically, this study used the triangulation of data which includes document analysis, online content analysis, and interview. The specific triangulation technique that was employed in this study is the triangulation of sources. Triangulation of sources allowed the study to verify the consistency of findings generated through the different data sources used (Patton, 2002). Having various sources involved in the study is helpful in analyzing the factors present and strengthening the assumption of the research. Both secondary and primary data will be used in this study.

2.4.2 Primary Data

The primary data used in this study include documents such as the government files retrieved from the DFA and NEDA. Moreover, this study will also collect information from televised and online interviews of Philippine leaders and

officials which make up the online- content sources. The online-contents that were analyzed in this study included the speeches of both President Aquino and Duterte, as well as the other officials concern, such as the military chief of staff, Malacañang Palace's spokesperson, etc. Lastly, the first-hand primary data that was gathered for this study was generated from the interview with officials from the DDB, DFA and Foreign Service Institute.

Given that this thesis focuses on the shift in Philippine foreign policy, it is very important to get the views of officials involved in foreign policy making. This study was able to conduct an interview with an active Philippine official who has a direct involvement in one of the factors involved in this research, General Dionisio Santiago who served as the former chief in the AFP and now was recently appointed as the new chair of the Dangerous Drugs Board by President Duterte himself. Moreover, a policy officer from the Department of Foreign Affairs who has continuously worked with various DFA secretaries, including especially Ambassador Manalo, the appointed acting DFA secretary by the Duterte government was also consulted for the purpose of clarifying the foreign policy of the new administration. The last group of people interviewed were two researchers from the Foreign Service Institute which is the research institute unit of the DFA. The data gathering period for this study took about a week from the 14th until the 18th of July this year. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that this study is limited to the perception of the Philippine officials.

2.4.3 Secondary Data

The secondary documents to be used include magazines such as *The Economist*, *The Diplomat*, and *Foreign Affairs* as these materials include economic and political articles and discourse relevant to the study. Moreover, academic journals from SAGE, JSTOR and ISEAS are also needed as these publications have proven to be useful in providing related studies and academic opinions. Other secondary sources used will include news articles produced by both local and international news agencies such as GMA News online, ABS-CBN News, Rappler.com, Reuters, Washington Post, South China Morning Post, Japan Daily, Al Jazeera and CNN.

2.4.4 Method of Data Collection

In obtaining the data above, various platforms and sources were used which include the internet, library and the necessity of the author to conduct a fieldwork in the Philippines on the month of July 2017 as previously discussed.

The primary and secondary online sources proved to be the most plentiful and accessible in which the online platform was fully utilized. During the data-collection process for online sources, the author practiced prudence in verifying the reliability and validity of the data gathered in which the cross-reference technique was employed. In searching the relevant and needed materials for this study, various search engine keywords were used such as: Duterte, Aquino, Philippines, South China Sea, China, foreign policy, economics, Dutertenomics, nationalism, pivot, Asia, ASEAN, US, Obama, Trump, Xi Jinping, Shinzo Abe, etc. In gathering the secondary documents used in this study, the researcher had engaged extensively in searching for books, magazines, and newspapers both in Thailand and in the Philippines which concerned the topic of the study. Moreover, in securing the records of the Philippine government such as Aquino and Duterte's economic blueprint agenda, the author had to send a formal request through the Philippine Freedom of Information website. The scope of time frame to which the study delves on started from online contents retrieved from the year 2008 till the month of August 2017.

CHAPTER 3

DUTERTE'S PERCEPTION, PRIORITIZING NATIONAL INTERESTS AND CHINA

3.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of the comprehensive discussions and analyses which is laid out in a narrative manner. The study all throughout follows Gideon Rose's (1998) neoclassical realism framework which was generally discussed in Chapter 2. In applying the theory to the Philippine case, this chapter will start first with the analysis on the perception of the foreign policy decision-makers on the state and the international system. Specifically, this pertains to the perception of the President Duterte towards the position of the Philippines in the international system in relation to its perceived relative power to China and the United States. It is necessary to establish a clear picture of these two countries given their undisputed dominance in the region which constrain the international system today. Moreover, this will help in providing a link between the leader's perception and of the influential actors in that system. The perception of President Duterte is important and sufficient given that in the context of Philippine foreign policymaking, the President is the Chief Architect and mostly the dominant influencer, hence it is the President who defines the national interests and behavior of the state.

After establishing the perception of President Duterte, the analysis continues on to the overall behavior of the state in the international system in which the national agendas of the Duterte administration are taken into consideration. These factors are necessary given that the study assumes that China's support and compatibility to President Duterte's national interest priorities feeds in his perception. This is done by the simultaneous analysis of China as the central factor of the research given its prevailing influence in the international system today that has truly affected the shift in Philippine foreign policy. This study was able to determine the two national interests of the Philippines under the Duterte administration; economic benefits for development and the war on drugs. This study was able to identify these two variables which draw inspiration from Chiang's thesis as scrutinized in Chapter 2

where the domestic imperatives of the Philippines basically include the country's economic concern and domestic security (Chiang, 2017). Moreover, the author sees these factors as an important indication of demonstrating the differences in the national interest priorities set by the Aquino and Duterte administration. The former administration has placed much attention on protecting the country's sovereign territory in the South China Sea from its perceived external threat which is China, whereas the Duterte administration focused more on the country's domestic issues such as the war on drugs, insurgencies, and terrorism (De Castro, 2016). It is important to note that the national interests set by each administration is due to what the leader perceives as the current need of the country. By analyzing these factors, the author aspires to provide sufficient evidence that will prove the causes of the foreign policy shift.

The last part consists a brief analysis that will delve on the terrorist attack in Marawi, Mindanao. The author asserts that this event is of important value to the study given that Duterte's behavior and perception is highlighted in this situation. This is due to the fact that the existing US- Philippine alliance are put to a test.

3.2 The perception of President Duterte on the Philippines in relation to the International System

3.2.1 Leader's perception and Foreign Policy

Understanding foreign policy decisions had been a rigorous task among scholars particularly to those who are committed to understanding international politics. Aside from the constant variables such as state structure and material power, a relative amount of importance was also devoted to the understanding of leader's perception in relation to foreign policy studies. A notable scholar Steven Spiegel argued that the most important factors in studying foreign policy decisions are perceptions and philosophy of state leaders (Spiegel, 1985 in Herrmann, 1986). Moreover, these perceptions have been specified by Alexander George wherein it is said to pertain to the leader's images of the opponent which affect their policy choices thus making it necessary for analysts to understand the operational code and cognitive factor as variables of policy making (George, 1979 in

Herrmann, 1986). Likewise, Rose in his neoclassical realism embraced perception as the dominant part of his theory which is said to be helpful in better explaining foreign policy decision and choices. With that, perceptions of leaders on the international system are not only beneficial but necessary to take into account.

It is no stranger for the scholars in this field that the international system is forever changing and will continue to do so in the coming years. The world has witnessed how the system has transformed from a bipolar set-up during the cold war period, to a unipolar one following the fall of the Soviet Union. The world today can be characterized as multipolar given the rise of various regional hegemon such as China and India in the Asia-Pacific region. With that, there is really no clear-cut definition in terms of determining the real position of the Philippines in this dynamic international system as this will have to depend on the international actors like states and international factors such as economic and military power which are constantly changing. Nonetheless, today, the Philippines has been classified as a middle power country. A middle power country is defined as an actor with sufficient strength and authority to stand on its own without the need for help from others (Botero, 2015). However, given the “*multipolarity*” of the international system, the concept of normative balancing emerges as a normal strategy for middle power states today. According to Chaewkang You,

Normative balancing refers to the middle powers’ effort to persuade the great powers so as to embrace a norm of “multilateralizing security” and “cooperative security.” Keenly aware of the consequences of the deadly military confrontation between the powers, these middle powers serve as norm entrepreneurs or broker and play a constructive role of persuading the two powers to be highly responsive to the above norms.

(Chaewkang You, 2016)

With that, in relation to this research and as guided by the neoclassical realism theory, the position of the Philippines in the international system will be defined based on how the current government visualizes it. Moreover, the author would like to assert that President Duterte is not utilizing the country’s middle power position as a normative power. Rather, this paper argues that the President, due to his perception is convinced that the country is not capable to go against China. In

fact, according to Chietigj Bajpae, a manifestation of this would be seen from the recent decision of the Philippines to virtually ignore the PCA award and resort to questioning the reliability of its great power ally, the US under the Duterte administration instead (Bajpae, 2016).

Back when he was still a Mayor of Davao city in June 2015, President Duterte mentioned in a national televised interview that the Philippines cannot afford to go to war with China. He further explained that the growing influence of China and Russia is becoming a reality that we must all accept especially in the 21st century. Moreover, he also cited the unreliability of the United States as the Philippine ally given his personal belief that there is no way for America to go to war with China in regards to the South China Sea dispute (R. Duterte, televised interview, June 23, 2015). Based on his responses in this interview, it can be realized how the upcoming Filipino leader sees China as a dominant force in the international system and how it wishes to position the Philippines in it. Duterte also acknowledges the fact that the Philippines is no match with China in terms of economic and military power. This also denotes that once elected, the foreign policy towards China will most likely change from that of his predecessor, Aquino's contain-China policy to more open and friendly relations with it. Moreover, the shift is also caused by the ambiguity of the Obama administration and the clarity of China's foreign policies towards the Philippines in relation to the South China Sea. The author would like to argue that the Obama administration is ambiguous in its stance on the Philippine-China dispute therefore establishing America's unreliability to the perception of Duterte that.

The ambiguity of the US can be realized in a personal interview conducted by Filipino political analyst Richard Heydarian,

On two occasions, I asked, on the record, two (former and current) senior American officials, one in Pentagon and another in the State Department, whether the MDT is just a matter of semantics or, instead, could be concretely invoked in specific scenarios, particularly in the Scarborough Shoal, if and when China chooses to fully reclaim the contested land feature. So far, the most I have heard is their reassertion of 'ironclad commitment', but no clear explanation on what this means in operational terms.

(R. Heydarian, ABS-CBN News, March 17, 2017)

In relation to China's stance on the other hand, Beijing had made it clear that it will not abide by the PCA ruling. Interestingly, Heydarian has put this situation into an interesting description in one of his presentations,

The Chinese were very clear. You know, the joke in the Philippines is that the Chinese ambassador in the Philippines is called the whisperer because he is always whispering something to the President. He meets the President more than other foreign envoy and diplomat. And the Chinese ambassador did a very good job at saying, "if you try to use this arbitration award to embarrass us and if you welcome more American military presence in the Philippines, in the South China Sea we are going to make life hell for you." With that, they deployed various nuclear bombers close to the Scarborough Shoal and they conducted joint military exercises with Russia. They did all the kind of signaling. But at the same time, they said, "If you play nice and not raise the award and kind of downgrade some aspects of relationship with the US then we will make life quite heaven for you and offer you all the economic incentives that your ASEAN buddies like Malaysia and Vietnam are getting."

(R. Heydarian, CSIS Forum, November 13, 2017)

Hence, given these discussions, Duterte perceives US as an unreliable ally and therefore was prompted to shift its diplomatic relation towards the two countries being hostile to the US and subservient towards china. With that, the change in the country's foreign policy is expected given the context of Philippine foreign policy decision-making where the President as the Chief Architect of foreign relations has a huge control and influence on it (Baviera, 2016). According as well to a Senior Foreign Affairs Research Specialist from the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) of the country's DFA, Jeremie Credo, *"Every administration, there is a risk that policies, good or bad policies tend to change depending on the interest of the President, the personality of the President..."* (J. Credo, personal interview, July 18, 2017) Duterte has also expressed in another interview that the country would overall be in a better position if we mend our relation and continue to work with China. In his own words, he uttered, *"We're better off making friends with China. Anyway, America is also the best friend of China. We will adopt a neutral policy there,"*

(R. Duterte, television interview, October 28, 2015). Moreover, this sentiment is also shared and supported by the wider spectrum of the Duterte government, especially by some of some his appointees such as the newly appointed chairman of the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) and former Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief Dionisio Santiago who was personally interviewed by the author of this study. General Santiago had echoed the nature of Duterte's foreign policy direction by stating,

"...the best balance is to be friends to everybody. What is wrong with being friends with everybody? They are our neighbors. China is very close and everybody is going to China for business, why disallow the Philippines to be friend with the Chinese and take advantage?"

(D. Santiago, personal interview, July 16, 2017)

At first, the responses of Duterte were perceived as pure words with no corresponding actions, especially during the pre-Presidential elections. It was thought that this was only a campaign tactic conducted in order to portray him as a totally different type of Presidential candidate from that of his opponents who most prefer to retain and continue Aquino's foreign policy. As another Senior Foreign Affairs Research Specialist from the FSI, Louie Merced puts it,

"Well I think, initially people thought it was all campaign bluster and will not follow to what he said. But to what we have been seeing, he is really trying to redirect our foreign policy and especially even in the West Philippine Sea issue,"

(L. Merced, personal interview, July 18, 2017)

At hindsight, President Duterte has been proven to be a determined leader who is willing to stand by his decisions regardless of how controversial it may be. That is also another reason why narratives of him being a dictator and fascist are propagating.

Upon the election of Duterte in mid-2016, rhetoric and campaign promises seemed to immediately become a reality. The world saw an instantaneous shift in Philippine foreign policy which is derived from its demand for economic growth and the domestic campaign of war against illegal drugs which will be manifested in the coming sections. Hence, these two factors constitute the national

interest priorities of the current government in which affected the behavior of the Philippines, resulting in the employment of Duterte's independent foreign policy.

In relation to China, specifically in the context of the South China Sea dispute, he vocally expressed his move to take a step backward from the efforts conducted by his predecessor in order to pursue closer relations with it. He redirected the country's foreign policy, immediately earning the name "Pivot to China" which was a part of his so-called "independent foreign policy." However, critiques have also quickly emerged and such policy was immediately dubbed as "national tragedy" by former Philippine foreign secretary Albert del Rosario who served in the Aquino administration as this would entail downplaying the country's international arbitration victory (Esmaguél II, 2016). The Pivot to China was fully realized when Duterte expressed his desire to revive diplomatic relations with China that have transpired during his state visit to Beijing.

The perception of President Duterte as revealed in the preceding paragraphs demonstrates a clear indication of the direction taken by the administration's foreign policy. The ambiguity of the US and the clarity of China's foreign policy stance on the Philippines in relation to the South China Sea is argued by this study to be the starting point of what feeds in to his perception. This has been validated through the rhetoric in which later turned into actual actions that are manifested in the coming sections of this chapter. Therefore, the actions taken by the Duterte administration constitute the behavior of the country in the international system through its foreign policy employment. However, perception alone on the state in relation to the international system would not be sufficient as it is just the beginning of the analysis wherein it satisfies only the first part of the neoclassical realism framework. With that, in order to make sense out of the foreign policy shift, it is also essential to link foreign policy to the national agenda set by the Duterte government.

3.3 President Duterte's National Interests in relation to the Behavior of the Philippines in the International System

3.3.1 The International System

The international system is a concept of international relations that have been established in the late 1950's due to the growing interaction between states. This term has been defined as a concept for the analysis of international politics or relations which mainly focuses on the political and economic global situations that encompass both diplomatic and military actions of state relations at a given time (Hatsuse, n.d.). Moreover, it is a structure composed of interacting states also called as units in which arranges and defines the system (Waltz, 1979). By employing the neoclassical realist theory, the research delves into the national interest agenda set by the current government which are the demand for economic growth and war on drugs. The following paragraphs will provide a discussion on the administration's prioritized national agenda in consideration to its perception on the position of the Philippines in the international system in relation to its perceived relative power to China and the United States.

3.3.2 China and the United States in the Asian Region Today

The scene in global politics today is undeniably one of the most exciting for the history books, when an emerging superpower state such as China, topples or challenges the status of the present world hegemon, United States. These changes and competition is predominately played out in Asia. The Philippines under the new administration chose to align with China, almost seemingly distancing from its longtime ally, the US which is somewhat daunting both for the West and the Asia Pacific region. Interestingly, Malaysia followed the same path that the Philippines has taken as Prime Minister Najib Razak expressed his intentions in seeking stronger ties with China. Malaysia which also claims some part in the South China territorial dispute believed that best way to resolve this issue is to work with Beijing and have peaceful negotiations with them (Associated Press, 2015). Moreover, Prime Minister Najib also asked the West to stop lecturing Malaysia as it embraces China and signed a raft of memoranda of understanding for Chinese investment in the country (*Reuters*,

06 November 2016). Aside from these, China has also continuously played the victim causing a revival of the dilemma between Japan and South Korea in relation to the Second World War. China, South Korea and Japan all have historical issues concerning Japan's imperial past. In September 2015, President Park Geun-hye became the only close ally of the US to attend China's massive military parade at Tiananmen Square. The parade was a way for China to celebrate the end of the Second World War and the defeat of Japan (Tiezzi, 2015). The increasing closeness between China and South Korea definitely alarmed the US and Japan as this would mean an even more difficult task for them to unite Asian democracies in the region to counter China.

These developments can be easily understood given that Asia is arguably one of the most diverse and dynamic regions in the world. This is due to the differences in culture, ethnicity, geography, language, religion, economy and government systems found inside it. With that, states in this region are constituted with various national interests and domestic priorities. Moreover, it also finds itself being composed of the extremes which is manifested by being home to the richest and poorest, the most and least populated, and the most democratic and authoritarian nations in the world (Shambaugh, 2014). Hence, the region has continuously drawn much attention from the world, particularly of superpower countries such as the United States. In fact, this can be manifested through the US' Pivot to Asia foreign policy launched by the Obama administration in order to recapture and maintain the US presence in the region where it has perceived it as the center of the 21st century economy (Ford, 2017). Conversely, this region is also home to various regional hegemony such as China, India and Japan. Amidst this fact lies various claims of scholars about the change in the international system today. It has been argued that the sole-superpower US is losing such status since the Cold War period due to a rising China (Rachman, 2016; Lai, 2011; Xuetong, 2011).

The US has been very active in the affairs of the region. Historically, it has played a role in the Second World War, as well as the Korean and Vietnam wars to name a few scenarios. Moreover, the country has finally established itself as the only world hegemon during the end of the Cold War due to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. However, the international system faced various events

that has constrained American foreign policy such as the September 2001 terrorist attack which has redirected Washington's attention towards the Middle East, particularly to Afghanistan and Iraq. This has somehow left the Asia-Pacific region neglected, in which states with potential to become superpowers such as China and India rests (Sutter, 2014). Nonetheless, this shortcoming was later realized by the Obama administration in which his foreign policy moved away from the Middle East, instead placing more focus on the Asia-Pacific region. The reason is primarily due to the rise of both China and India because to their undeniable economic growths. With that, the US sees it important to engage more with the region diplomatically, strategically, and economically, thus strengthening existing ties with allies such as that of with Japan, Australia, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines and forming new alliances such as with Indonesia and Myanmar (McLaughlin, 2012; Clinton, 2011).

It is agreed among the political and economic American elites that the US should maintain a global presence in terms of military, economics, and politics in order to contain possible challengers (Hook & Scott, 2012). This means that the US, regardless of whoever the President is, will most likely steer its foreign policy under these ideals in order to maintain its position in the international system, including the Asian region. In fact, despite the transition in its leader, from President Obama to the newly elected Donald Trump, Washington's foreign policy includes America's continuous engagement with the Asian region particularly in the issue of North Korea missile crisis and the South China Sea (Broader, 2017; Valencia, 2017). With that, the US in the region is undeniably still relevant and has maintained its position in the region. However, various arguments emerged in the spectrum such as the idea of a declining US and a rising China.

China is a country that has been in the interest among scholars due to its said continuous rise and weakening of the Pax Americana (Shaplen & Laney, 2007). However, it has been argued that the US' Pivot to Asia somehow provoked China to become more aggressive in the region which was manifested when it revived its Senkaku Island dispute with Japan and started to push forward for its nine-dash line claim in the South China Sea (Ford, 2017). Nonetheless, majority of the literature that claims China's rise argued on the basis of its continuous economic growth in the

21st century. In 2014, China overtook the US as the world's largest economy according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Bird, 2008). The news raised a lot of speculations and was not easily received by other countries, particularly the US itself. The United Kingdom nonetheless took a different course and embraced China as the new world economic power. In fact, a new UK- Sino relations developed in 2015 when President Xi Jinping visited London and signed bilateral trade deals (Mullan, 2016). A Realist scholar, Dr. Mearsheimer asserted that, "*generated wealth will later be transformed into military power,*" which was manifested in China's case (Mearsheimer, 2016). In 2015, China's military spending under Xi Jinping has increased to \$145 billion which is an average of 12% hike per year doubling its defense budget (Bitzinger, 2015). China investing a lot in military power only sends a message to the world of its attempt to be a dominant power in the region, countering that of the US.

Nonetheless, despite its increase in military power, China has ironically changed its aggressive behavior towards Southeast Asian nations. President Xi even pushed forward for multilateral economic agreements such as RCEP and global initiatives such as the One Belt One Road project (*Bloomberg News*, 14 May 2017). Hence, it can be realized that Beijing started using soft power strategy and economic assistance to persuade states in the region to side with them (Hsiao, 2008). This seemed an effective strategy particularly in the case of the Philippines under President Duterte which can be realized in the coming paragraphs. The paragraphs above gave a sufficient description on the positions of the two influential actors in the international system. It can be concluded that there has not much of a significant change between the foreign policies and capabilities of both the US and China in the region.

Now that this study has already established the perception of Duterte on the Philippines' position in relation to the international system above, this research moves on examining the first of the two national interests that are set by the Duterte administration which is the administration's economic agenda.

3.4 The Influence of Economic Benefits on Philippine Foreign Policy

Since its independence, the Philippines has faced numerous economic challenges and constraints that make it susceptible and reliant on external superpower countries. This comes as no surprise given that attaining economic security is one of the three core pillars of Philippine foreign policy (Romulo, 2011). With that, there have been numerous studies that scholars have looked into in relation to how the Philippine foreign policy was shaped and influenced by its desire to maximize economic benefits. A study conducted by Berry (1990) pointed out that the Philippines upheld the pragmatic security alliance with the US in the late 1970's concerning economic benefits as the primary aim. During that time, the country was able to receive an overwhelming \$962 million for two consecutive years which was about twice the amount of the previous compensation rate after renegotiating the treaty. It was also during that time that the Philippines is of important value to the US given its strategic location that is essential for the Americans engaging in the Vietnam war. Lande (2001) also presented a similar notion in his study by focusing on the Filipino nationalist make the most of the economic gains from the US. He argued that Filipino nationalist during the 1970's believed that the US was only beneficial for economic purposes rather than an ally for security protection. Because it was at this time where resentment against America emerged and grew swiftly due to the observance of the US supporting the authoritarian regime of Marcos. However, the economic benefit garnered by the government, including the Filipino nationalist were sufficient in keeping the foreign policy intact. Nonetheless, even after the Marcos regime was ousted, the US resentment continued. Several studies asserted that Philippine foreign policy with the US during the Corazon Aquino administration in 1986 was primarily based and founded on a long-term economic gain framework. It was unfortunate though that it was at this period where the Philippines, particularly its military bases lost its value for the Americans due to the disappearance of the Soviet threat resulting to the US decision of halting the increase in the compensation it offers. This has subsequently caused the failure of the renewal of bases in 1991 (De Castro, 2003; Sanger, 1991). The previous studies represent a strong empirical basis on economic as an influential aspect to shift in Philippine foreign policy which

changes depending on the economic agenda of every administration. In respect to this study, this study would like to argue that President Duterte views China as a partner for its economic agenda which is part of his national interest priority.

3.5 Duterte's perception on China and the United States

3.5.1 Duterte's visit to Beijing and his desire for economic benefits

On the night of October 18, 2016, President Duterte arrived at Beijing's Capital International Airport for his four-day state visit. His delegation was composed mostly of his cabinet members including Senator Alan Peter Cayetano who was the chair of Senate committee on foreign affairs at that time and now the Secretary the Department of Foreign Affairs since May of 2017 (Ranada, 2016). A day before his flight to Beijing, Duterte has expressed in an interview with Xinhua news agency that he believes China is the only country that can help the Philippines (*Xinhua News*, 17 October 2016). In this visit, Duterte seeks to revitalize relations with China which soured during the Aquino administration. Moreover, he mainly aspires to enhance economic trade and economic cooperation with them. General Santiago has also mentioned that *"There is this big neighbor who is willing to do business with us and support us economically,"* pertaining to the Chinese (D. Santiago, personal interview, July 16, 2017). The goal seems reasonable given China's continuous economic rise, placing itself as the second largest economy in the world (The World Bank, 2017). Therefore, China would obviously mean an absolute win for the Philippines, specifically in terms of exporting mineral and agricultural resources given that they are a big market.

Aside from the macro aspect such as trade, the microeconomic part would also have relative gains which were also discussed during this visit. In fact, traveling together with the Philippine government in President Duterte's state visit to Beijing are approximately 400 Filipino businessmen, of which around 200 of them are of Chinese descent. Businessmen and entrepreneurs who wanted to be part of this trip had to register with the Philippine government weeks before the flight in order to take part in this event. Among the business dealings, most participants had listed in their agenda consists of private infrastructure development, railroad construction, and

funding, agribusiness, power, manufacturing and tourism (Woody, 2016). According to the president of the Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Angel Ngu, *“The trip is a good sign that Philippines and China will restore bilateral relations and also it will open the market for us,”* (A. Ngu, television interview, October 17, 2016). The administration’s visit to Beijing has truly established a clear picture of the country’s position today which demonstrates an opposite direction compared to what the previous government has taken. It can be assumed that demand for economic growth is on top of the priority list of this administration. General Santiago has also shared during the interview that Duterte aspires to improve the country’s economy first so that the Philippines can improve its military forces in order to protect itself and be less reliant on other countries like the US. Although, he has also cautioned that the administration should make sure that the Philippines will not be in disadvantage position in this revitalizing relationship (D. Santiago, personal interview, July 16, 2017).

Aside from the foreign policy shift, it is also worth knowing that President Duterte’s election was historical as he holds the record of being the oldest Filipino President to serve the country at the age 71 and also the first who came from Mindanao. And as the first native Mindanaoan President, he vowed to develop the southern region economically which was said to be less prioritized by the previous administrations. A decentralized economic strategy was one of the approaches that were extensively discussed for the Duterte government’s socioeconomic agenda during the two-day business sector assembly in Davao City, Mindanao June of last year. According to the CEO of the Magsaysay Maritime Corp., one of the attendees of the meeting,

“Decentralization is key to inclusive growth. Manila has always been the central business hub of the Philippines, leaving a lot of people in the regions excluded from the enjoyment of economic opportunities and a better quality of life,”

(Joven & Rodriguez, 2016)

Also known as *“Dutertenomics,”* accompanying the socioeconomic agenda is the willingness of the government to enormously invest on big infrastructure projects which was named as the *“build build build”* project. This has

been dubbed as the “golden age of infrastructure” in the Philippines which includes mostly the expansion of airports and construction of major roads, bridges, railway transportation system. Through this economic agenda, public spending on infrastructure projects is estimated to reach 8- 9 trillion pesos in the next five-year (Morallo, 2017). With that, it is evident that infrastructure is among the top priorities of the Duterte government in its economic agenda.

On June 2017, a government panel led by the President has finally approved a total of 305.64 billion pesos or \$6.05 billion budget in order to start the infrastructure projects (*Reuters* 27 June 2017). Among the top infrastructure priorities of the Duterte government is to kick-off the construction of the first phase of the Mindanao Railway which will connect the cities of Tagum, Duterte’s hometown Davao and Digos which will cost approximately 31.5 billion pesos. Tagged as “high priority,” the Department of Transportation (DOT) has already submitted a feasibility study to NEDA in order to fast-track the construction of this project. NEDA Undersecretary Rolando G. Tungpalan clarified in an interview that the funding for the Mindanao Railway project will be coming from a national budget and not from the official development assistance (ODA). However, the construction of the project is open to the involvement of foreign entities which includes Malaysia, Japan, and China. Aside from a new railway system, the Mindanao region is also the main priority of the government for the construction of roads and bridges with a total budget of 139.6 billion pesos allocated, amounting to a 36.5% of the total budget divided by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) for the country (*SunStar Davao* 03 February 2017). In terms of his promise to develop other regions in the country, particularly his very own Mindanao, the President has once again proven to be a man of actions.

In just a year in office, the President was able to successfully accumulate approximately 1 trillion pesos in ODA which was an unprecedented feat in the history of modern Philippine governance. Aside from Japan which pledged 1 trillion yen (424 billion pesos) for the infrastructure projects of the country, China is undisputedly seen as the biggest ODA source of the Duterte administration with \$9 billion in total value apart from the \$15 billion worth of private commercial deals (*ABS-CBN News*, 15 January 2017). This is truly a significant achievement for the

Duterte government because with only the exception of few projects such as the Mindanao Railway project, most of the other infrastructure projects of the government will actually require foreign funding. In fact, big-ticket projects such as the Mega Manila subway, Philippine National Railways (PNR) North 1, PNR North 2 and PNR South Commuter will be funded through ODAs which costs 227 billion, 105.3 billion, 150 billion and 134 billion pesos respectively. The PNR South Long Haul is a 151 billion pesos project that will be funded through Chinese ODA. Once completed, the 581-kilometer rail line will run from Manila to Legazpi, passing through various cities, seaports and economic zones of South Luzon (Morillo, 2017). Majority of these foreign aids and ODAs were discussed and sealed during President Duterte's meeting with President Xi Jinping in Beijing last year.

Duterte and his delegation were very much well received in China. This was seen across the globe as a true turning point for the Philippine-Sino relations ever since it had deteriorated due to the South China Sea dispute. President Xi has accepted the renewal of relations and even described it as a milestone achievement for both countries. In his speech, the Chinese leader has articulated that, *"I hope we can follow the wishes of the people and use this visit as an opportunity to push China-Philippines relations back on a friendly footing and fully improve things,"* (BBC News, 20 October 2016). However, some members of the Philippine Senate were worried about the massive economic dealings that the Duterte administration has entered with China. In May 2017, Senator Richard Gordon has requested for the disclosure of the details with regards to the billions dollar aid and loans from China in order to make sure that there are no conditions that will hurt the Philippine interests. In order to assure the protection of the country's national interests, Senator Francis Pangilinan has urged the members of the Senate to support the Senate Resolution 158 which was filed by Senator Paolo Benigno Aquino IV since last October. It is a resolution that will require both the Senate committees on foreign relations and economic to conduct a hearing and investigation on the administration's foreign policy (Romero, 2017). It can be realized at this point that despite the economic benefits that the country will gain from China, some of the national politicians are aware of the danger that the country may face and therefore are not totally appease to Duterte's foreign policy direction.

With regards to that, this research would like to offer two perspectives of analysis corresponding to the Duterte's foreign policy and his economic agenda. For China's side, the shift in Philippine policy is of important significance as it can be seen as a victory for winning an ally in the region. Moreover, this further establishes its regional hegemonic position as it sends a signal to the world that it has somehow successfully achieved the level of possessing an undeniable influence on its neighboring countries, especially on those that are allied with the US. For the Philippine under the Duterte government, China is seen as a swift economic partner with favorable conditions for its ambitious infrastructure goals. However, this ambition to forge closer ties with China in order to maximize economic benefits requires a trade-off. This study argues that the apparent trade-off here is downplaying the country's arbitral win courtesy of the Aquino administration.

3.5.2 Duterte's hostility towards the United States

Another evidence which truly demonstrates the shift in Philippine foreign policy aside from the revitalization of Philippine-China relation is the deterioration of the Philippine-US relationship under this administration. President Duterte has truly grabbed worldwide attention for severing ties with America, specifically to that of the Barack Obama administration which was evident through his virulent rhetoric. On September 5, 2016, the President had a press conference in Manila before heading to Laos for the ASEAN Summit. It was in this event where he labeled Obama, who was the US President back then, a son of a bitch (Worley, 2016). Duterte was emotional as he delivered his speech saying, "I am a President of a sovereign state and we have long ceased to be a colony. I do not have any master except the Filipino people, nobody, but nobody. You must be respectful. Do not just throw away questions and statements. *Putang ina, mumurahin kita jan sa forum na yan* (Son of a bitch, I'll swear at you in front of everybody in that forum)," (R. Duterte, presidential speech, September 5, 2016). In his speech, the questions and statements that he is indicating simply pertain to Obama's criticism on his bloody campaign against drugs. This has actually hurt the Philippine-US relations which eventually led to the cancellation of the scheduled meeting of President Obama and Duterte (Gayle, 2016).

Moreover, it was also during his state visit to Beijing where Duterte's anti-American rhetoric has reached its peak when he has announced the separation from the country's longtime traditional ally, the United States, in replacement of a better preference to China and Russia. It was in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing where he stated that "In this venue, your honors, in this venue, I announce my separation from the United States," (R. Duterte, presidential speech, October 20, 2016). In this announcement, he has expressed his desire to realign with China both militarily and economically. This also denotes the fact that the two countries will resolve their South China Sea dispute through bilateral negotiations (Blanchard, 2016). In this speech, it can be expected that the South China Sea arbitral victory will not be utilized for now by the Duterte government, hence the term "downplaying" it. With that, the downplaying of the arbitration actually does not mean the total abandonment of it which has been mostly perceived by the majority of the scholars. Mr. Merced from the FSI has clarified this notion during the interview in which he explained that,

"...I think what you also see there is that Duterte cannot really completely abandon the arbitral tribunal ruling because it has a strong public support. So it will be quite difficult and tricky to completely abandon it because there will be pressure from many sides. That is why if you look at his statements, he would say, there is a proper time for it, I will still raise it but it is not now, maybe in the future. He cannot really go far as saying that oh we really just toss it in the trash bin,"

(L. Merced, personal interview, July 18, 2017)

However, a follow-up question was immediately raised that if the arbitration were not to be raised now, then when? With that, this thesis would like to argue that time is also of essence given the fact that the South China Sea is being militarized rapidly by the Chinese through constructing artificial islands which will soon become their military bases. This apprehension has been address by Mr. Merced of the FSI by stating,

"I think a lot of people are also concern that it might already be too late by the time we raise it, China has already done what it wants to do in the South China Sea and there will be little value for the arbitration case. So

well, we'll see. I think this is where the diplomacy skills of the Philippines will be tested on how far are we really willing to push for our own national interest..”

(L. Merced, personal interview, July 18, 2017)

Given this notion, this research would assert that the faith of the country in the South China Sea stand-off lies in the hand of no-less but the Duterte government itself. And with the continuous drive of the current government to forge closer relations and cooperation with China, the future of the Philippines' legal territory in the South China Sea is something that would be hard to imagine, at least for now.

Overall, it can be understood here that the shift in Philippine foreign policy is very much influenced by the immediate economic benefits the Duterte government requires due to its economic plan of heavy infrastructure spending. While the economic benefit is very much essential to this administration, it is also interesting to know though that President Duterte is only interested in dealing with countries who do not interfere in its domestic affairs. In the discussion above, there are notably two countries that are relevant to the economic dealings of the current administration; China and Japan. The two countries were very much welcomed by the new Philippine government as both of their leaders kept silent with regards to Duterte's war on drugs and instead, both had pledged generous economic support for country's future development plans. According to Mr. Jj Domingo who served as a foreign service officer in the DFA,

“In a way that's the genius of the President's policy. Because of his anti-American rhetoric and pro-China rhetoric, you have now the Chinese who want to make sure that this remains and you have the Japanese that are courting him, to make sure that he does not fall towards the Chinese orbit that much,”

(J. Domingo, personal communication, July 17, 2017)

However, as seen in the figures above, the Chinese government seemed to be a lot more aggressive in trying to win over the Duterte administration, showering the Philippines with more ODA and billions worth of private investments compared to its East-Asian neighbor.

Moreover, aside from the favorable perception of Duterte towards China which was evident way before he got elected as President, the shift in foreign policy is also supported and ushered in by the fact of a deteriorating Philippine-US relations due to America's disapproval of Duterte's war on drugs. With that, this research argues at this point, that Duterte's political ideology in regards to upholding the war against drugs does not align with the United States under the Obama leadership. Hence, the war on drugs is an important factor in this study and is considered as the second variable in the study that is required to be examined under the neoclassical realism theory. Specifically, political ideology is a factor under the theory of innenpolitik that stresses emphasis on domestic factors that determine how countries would behave toward the world beyond their sovereignty (Rose, 1998). Therefore, this research argues that Duterte's war on drugs has a degree of influence on the shift in Philippine foreign policy.

3.6 Duterte's War on Drugs

During the Philippine Presidential elections, Duterte has been known for his campaign to solve and alleviate drug problem in the country. He even gained massive support from the public when he kept on promising to fulfill this in just the span of 6-months. This domestic policy campaign would not be an easy task and will surely require aggressive efforts from both the government and other concerned domestic bureaucracies such as the Philippine National Police (PNP). Immediately upon winning the elections, the strongman has kept his words true to his campaign promise and in just a month in office, around a thousand have been killed and over 600,000 drug-related individuals have turned themselves into authorities. Moreover, some drug syndicates, both big and small, have finally been brought to jail (Robins-Early, 2015). President Duterte's war on drugs has received both supports and critiques. Nonetheless, despite the opposing views, what is certain is the fact that this campaign was truly felt not only in the country but in the entire world.

Despite his harsh rhetoric and bloody war on drugs, President Duterte has continuously graced his first three months in office with a consistent high approval ratings from the Filipino public. The Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey found 83

percent of respondents have “much trust” in the president, while 9 percent are undecided, leaving the remaining 8 percent with “little trust” resulting to a +76 net trust rating (Gonzales, 2016). According to the chairman of the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) General Santiago, “...this President is very popular. His actions are sanctioned by the Philippine people. Right or wrong is adored by the Filipino people,” (D. Santiago, personal interview, July 16, 2017). However, this is not the case outside the country and the story has been uncovered in a rather different headline throughout the world. The action by the new administration has resulted in countless cases of extrajudicial killings that have alarmed many citizens in the international community. Al Jazeera reported that the war on drugs operations resulted to total fatalities of 2,448 as of August 2016 (Regencia, 2016). Other international news agencies such as the Washington Post had even released an article entitled, “Nearly 2,000 have died in Duterte’s ‘war on drugs’ in the Philippines. One is a 5-year-old girl,” (Phillips, 2016). The bandwagon of international news agencies kept on reporting the same thing, highlighting the theme “crime against humanity” which was prevalent and had the international community appealing that the action of the new Philippine government in inhumane and therefore must stop.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has released a statement in the same month, condemning the actions of the Philippine government. However, Philippine president Duterte himself disregarded the official announcement and has even called UN’s proposition about this matter as, “stupid,” (*Al Jazeera*, 18 August 2016). The US government finally stepped in when hundreds of US citizens protested in New York City to show their disapproval to the unjustifiable domestic policy of the Philippine government. Some have even named Duterte as a mass murderer (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 25 August 2016). On September 2016, the US government took the opportunity during the ASEAN Summit in Laos to urge the Duterte government to conduct the war on drugs the right way, which basically means to be in accordance with the rule of law (Placido, 2016). When asked by the press in Vientiane about his comment on the Philippines’ war on drugs, Obama has expressed that,

“We're not going to back off on our position that if we're working with a country, whether it's on anti-terrorism, whether it's ongoing after drug traffickers, as despicable as these networks may be, as much as damage as they do, it is important from our perspective to make sure that we do it the right way. Because the consequences when you do it the wrong way, innocent people get hurt. And you have a whole bunch of unintended consequences that don't solve the problem,”

(B. Obama, news conference, September 8, 2016)

Regardless of the growing international criticisms towards his war on drugs, the tough leader has vowed to continue with it and has even promised the Filipino people that it will even be more intense in the coming months.

The then US President was right when he said that innocent lives might be taken away in this war. In fact, there have been numerous cases where the victims included innocent children and students who had been proven to have nothing to do with illegal drugs. The most recent case just happened last August 16, 2017, during an anti-drug operations in Caloocan City where a 17-year-old high school student was killed. In an earlier report by the authorities, the victim was shot because he was said to fight back against the police during the operations which were immediately denied by the witnesses and disproved by the released CCTV footage that has captured the scene. The National police chief Ronald dela Rosa assured the public that the officers who shot the victim will be held responsible for their actions (*Al Jazeera*, 19 August 2017). Nonetheless, President Duterte is aware of these cases. And earlier in December of 2016, the Filipino leader had apologized for it on national television in which he uttered, “I would admit there were killings that were really unintended, like the children who were caught in a crossfire. ...and I'm sorry,” (R. Duterte, television interview, December 29, 2016).

After a year of conducting the war on drugs, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) said that the Duterte government was successful as the campaign had more positive impacts, especially in alleviating the use of narcotics in the country. PDEA Director General Isidro Lapeña stated that during Duterte’s term, 86,984 drug suspects were arrested, including 302 government workers while nine drug laboratories were and 152 suspected drug dens were closed down dwarfing the anti-drugs operations of the past administrations (Placido, 2017). The Duterte

government has mentioned that the war on drugs will continue until the end of his term which will be until the year 2022. Interestingly, this perceived success of the government's drug war was also due to the help and strong support of its newfound ally, China.

Unlike the United States under the Obama administration and other countries in the West, particularly the European Union, who criticized Duterte's war on drugs, China has been seen to be very supportive. In fact, aside from the Chinese government, private Chinese citizens had partnered with the Duterte government. A Chinese businessman Huang Rulun funded the Mega Drug Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation Center in Nueva Ecija in which the phase 1 of the project was completed in November 2016. The center is expected to accommodate and handle 10,000 patients which is of big help for the government's anti-drug policy. The President had labeled the Chinese tycoon as a "Good Samaritan," (Ranada, 2016).

Moreover, the Chinese government had also been consistent in showing support to the Duterte government since his election. On September 29, 2016, the country has finally released an official statement through its Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang, who said that "Under the leadership of President Duterte, the new Philippine government enacted policies that prioritize combating drug-related crimes. China understands and supports that," (Viray, 2016). Moreover, during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) undertaken by the UN Human Rights Council in May 2017, China once again stood by the Philippine side. In reality, out of 47 members of the council, 45 had urged the Philippines to end extrajudicial killings and withdraw its plan to revive the death penalty except for China. During the press conference, Chinese spokesperson Shuang once again delivered a stance in favor to the Duterte government,

"Drugs are the common enemy for all human beings, bringing pain to many developing countries, including China. China supports President Duterte and the Philippine government in combating drug-related crimes in accordance with the law. We hope the international community can respect the judicial sovereignty of the Philippines and support its efforts in fighting drug-related crimes through cooperation,"

(Flores, 2017)

Mr. Merced of the FSI has also reaffirmed this notion during the interview stating,

“While everybody is criticizing him on the way he approach the drugs campaign, China was very open arms and was willing to help Duterte and I think that also played a big factor on why he is so open to dealing with China right now. They don’t even care about the human rights issue because it is *the same with them. In that regard, they have a commonality, and Duterte finds peace with that,*”

(L. Merced, personal interview, July 18, 2017)

It truly makes sense that China’s support for the war on drugs and non-intervention in the Philippine domestic affairs supports Duterte’s political ideology in which the Philippine government is mainly operating on, thus ushering the shift in Philippine foreign policy. During President Duterte’s recently concluded SONA last July, the President reiterated the concept of non-interference in upholding the position of the country’s foreign policy,

“As an independent nation, we will uphold and promote our national interests in the international community. We will strengthen and seek partnership with those who share our values. We will engage nations with full respect for the rule of law, sovereign equality, and again, non-interference. These are the principles that we are upholding as we advance to this year for the meeting as the chair of the ASEAN”,

(R. Duterte, Presidential Speech, July 24, 2017)

With that, this research asserts that the President’s last speech which emphasized on non-interference and respect for sovereignty is another supporting evidence that explains the administration’s favorable stance towards China and antagonism towards the United States.

Moreover, the shift in Philippine foreign policy under President Duterte was somehow put to a test during the terrorist attack in Marawi, Mindanao. The Duterte government had seen the necessity for a sudden reinforcement of Philippine-US alliance due to the demand of the Armed Forces of the Philippines for American intervention. With that, understanding the true intention of the country’s independent foreign policy can be also be comprehended in this event and is therefore necessary to

discussed. Moreover, this even provides an opportunity to have a deeper understanding of the true intentions of President Duterte whether the country has truly sided towards China as what was established in the former paragraphs in relation to the two national interest priorities.

3.7 The Marawi Terrorist attack in Mindanao

On May 23, 2017, the Islamic city of Marawi which was located in the province of Lanao del Sur in Mindanao has been under attack. The aggressors were believed to be affiliated militants of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) which included members from two local jihadist groups; the Maute and Abu Sayyaf. It was reported that the violence erupted right after the troops from the Philippine government had launched an operation in the city to arrest Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon who was also believed to be the ISIS leader in Southeast Asia. Since then, the tensions between the terrorist groups and government troops had escalated immediately as exchange of gunshots were heard in the area which left at least eight injured and one cop dead (Cupin, 2015). At around 4:30 PM on that day, some members of the Maute group had forcefully occupied the Amai Pakpak Medical Center public hospital. It was also on this site where they had planted the group's black flag which included ISIS' logo (*ABS-CBN News*, 25 May 2017). Towards the end of the day, the city has seen some of its establishments like the Dansalan College and Saint Mary's Church being destroyed in flames (Funbuena, 2017).

When the attack occurred, President Duterte was currently on the second day of his official state visit to Russia. Upon being briefed about what has happened, the decisive leader had promptly declared martial law to be enforced in the entire Mindanao. Duterte cited rebellion as a justification for the declaration of it, reasoning that the ISIS-inspired Maute Group has tried to establish a territory of the Middle East-based terrorist organization in Mindanao (Morallo, 2017). However, most constitutional and security experts do not share this view. In contrast, they argue that the situation does not really require martial law as it is still controllable (Viray, 2017). Moreover, many are quite skeptical about the military rule being imposed given its

negative reputation due to the bad experiences that the country has endured during the Marcos regime.

3.7.1 Duterte's visit to Moscow

The President had to immediately cut his scheduled week-long trip to Moscow. Nevertheless, the Filipino leader was still able to discuss few important matters which included discussions on economic and security assistance with Russia's President, Vladimir Putin. Moreover, the brief meeting between the two leaders correspondingly encompassed the worsening situation in Mindanao before the aggrieved leader head back to the Philippines (Mendez, 2017). President Duterte primarily traveled to Moscow to seek better economic relations, specifically in trade which was part of an attempt to reorient the geopolitical alliance of the Philippines further away from Washington and towards Moscow (Walker, 2017). But as the crisis intensifies in his native homeland, President Duterte has taken this opportunity to candidly request to his "idol" President Putin, his intention of purchasing arms from Russia,

"I'm sorry to hurry up but I need to buy arms. If you can grant me soft loan, we will pay right away because the arms that we ordered from America was canceled and we have a problem now with ISIS rebellion,"

(R. Duterte, presidential speech, May 23, 2017)

It was in November of last year when the US State Department stopped the selling of approximately 26,000 pieces of assault rifles to the Philippines' national police. This was due to growing concern of the United States over the human right violations attributed to the government's war on drugs that has caused thousands of extrajudicial killings as discussed earlier in this chapter (*The Philippine Star* 2 November 2016). According to President Duterte, Russia was very much ready and willing to accommodate the needs and provide the required defense equipment to the Philippines in order to counter terrorism. President Putin, on the other hand, has deeply expressed his condolences to his Filipino counterpart and hopes that the crisis in Mindanao would immediately be resolved (Romero, 2017).

On July 11, 2017, President Duterte an optimistic speech during the 10th listing anniversary of the Phoenix Petroleum. He was certain that the Marawi crisis

will be resolved in 10 to 15 days. However, the spokesperson from the AFP, Brig. Gen. Restituto Padilla did not promise a specific time in regards to when the crisis will end. Nonetheless, the General has assured that offensive operations are positively being carried out at the moment (Morales, 2017). The conflict in Marawi has continued for about a month and during the third week, the Philippines, through its military seek help from Washington in order to solve the crisis. A spokesperson from the US Embassy in Manila informed the media that, “At the request of the government of the Philippines, U.S. special operations forces are assisting the AFP with ongoing operations in Marawi that help AFP commanders on the ground in their fight against Maute and Abu Sayyaf militants,” (*Reuters* 10 June 2017). When President Duterte was asked to comment on the assistance of Washington in the Marawi crisis, the usually anti-American leader unexpectedly thanked the US for its help. Although the President has also clarified that he did not personally ask for the help of the US and that he was also not aware of the American military presence in the crisis until the troops were actually seen arriving at the site. President Duterte, who is also the country’s commander-in-chief told the reporters that, “This is really their sentiment, our soldiers are really pro-American, that I cannot deny,” pertaining to the AFP. The operations of the US troops were also limited to training and technical assistance only. With the help of the Americans, advanced surveillance and tracking equipment such as flying drones were installed in the area. Moreover, the US P-3 Orion surveillance plane was also seen in action flying over Marawi City (Dancel, 2017).

On the other hand, the Chinese did not abandon the Duterte government during the Marawi crisis. President Duterte has acknowledged the help coming from its newfound ally as it delivered firearms and ammunition towards the end of June. Moreover, the President has also proudly articulated that the help coming from China did not require anything in exchange (*CNN Philippines* 15 July 2017). In his speech given during the arrival of weapons at the Clark Airbase, President Duterte said,

“To Ambassador Zhao, please relate our sincerest thanks to President Xi Jinping and the government of the People's Republic of China for its military aid package I will receive today in behalf of the Philippine government,”

(R. Duterte, Presidential Speech, June 28, 2017)

It has been made known to the public after Duterte's state visit to Beijing that the two countries had an agreement where China pledged to turn over 590 million pesos worth of military equipment to help the Philippines in fighting the ISIS-inspired terrorists in Mindanao. Moreover, the Chinese government was also perceived as a generous ally as it donated 5 million pesos to the families of soldiers killed and wounded in Marawi (Ho, 2017).

When the insurgency ended on October 23, 2017, the President once again expressed his gratitude towards China and went on to saying that, *"It was China who responded immediately to our cry for help,"* (R. Duterte, Presidential Speech, November 16, 2017). Furthermore, the President gave an inclination in his speech that pertained to the economic aids and fundings the country receives from its new ally, *"Maybe in the future, the Philippines would also show its debt of gratitude to China for all of the fundings, public works, bridges and all,"* he added, referring to other forms of aid from Beijing" (R. Duterte, Presidential Speech, November 16, 2017).

There are many points of analysis that can be drawn in the Marawi crisis. However, this study would only highlight three which are the most relevant to the thesis topic. First, the crisis revealed the vulnerability of the Philippines, particularly of its Armed Forces, in handling domestic defense and security issues such as terrorism, therefore the country sees itself depending on other states. With that, America remains to be an important aspect to the Philippine defense architecture and system. In fact, the US has been a big influence in the development of country's AFP. Historically, the journey of the two countries started off when the Americans conquered the Philippines back in 1898 during its colonial expansion period. However, when the Philippines gained independence on July 4, 1946, American military presence remained under the Military Bases Agreement of 1947. Likewise, the Mutual Defense Treaty was signed in 1951 which marked the start of the so-called "special relationship" between the countries where interests of both nations are best believed to be benefitted (Lande, 2001). Moreover, it also proved that despite the antagonism of the President towards Washington, the AFP can still be seen as US-oriented which suggests a divergence between the executive and military institution is existing. Hence, this event could have provided a window of opportunity for the revitalization of Philippine – US alliance.

However, which leads to the second point, this event has also proved that President Duterte has genuine desires in truly realigning the country's geopolitical strategy to Beijing and Moscow which was evident in his numerous speeches as identified above and the acquirement of armaments from those countries. Moreover, this event had only strengthen the personal preference of the President towards China and despite the diversion between the President and AFP in their preference on handling domestic security, the executive branch has more power and influence in actual foreign policy. This is manifested in a sense that even though America was the first in sending help during the emergence of crisis, the President was perceived to be more satisfied with China's assistance.

Third, in relation to Duterte's visit to Moscow, this study would like to argue that the scenario of purchasing hardware weapons from Russia seemed to be more symbolic, emphasizing the foreign policy shift than its actual pragmatic benefit. This last point can be supported by two arguments; first, the Philippine military institution has been used to the American weaponry system due to the existing military treaties. Therefore, the systems that the AFP currently uses are actually patterned after the US. Moreover, as acknowledged by President Duterte himself, most AFP officials are educated in the West which makes their institution operate under US-centric values. Second, the author of this research is quite skeptical about the practicality of this purchase if it were really to push through given the fact that there is no sufficient time for the AFP to learn and adapt to the Russian system since the crisis in Mindanao has already been on-going. Mr. Merced of the FSI has also backed up this argument, "*If we introduce weapons and hardware from other countries, if we buy them, it won't be very easy to integrate them with what the AFP is used to using,*" (L. Merced, personal communication, July 18, 2017).

With that, this paper suggests that Marawi crisis event may have provided an opportunity for the Philippine-US revitalization due to the demand of the Armed Forces of the Philippines for US intervention and the utilization of the existing Philippine-US existing security treaty, thus hindering the idea of a total Pivot to China. However, this paper argues that it this event demonstrated that President Duterte has truly have a more favorable preference on China. Therefore despite these

restraints, it can be concluded that the China's support and compatibility to Duterte's national interest are more powerful in constraining the Philippine foreign policy.

After delving into the three factors in this section, it can be concluded that President Duterte has truly taken a different path in terms of steering the course of the country's diplomatic strategy as influenced by his perception of the country and the international system, thus causing the shift in foreign policy. In order to understand this, it is also beneficial to be reminded of the two main priorities of the Duterte administration; heavy economic spending and domestic concern for the war against illegal drugs.

In the first factor which discussed the economic benefits, the study found out that Duterte leaned towards China due to the big business projects and loans, both conditional and unconditional promised to his government. Moreover, the government of Xi was quick in responding and committing to the economic agenda of the Duterte administration. At the same time, this desire of aspiring to partner with China economically where the behavior exemplifies a no-strings-attached type of commitment, would have to connote back to Duterte being the first Filipino President from Mindanao, in which he is expected by the Filipino people to fulfill his campaign promise of developing the other cities and provinces believed to be left out by the other administrations. With that, this paper argues that President Duterte perceives China as the best economic partner in fulfilling his economic agenda which is one of his national priorities.

The second factor which discussed the administration's war on drugs proved another point that supports the shift in Philippine foreign policy. The Duterte administration's campaign against illegal drugs which caused numerous extrajudicial cases was supported and praised by the Chinese government. Moreover, China did not only support the Duterte administration on a diplomatic level but also through the actual government-to-government level through China's donation of drug rehab facilities and financial aid to be used for this policy. Hence, China's support for President Duterte's war against illegal drugs which is another national priority of his government establishes a clear reason for the government to realign with China. Therefore, this paper asserts that aside from material benefits, similar political ideology is also a factor that supports the shift in Philippine foreign policy.

The last factor that was added in the analysis, the Marawi terrorist event may have demonstrated a degree of constraints to the shift in Philippine foreign policy. However, the Duterte government was still observed to favor China more instead of its US ally in terms of handling its domestic crisis. In fact, the author would like to argue that despite constraints emerging due to the reinforcement of US presence in the country due to Philippine military's demand, the President was still seen to have preferred China, only strengthening the fact of the country realignment and foreign policy shift. This point was proven through the rhetoric of the President as discussed earlier and his visit to Moscow in which he demonstrated the willingness to diversify sources of arms for the Philippines, thus implying a less dependence on the US.

In summary, this chapter was able to prove through the discussion and analyses on how the Duterte government perceives the position of the Philippines in the international system which is weak in terms of economics and military capability compared to China. In congruence to that perception, the government's national priorities also converged with China thus further strengthening the shift in foreign policy. With that, as guided by the neoclassical realist framework, the perception of the Duterte government on the position of the country in consideration of the three factors can undeniably explain the shift which demonstrates a direct contrast to that of the Aquino administration that has pursued a US-centric and a contain-China foreign policy to Duterte's independent foreign policy. The overall impact of the change in foreign policy of the Philippine directly points to the issue of the South China Sea.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPLICATIONS OF DUTERTE’S INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY ON THE SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTE WITH CHINA

4.1 Introduction

As the shift of foreign policy was discussed and analyzed in the preceding chapter, this section will be devoted to tackling the implications of the foreign policy shift which is the downplaying of the South China Sea issue. With that, this chapter gives an overview of the foreign policy conducted by the Aquino and Duterte administration in regards to the South China Sea. The purpose of this chapter is to fulfill one of the objectives of this study which is to discuss the impacts of the foreign policy shift which constitute the actual hypothesis of the thesis.

4.2 Challenging China: Aquino’s policy on the South China Sea

In 2011, just a year in office, former President Aquino asserted in his SONA that the country will no longer keep silent in regards to the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea). It was at this moment where he opened the possibility of bringing this disputed case with China to the United Nations tribunal for the Law of the Sea (*GMA News Online* 25 July 2011). Aquino proudly uttered in his speech, “*Ang sa Pilipinas, ay sa Pilipinas,*” (What belongs to the Philippines, belongs to the Philippines) pertaining to the country’s stance with regards to the Spratlys under his administration (AP Archive, 2015). The Philippines at that time wanted to resolve this issue through a Rule-of-Law approach (Sonsri, 2015). The Aquino administration kept its promise and in 2013, the Philippines filed a case at the PCA in The Hague, Netherlands against China.

The South China Sea dispute dates back in the early 1970’s when countries started claiming their respected territories in the vast body of water which contains abundant natural resources such as oil and natural gas. Along with China and

the Philippines, other countries within the Southeast Asian region such as Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam also have their own claims in the contested waters which are part of their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (Council on Foreign Relations, 2017). The problem grew and intensified when China asserted its ownership through its historical nine-dash line claim which encompasses almost 90% of the South China Sea, overlapping other countries' EEZ. With that, China incorporates various reefs and islets such as the Spratlys, Scarborough, and Paracel to its territory alarming other stakeholders in this dispute (Liu, 2016). Throughout the years, there were no stakeholders that have pursued in forwarding the issue to an international court to settle the dispute. Not until in 2013 when the Philippines under the Aquino administration finally filed a case at the PCA in The Hague, Netherlands.

The PCA evaluated various legal aspects which are labeled as "item" in this section for the purpose of being easily identified. Moreover, the author translated legal syntax wordings into a more generalized form highlighting its political effect for a more comprehensive understanding of the discussion. There were at least five items that were identified in the arbitration; Historic Rights, Status of Features, Lawfulness of Chinese Actions, Harm to Marine Environment and the Aggravation of the Dispute (Permanent Court of Arbitration, 2016). The PCA was grounded on these items as a basis for their decision that took approximately three years of careful deliberation.

The first item that the court had to deal with was analyzing the validity of Beijing's historic rights and the methods of determining maritime entitlement in the South China Sea. This means that the Tribunal has jurisdiction to analyze the historical background and territorial development of the disputed area which would lay as a source of foundation in identifying maritime entitlement of both Manila and Beijing. Because of this notion, the Tribunal examined China's Nine-Dash Line which is a historical claim loudly reverberated by the Chinese government. The arbitrators found out that the claim explicitly violated international law as it does not coincide with the concept of EEZ as stated in UNCLOS. There was also lack of historical evidence that would prove China in exercising exclusive control of the area. Hence, it could be concluded that China's historic claim had no legal basis which means that it has no rights to the resources within the area.

Next, the PCA also looked into the status of particular maritime features and distinguish whether they are capable of generating entitlements. In order to do so, the court was required to look into a circumstantial matrix in assessing the features found in the disputed area. The maritime features such as reefs should be seen above the water in its natural condition to be able to generate maritime entitlement. However, China modified the reefs by artificially elevating them to be above high tide water level. In 2015, various media reported that China continued to construct artificial islands while the arbitration was on-going (*The Guardian* 27 June 2015). It was clearly stated in the convention that the features on their natural condition and not those that of being artificially constructed are to be acknowledged. China also claimed various features that had no chance of generating extended maritime zones given that such sea features it claimed like the Spratly Islands were mostly rocks which had no possibility of inhabitation of a stable community. Thus, it can be concluded that China's claim of features in the area, once again had no legal basis. Nonetheless, the Spratly Islands still belonged to the Philippine territory even though it could not sustain life as it lies within the archipelago's EEZ, therefore under Philippine sovereignty.

The arbitration also concerned the Philippines' protests towards China's unlawful actions. There is no doubt that Beijing could easily intimidate Manila given its higher economic and military power. In fact, there were numerous times that China violated the sovereign rights of the Philippines within its EEZ. In fact, there was an incident in 2016 that the Chinese disrupted the fishing economic activity of Filipino fishermen which harmed their livelihood and food access (Harvey, 2016). This was obviously a violation of the rights of Filipino fishermen given that they are prevented by a foreign country to carry on with their economic activity inside their own sovereignty. Moreover, China also projected its aggression in the disputed area by conducting a petroleum exploration without the knowledge of Philippine government (Nicolas-Lewis, interviewed by S. Zhang, television interview, July 2016). This has alarmed the United State as it has perceived China to be militarizing the area which posits future danger and intimidation in one of the most important trading routes affecting the safety and interest of the Asia-Pacific region at large. With that, Washington was prompted to adopt a tougher stance in the disputed area by which it

aimed to send a US Navy Ship to patrol near the man-made islands constructed by Beijing (Dan de Luce, 2015). Moreover, China has failed to prevent their own citizens from fishing in a territory that is not theirs. There was an instance where ironically, Chinese law enforcement vessels unlawfully caused a collision by physically obstructing Philippines vessels (Denyer, 2016). The PCA considered various incidents that proved Chinese unlawfulness in the disputed waters which rendered Philippine further favorable points.

Another item that the court included in its arbitration was the marine environment status of the South China Sea. The Tribunal found out that China has truly harmed the area due to its massive land reclamation and construction of artificial islands in the contested waters. With that, China has failed to fulfill its obligations in preserving and protecting marine ecosystems which serve as habitats for endangered species (Shim, 2017; Northam, 2016). This came as no surprise given China had a huge population that kept demand for seafood very high (Galiher, 2011). Aside from construction in the area, the Chinese government had kept a blind eye in stopping their fishermen from harvesting endangered sea turtles, corals and giant clams causing additional severe damages to the coral reef environment (Corr, 2017).

The last item that the tribunal included was to find out whether China had aggravated the situation of the dispute. With the first four items shown beforehand, the answer would be observed as pretty obvious. More so, China had been persistent that it does not acknowledge and will never recognize the jurisdiction of the proceedings. Moreover, while the settlement case was being arbitrated, China continuously built artificial islands within the Philippines's EEZ and had caused to distort or almost erase substantial evidence of the natural condition of maritime features in the disputed sea.

It can be observed from the five items included in the arbitration that the PCA had no power or authority to rule and decide on any matters concerning sovereignty over land territory as well as the delimitation of any boundary between the two countries given that these are the limitations of the dispute settlement that cannot be resolved under UNCLOS. The Philippines pursued the arbitration unilaterally without China's participation. However, even though the Chinese party did not directly involve itself in this settlement, the case can still be arbitrated. It is

clearly stated under Annex VII that, "absence of a party or failure of a party to defend its case shall not constitute a bar to the proceedings," (Permanent Court of Arbitration, 2016). Moreover, despite the absence of China, the tribunal would still possess effective jurisdiction over the dispute provided that the claim was well founded in fact and law. In order to do that, various steps had been taken to demonstrate the accuracy of the claims by the Philippines. The complaining State was questioned during the two hearings and was requested to submit various written reports of its stand on the dispute throughout the arbitration. The Philippines assigned independent legal experts to be present in the Hague in order to provide comprehensive and accurate information regarding historical evidence that concerns the South China Sea before the ruling Parties.

On July 12, 2016, The Hague has made its court ruling decision in regards to the South China Sea dispute. The court's decision favored the Republic of the Philippines where a unanimous decision has been fostered in the tribunal that rendered an award to Manila. The Tribunal has issued its Award on the basis of Jurisdiction and Admissibility by establishing valid arguments to counter Beijing's claim under Annex VII of the UNCLOS in the adjudication as it was introduced by the complainant. As stated in Annex VII of UNCLOS, Article 11, "The award shall be final and without appeal unless the parties to the dispute have agreed in advance to an appellate procedure. It shall be complied with by the parties to the dispute," (UNCLOS, n.d.). Therefore the PCA ruling is legally binding which should not be overlooked.

This court ruling is said to be a milestone achievement for the Philippines. In many instances, the media would often associate this event with the word "landmark" as it depicted a similar scenario to that of David defeating Goliath when a seemingly less powerful and small country wins over a big dominant one. Former President Aquino was able to finish his 6-year presidency fulfilling one of his promises of really taking action in asserting that what belongs to the Philippines should be taken care of the country. This foreign policy move was part of his administration's China containment policy which resonated with Obama's Pivot to Asia.

Ironically, upon the election of Duterte in mid-2016, he vocally expressed his move to take a step backward from the efforts conducted by his predecessor in order to pursue closer relations with China, redirecting the country's foreign policy, immediately earning the name "Pivot to China", a part of his so-called "independent foreign policy." Such policy was immediately dubbed as "national tragedy" by former Philippine foreign secretary Albert del Rosario who served in the Aquino administration (Esmaguél II, 2016). Upon replacing Aquino as the new President, Duterte stated the intention of downplaying the South China Sea issue.

4.3 Duterte's Policy on the South China Sea and China

Despite the bold move which the Aquino administration has conducted, the Philippines continues to receive much attention worldwide through its dramatic shift of foreign policy from that of containing (Aquino's foreign policy) to being open and closer to China (Duterte's foreign policy). Upon assuming Presidency, he immediately pushed forward for a true practice of independent foreign policy which denotes that the country will seek closer relations with China and Russia as it distances itself from its traditional ally, the United States (Merez, 2017). This foreign policy shift by the new administration is understood as a "*Pivot to China*," which explicitly demonstrates a change in the normal pattern of the country's strategic diplomacy with aims of diversifying options and improving relations with other countries (Kraft, 2017). The push for an independent foreign policy offered an opportunity for the Philippines and China to revitalize its relationship which had been damaged during the preceding administration.

The new administration changed its manner in approaching China, especially with regards to the South China Sea dispute. Unlike the Aquino government who was seen as confrontational, the Duterte government opted for a more diplomatic approach. However, the approach taken was seen to be too soft on China which raised concerns. In fact, last August 16, 2017, the presence of the Chinese vessels near the Pag-asa Island in the West Philippine Sea was ignored by the DFA. In defense, DFA Secretary Alan Cayetano asserted, "*In the past, it's our strategy to confront China every opportunity we have and diplomatic protest is one of the instruments we use. That's not our strategy anymore, our strategy now is to have*

peace, stability, and dialogue and so far it's working," (Manila Standard, 17 August 2017). Hence, it can be expected that Duterte's policy on the South China Sea would include a partnership with China. It was in July this year where talks about joint oil and gas exploration have been discussed between Manila and Beijing. Nonetheless, the Philippine government has expressed to set conditions in favor to the Philippines as it deals with China in this situation (Pazzibugan, 2017). Although the author would take a pessimist view on this, as the reality of international relations says that a bigger country in terms of economy and military capability gets to lead the discussion table. Another reason for the country's new approach with China, as discussed in the previous chapter, is President Duterte's doubts about the US in terms of responding to Philippines' needs when tensions between Manila and Beijing arises.

4.4 The Implications of Duterte's Foreign Policy Shift

However, as the two countries strengthened their relationship, the Philippines had to set aside its PCA award. It is known that having legal control over some parts of the South China Sea would grant the owning country a bargaining chip and an upper power position in the region. This is due to the contested area having oil reserves of at least seven billion barrels and an estimated 900 trillion cubic feet of natural gas that can be turned into marvelous economic opportunities (Kipgen, The Philippines' South China Sea Flip-Flop, 2017). Moreover, the area is also known as one the most important trading lanes in the world in which approximately \$5.3 trillion worth of goods pass through every year making the 30 percent of the world's global maritime trade (Fisher, 2016). With that, it can be realized that the South China Sea plays a vital role in serving as a national interest for various countries in the region.

For China, the utmost important thing would be to take control of the area, thus resulting in their assertiveness and nine-dash claim which was immediately dubbed as unlawful by the PCA and the international community. Basically, the Chinese government aspires to control the area for defensive purposes rather than expansion resulting in the installation of numerous military bases and construction of artificial islands (Emmerson, 2016). This is one way to counter the presence of the United States in the region and somehow to weaken its sophisticated hubs and spokes system which has been containing China in years. Moreover, this move also coincides

with Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream" or great rejuvenation campaign which was his government's main objective (Wang, 2013).

One of the implications of Duterte's foreign policy in relation to the South China Sea was allowing China to militarize the disputed area which undeniably results in a future long-term threat to the security and stability of the Philippines and the region. It was in May of last year when Pentagon released a report about China's 3, 200 acres of land reclamation where construction of Chinese islands in the south-eastern part or Spratly Islands of the South China Sea was realized. The Chinese government was persistent with their reclamation which was said to be part of their island-building program. The Chinese officials insisted that it has only reclaimed lands that are part of Chinese territory in order to provide public service and support to Chinese fishermen. Jin Canrong of Renmin University predicted that China will continue on with its reclamation in the year 2018 in which he asserted the turning point China-US battle for influence in the region. (Tiezzi, 2016).

Moreover, the Philippines' foreign policy redirection will affect the US as a balancing actor in the region. Under a Duterte presidency, Washington may face a difficult situation in maintaining peace and stability if other states in the region try to refuse its presence. Hence, this scenario will also complicate the strategic partnership among ASEAN member states who desire for a proper code of conduct which is an opted solution for the South China Sea dispute (Kipgen, 2017). According to Ms. Credo from the FSI, *"...we [The Philippines] have been very proactive in pushing forward with the South China Sea issue, and with our backtrack now, our credibility is somehow at stake. So hopefully there would be some progress with the framework or eventual implementation of the code of conduct,"* (J. Credo, personal interview, July 18, 2017). Hence, another implication of the shift is the slowing down of the South China Sea code of conduct formation. Moreover, a recent study was released by the US Center for Strategic and International Studies which was commissioned by the Washington's Defense Department in which basically argued that by 2030, the South China Sea will be China's lake (Akita, 2016). Thus, it can be realized here that the West is also aware of the future consequences it will face if the area was left neglected.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The neoclassical realism which was employed in this theory was helpful in explaining and understanding the shift in Philippine foreign policy. Moreover, it was useful in filling in the gap found in the previous studies done on this topic satisfying one of the objectives of the thesis. Converging neorealism and classical realism, this paper generally concludes that the perception of the foreign policy decision-maker, usually of leader towards the state and the international system is an important aspect when it comes to understanding foreign policy decisions.

The shift in Philippine foreign policy under the Duterte administration is primarily caused by the change in the national interest priorities of the new government which are economic development and war on drugs as discussed in Chapter 3, different from the Aquino administration which is on protecting the national sovereignty in the South China Sea. The national interests set by the new administration is derived from its perception of what the Philippines needs in relation to its position in the international system with the consideration of its perceived relative power to China. Given that President Duterte acknowledges that the Philippines is unparalleled with China in terms of economic and military power, the foreign policy redirected to having a favorable stance towards it. Moreover, China's support and compatibility towards the Duterte administration's national interest priorities feeds in his perception of having a favorable inclination towards it. Additionally, despite instances where the foreign policy shift may have constrained by domestic events such as the Marawi terrorist crisis where the Philippine-US relationship had been reinforced due to the demand of the Armed Forces of the Philippines for its intervention, President Duterte was still observed to have favored China in this occurrence which denotes a true realignment. With that, this thesis would like to assert that Duterte's perception is an important factor in understanding why the country shifted its foreign policy. Moreover, the author would like to argue that the perception reflects the liking and preference of the foreign policy decision-maker in relation to their prioritized national agenda despite of the consequences it may entail.

Aside from its national interest priorities set by the administration that makes China as the compatible partner to carry out its domestic agendas, the factor of an ambiguous US contributes to Duterte's perception of establishing an unreliable US. Hence, it can be concluded that Duterte's shift towards China is pragmatic in a sense that America is uncertain in terms of responding for the protection of the country. Furthermore, China will not abide by international law anyway which only feeds in Duterte's perception that the country is better off in redirecting its foreign policy towards Beijing in order to achieve its domestic goals which are the need of funding for big infrastructure projects and to sustain the administration's war against drugs.

This study also concludes that the Philippine foreign policy is vulnerable to changes depending on who the leader is. Moreover, their perception is necessary to understand as different leaders may have perceived the country's threats and opportunities similarly, however their foreign policy response may be different. Therefore, the Filipino public should take into serious account the foreign policies that aspiring Filipino leaders wish to push forward during elections. Its implications on Philippine politics is that power in the domestic sphere is important to analyze given that if one wants to analyze and go deeper into understanding the country's chosen foreign policy, it is necessary to determine whether the national agendas set by the leaders are for their self-interest or pragmatic benefit of the country. For this study, it can be concluded and as established in Chapter 4 that the trade-off in this shift in foreign policy is the South China Sea. However, the author argues that more than the support and compatibility of the national interest priorities of the administration with China, the Duterte administration was left with no choice but to be subservient to China due to immediate benefits it could achieved despite long-term threats to the country's national security. Moreover, Duterte was able to consolidate power among the majority of the Filipinos in which supports his domestic agendas. In conclusion, the President is provoked to maintain his domestic stability in which can only be done through continuing on with his policies and making it materialize in which China is of big influence in carrying out those domestic goals.

In the context of international relations, the shift in Philippine foreign policy will affect both its relationship with China and the United States. Hence, this development has a substantial effect on regional politics and security that the author

would like to reflect on. President Duterte, through his foreign policy choice, was able to disrupt the Philippine-US relations. Thus, it can be expected that the country's relations with America will have complications in which threatens the existing Philippine-US security alliance. Nonetheless, this disturbance in the relationship is not entirely dependent on Duterte alone. Therefore, it is also interesting to take into account for future researches about the actions of the Trump administration in this situation. When such alliance gets disrupted, the power and influence of US economically and militarily in the region may weaken, allowing China to have the opportunity of dominating the region in these aspects. However, it is interesting to ponder that this notion is not certain as this view is complex given that as the Duterte government seeks to diversify military relations with China and Russia, the Philippine military still remains US-centric. Nonetheless, the idea of a continuous infiltration of China and Russia in the Philippine military institute may have significant influence in the long-run which may polarize the institute in the future. Likewise, the emergence of Donald Trump also adds up to the complexity of the issue given that the new US government through his government finally supports the administration's war against illegal drugs which pleased President Duterte. With that, it may be possible in the future that President Duterte's perception towards the US may change and so as its foreign policy. For now, this thesis argues that the Philippines shift towards China weakens American hegemony in the region. With that, this may impede US' balancing strategy in maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Moreover, this thesis also concludes that understanding the case study presented above denotes the importance of the neoclassical realism theory as it reinforces the importance of the perception of President Duterte in redirecting Philippine foreign policy. It can be seen, that regardless of the state power of the Philippine, be it a medium or a small power, the country's behavior is hugely influence by the current President. Therefore, this thesis presents the notion of the Philippines as a country being vulnerable to foreign policy changes. Hence, this study argues that the country may be deemed as unreliable, especially for its allies and partners in the international system. This is due to the country having to pursue different policies that best suits not particularly the nation but the current government at a certain period of time.

For the Philippine-China relations, the country under a Duterte presidency will further cause a continuous strengthening of their relations. With that, the Duterte government may be able to fulfill both of its national interest priorities. Hence, the country will see the actual development of big infrastructure projects under this administration. Given this notion, it is possible that President Duterte may maintain a high popularity among the majority in the country courtesy of this particular domestic policy as big projects denotes tangible materials that the Filipino society can actually see. Moreover, there is a high possibility of a huge influx of Chinese Foreign Direct Investment to the country which also denotes a huge number of Chinese workers and companies entering the country.

However, there will also be a continuation of the country's infamous war on illegal drugs. Currently, the country has seen various killings of innocent people which have enraged a substantial amount of population in the Philippine society. Particularly, this situation may provide an opportunity for the opposition party to criticize the government in which the idea of ousting President Duterte may be ushered in. However, this thesis argues that this possibility is less likely to happen as there is currently no clear leader of the opposition to go against the Duterte administration. Most importantly, the strengthening of Philippine-China relations has resulted to the downplaying of the arbitral tribunal ruling. With that, it can be concluded that as the Duterte administration views China as a viable partner for its economic and political aspirations, it intentionally overlooks it as a threat which was perceived by the previous administration resulting to an "underbalancing" effect. Thus, this may permit China to militarize the area through the construction of artificial islands which will be transformed into military bases, thus eventually resulting in a future long-term threat to the security of the Philippines and the region. Hence, this thesis argues that the Duterte administration's independent foreign policy is only beneficial for temporary peace which means achieving only short-term goals such as economic benefit to secure one of his administration's national agenda priority. In fact, the foreign relation redirection by the Duterte administration constitute a more problematic situation given the less utilization of the tribunal ruling which indirectly allows China to illegally take control of some parts of the South China Sea. Hence, this is problematic as it would rather be more difficult to protect the country's

sovereignty once China has already finished establishing its artificial islands within the Philippine territory. With that, this thesis finally concludes that the problem offered in this study provides an interesting situation to look forward to in the future of international relations. The succeeding Philippine president after Duterte should be ready to resolve the dilemma in the South China Sea that would definitely concern the country in the future. Hence, there is a high chance for the Philippine foreign policy direction to change course again in which definitely time can only tell.



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