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測量與比較艾奎諾與杜特蒂掌政下菲律賓
在中美之間的外交抉擇行為

Who Is My Neighbor?

Measuring Philippine Alignment Behavior Between China
and the United States Under Aquino and Duterte

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摘要

在中美兩強的競爭中，亞太地區如菲律賓等小國必須在戰略上與大國結盟。在過去的幾十年裡，不同領導人領導下的菲律賓以各種的形式做到了這一點，本研究則著重於 Benigno Aquino III 和 Rodrigo Roa Duterte 兩位領導人的比較。簡而言之，前者選擇了一種平衡戰略，積極尋求與美國軍事和經濟的連結，並在與中國的領土爭端問題上採取激進的立場。相較之下，後者擱置了菲律賓與華盛頓根深蒂固的關係，轉而支持與鄰近霸權的經濟友好關係，並尋求南海議題的合作與和平解決。本研究透過總統的互訪做為政治因素，市場互動做為經濟指標，以及公眾輿論做為社會傾向，以衡量兩屆政府在這三個面向的異同。研究結果顯示，在所有這三個面向，Aquino 政府都傾向於與美國合作，而 Duterte 政府相對於前任領導人所奉行的外交政策，則表現出對中國漸進的轉向。

關鍵詞：菲律賓結盟戰略、Duterte 外交政策、Aquino 外交政策、亞洲區域強國、美菲關係、中菲關係

Abstract

Between the rivalry of the United States and China, small countries such as the Philippines must strategically align themselves. Over the past decades, the country under various leaders have done it one way or another. This study focuses on the alignment behavior that resulted from the leadership of Benigno Aquino III and Rodrigo Roa Duterte. The former chose a balancing strategy by actively pursuing military and economic ties with the United States and taking an aggressive stance on the matter of territorial disputes with China. In contrast, the latter sets aside the Philippines' deeply rooted ties with Washington in favor of economic amities with its neighboring hegemon, and peace and cooperation in the South China Sea. The marked contrast of the two administrations are quantifiably measured in this study through presidential visits as political factors, market interaction as economic indicators, and public opinion as social leaning. The findings show that in all of these fronts, the Aquino administration favors cooperation with the United States, while the Duterte administration exhibits an obtuse pivot towards China relative to the foreign policies pursued by the previous leadership.

Keywords: Philippine alignment strategy, Duterte foreign policy, Aquino foreign policy, Asian regional power, US-Philippine relations, China-Philippine relations

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

A. Background

“In this venue, your honors, in this venue, I announce my separation from the United States,” is the declaration that the then newly-inaugurated President Rodrigo Roa Duterte (PRRD) made in the Great Hall of People on his first visit to China. (Blanchard, 2016) Fresh from mayorship in Davao City, Philippines, President Duterte was eager to set aside island disputes in the South China Sea and cooperate with China for his campaign headliner, “Build, Build, Build” and to protest against the vague foreign policy of Uncle Sam regarding said disputes. The Duterte administration comes in the wake of Benigno Aquino III’s six years of presidency. Aquino’s term was marked by his aggressive stance regarding the South China Sea (SCS)/West Philippine Sea (WPS) maritime quarrels, which brought along frequent disturbances in the shared waters.

In the troubled times, former president Aquino looked toward the United States for military help, awakening a dormant military agreement, which Washington was happy to cooperate with given the rising influence of China in the Asia-Pacific region. A few years down the road, Aquino’s continued pursuit for US protection was highly criticized by domestic mass media as the public started to feel a greater sense of China’s infringement on their sovereignty. The unease and dissatisfaction were exacerbated by the absence of a clear statement from the US that it would come to the Philippines’ aid were hostilities to erupt in the disputed waters in spite of the hefty agreements Manila was making with Washington.

Duterte's course and radical switching of gears were welcomed by many when he won the Presidential seat in 2016. Five years later, 2021, this study seeks to measure to what extent Duterte has changed things around after taking the wheel from Aquino.

B. Research Question

Though a number of investigations have been done to explore why Duterte has taken up the foreign policy that he has, not many existing literatures ask to what degree it does. In light of this, this research would like to answer the question: by how much does the Duterte administration lean on or favor China and veer away from the United States relative to the Aquino administration?

C. Research Objectives

To accomplish this, the specific research objectives of this study are fourfold:

1. To measure how much more the Duterte administration leans on or favors China and veers away from the United States *politically* relative to the Aquino administration;
2. To measure how much more the Duterte administration leans on or favors China and veers away from the United States *economically* relative to the Aquino administration;
3. To measure how much more the Duterte administration leans on or favors China and veers away from the United States *socially* relative to the Aquino administration;
4. And to do an overall comparison of measurements.

D. Significance of the Study

In understanding, through achieving these objectives, to what extent the Duterte administration has pivoted towards China and away from the US, we are able to get a better grasp of the current state of the Philippines. It allows us to gain a wholistic and quantitative view of how the country has shifted in alignment between the two powers since the Aquino administration. Additionally, the means of research this study takes up is transferrable and may also be of relevance to future research in alignment behavior in triangular relationships outside of the Philippine-China-United States context.

E. Scope and Limitations

That said, this study will focus on presidential visits for the political aspect, approved foreign investment and trade for the economic factors, and public opinion for social leaning. It furthermore bounds itself to the shift of the Duterte administration's relationships with the two regional powers (the United States and China) and will cover only the Aquino and Duterte administrations, spanning the years 2010 to 2020. The data applicable to this study is limited to its availability from relevant organizations.

CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature

This chapter will outline the concepts used in this study regarding alignment behavior and trilateral relationships. It will also give a clearer picture of what the study is all about and set the foundation for the study's theoretical and conceptual frameworks.

A. Inter-state relations

Accordingly, it is of foremost importance that the nature of bilateral relationship between two countries are discussed. The way in which countries view one another in asymmetry and how it affects their policies toward one another is fleshed out in the following section:

Asymmetrical Relations

Brently Womack suggests that between two sovereign states there exists a power dynamic – an uneven one that exists as a result of a difference in capabilities. This creates a disparity in the relationship, assigning one country as stronger and one as weaker. Brently Womack narrates specifically how weaker states interact with stronger states in view of the power difference. He calls this phenomenon the “Asymmetric Relations” theory. (Womack, 2016)

Further explained, relational asymmetry points to the fact that between a larger state “A” and a weaker state “B,” A naturally plays a larger role in B’s foreign relations than B plays for A. This gives birth to relational anxiety in B’s view as it struggles to grab and hold A’s attention; Womack calls B’s pining gaze towards A, “Over-attention.” On the other hand, since B is only a small part of A’s larger regional agenda and prioritizes bigger countries or other “A” types, A may not give B the time of day it desires. Womack labels this one-sided view “Inattention.” (Womack, 2016)

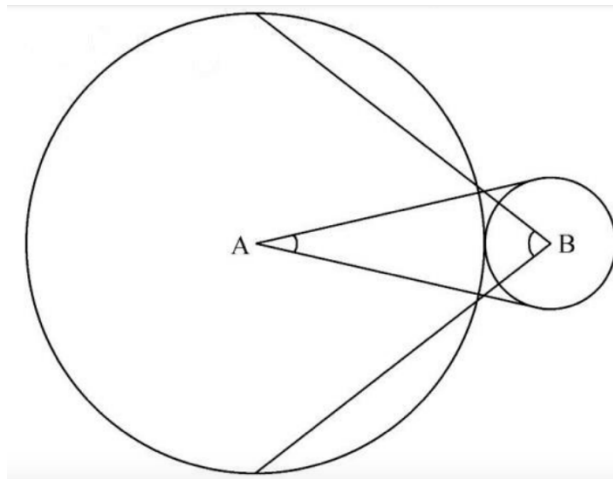


Figure 1: asymmetrical relations

Source: Womack (2016)

Moreover, Womack explains that the politics of “Over-attention” and “Inattention” describes the greater role that A plays in B’s domestic and international policy-making. However, B’s policy actions in general or towards B specifically may be shrouded in fog due to all the other voices and priorities that plays into A’s maneuvers. It may even be said that A can be hesitant to solidify relationships and create consistent policy towards B. B has a stronger desire then to achieve stability and clarity in its relations with A, establishing clearer connections – which A may never give. B, however, may temporarily sway A’s sights into over-attention through the employment of “novelties,” taking up policies which are of importance to A or are of broader consequence. These series of events are in the name of what Womack pins as the ultimate goals of A and B, which are gaining the deference of Bs and desired validation of autonomy from As respectively. (Womack, 2016)

The interactions of countries A and B described by Womack characterize bilateral relationships between small powers and greater powers. It is because of the tensions and anxieties that exist

between two nations that smaller states must consider their place in the grander scheme of power dynamics.

Balancing and Bandwagoning

In post-war conditions, countries traditionally choose between two sides of the emerging world order. Whom they align themselves with is determined by many different factors and carries implications on both foreign and domestic policy. As countries find themselves caught between two powerful nations, scholars suggest that countries can employ one of two extreme strategies: balancing or bandwagoning. Some countries choose to ally themselves with the “weaker” of two nations, effectively balancing out power dynamics against the stronger. Stephen Walt articulates that a country may choose a balancing strategy thinking that the potential ally will not readily step on their sovereignty, which they presumably prefer to protect. Furthermore, the more vulnerable side will require more help, setting the country up for a more powerful position as opposed to becoming the one controlled if it had joined the stronger side. Walt furthermore believes that balancing is the more common or dominant strategy that occurs among weaker states. (Walt, 1994) On the other hand, a country may choose a bandwagoning strategy, standing with the stronger side to accrue power. Walt argues that some parties may choose to bandwagon to avoid the stronger nation’s wrath or to share in its glory. (Walt, 1994)

In a different and somewhat contradictory stream of thought, Randall Schweller argues that the dominant strategy for smaller states is to bandwagon. This is owed to the fact that smaller states are aware of their stark lack of resources and look to powerful states for “promised future rewards.”

(Schweller, 1994) This implies that given a choice, countries will tend towards the stronger of the two nations in the pursuit of domestic interests.

Hedging

Nevertheless, alignment behavior is rarely so black and white. Countries may seek to gain the good graces of both competing nations to maximize total benefits. However, as small nations latch on to one greater power and the other, it must be step carefully in stabilizing both relationships so as not to fall too deep onto either side. Describing this practice, Cheng Chwee Kuik espouses the theory of hedging strategies: alignment behavior that takes on a middle position between two powers. Specifically, Kuik suggests that small countries tend to pursue contradictory policies to “prepare a fallback position” when dealing with two greater powers. These strategies are geared towards risk-aversion and the pursuance of insurance by taking advantage of good relationships, but also “seeking to offset longer-term risks” or consequences. (Kuik, 2016)

In light of this, Kuik proposes that countries are hedging when they 1) are intent on not taking sides and do not fully align themselves with either country, 2) employ opposing and counteracting policies towards both nations, and 3) use these policies to run after gains while setting up a fallback position. In short, taking on a position of hedging can be likened to the saying, “hoping for the best but preparing for the worst.” The exemption of any of these preconditions would mean that the weaker power is in fact not hedging, rather it is balancing or bandwagoning. (Kuik, 2016)

Strategic Triangle

For Lowell Dittmer, bilateral relationships between countries can be characterized by either an “amity” or an “enmity,” which describe positive or negative relations respectively. Moreover, similar to Womack, Dittmer recognizes the presence of symmetry or asymmetry that can exist. However, Dittmer goes a step further to say that when power asymmetry occurs, there may come a point in time where weaker nations may no longer wish to suffer under the conditions of insouciance from one stronger nation that may seek to assert dominance. This gives way to the introduction of a third party, another greater power that the smaller state may turn towards, effectively ushering in a novel trilateral relationship, distributing attention, and shifting the power dynamic.

Dittmer details these trilateral relationships and classifies them into three patterns. The first relationship he calls a *ménage à trois*, in which all three countries enjoy a good relationship all around; that is, all connections within the triangular relationship are characterized by amity and all countries have mutually benefitting links to one another. A second kind of pattern is called the “romantic triangle.” Whimsical as it sounds, a romantic triangle describes a situation where there are two “wing” players that try to win over a “pivot.” Here, the pivot has amity with both wing players, but the two wing players have enmity with one another. Dittmer explains that this relationship is most beneficial to the pivot, whom may be cold-heartedly pitting the two wings against each other and reaping the benefits of their attention or simply balancing the two because of indecisiveness about whom to choose. Either way, the author goes on to say that this relationship may sooner rather than later fall apart if one of the wings decides to stop playing the game. On the other hand, the last relationship is what Dittmer claims to be the most secure of the three and aptly

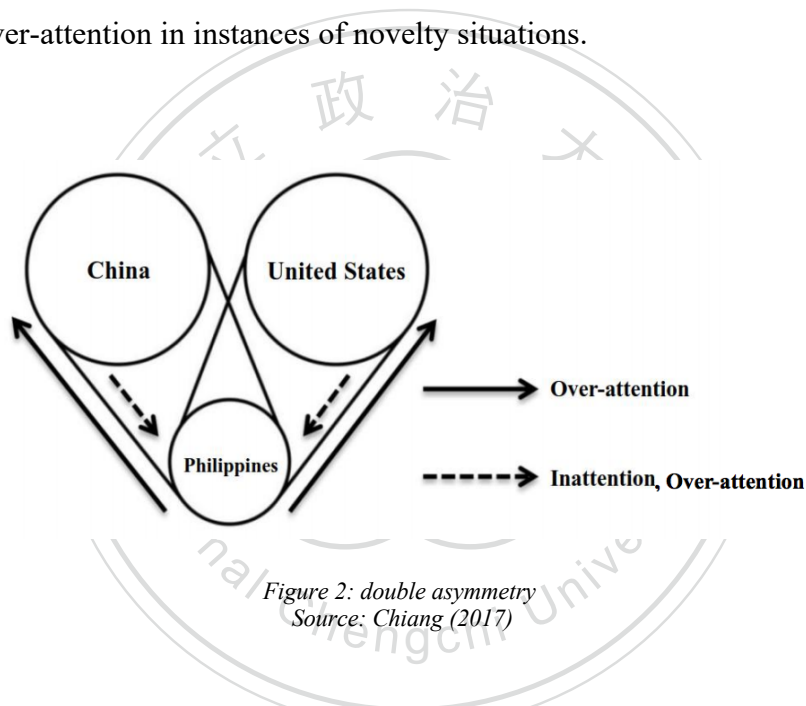
calls it the “stable marriage.” This relationship entails the amity of only one bilateral relationship, meaning one amity between two countries and enmity among the two countries and a third party. This isolates the outsider but solidifies the amity. It may prompt the ostracized party, however, to try and gain one or the other’s favor, especially taking advantage of the asymmetry in the amicable relationship. (Dittmer, 1981)

Among these three classifications, the case of the Philippines between the United States and China is closest to a romantic triangle where the pivot is the Philippines and two wing players are the United States and China. However, while the amities and enmity that characterize the romantic triangle are similar to reality, the theory implies that the Philippines is the center of attention, which is quite far from the truth. In actuality, the two superpowers are not fixated on winning the Philippines over. Rather, as Womack suggests, the Philippines plays a rather small role in the overall foreign policy of the two larger nations. Jeremy Chiang talks more about this in his theory of double asymmetry.

Double Asymmetry

For Chiang, the trilateral relationship among the Philippines and the two regional powers is characterized by asymmetry. Chiang builds on Stephen Womack’s theory of asymmetrical relations and applies it to the triangular relationship, saying that the politics of inattention and over-attention are at play. Therefore, rather than the Philippines being the central player in the trilateral relationship, the country plays but a small part in the interaction of the two type-A countries that are the United States and China. As a result, the small power must apply novelty situations to vie for the over-attention of or seek autonomy from its seniors.

Chiang offers that this is the driving force behind the phenomena of the shifting foreign policies of each administration. He claims that these actions that vie for a response from either or both countries are the activation of: 1) territorial disputes, 2) nationalism and identity, 3) domestic imperatives, and 4) international context. In his work, Chiang narrates the changes in courses of action among the Arroyo, Aquino, and Duterte presidencies with regard to these four themes. Figure 2 illustrates this relationship: the smaller power, Philippines, looking upon the two major powers with over-attention while the two major powers look upon the Philippines with inattention and occasional over-attention in instances of novelty situations.



With this in mind, it can be said that the asymmetric relationship among the three countries and the manner in which the Philippines shifts between the two countries are a result of the relational anxiety caused by relational asymmetry. The actions that the Philippines take can be interpreted as its alignment behavior as it tries to navigate its relationship between the two hegemons. Over the years, it has mostly taken to a hedging (or equi-balancing) strategy, trying to reap maximum benefits from either side. The following section provides a backward look on the past Philippine administrations and each leader's handling of the trilateral relationship.

B. Philippine Context

The Philippines between China and the US

As a former colony of the United States, there is no doubt that Philippine-US relations run deep. The bandwagoning strategy of the Philippines perhaps only lapsed with the rise of China in the latter 20th century. Since then, the strong bilateral relationship between the US and the Philippines would be complicated by China, creating the rocky triangular relationship the three countries are in today.

True to the double-asymmetric structure, Richard Heydarian would go on to describe this tripartite relationship as rollercoaster-like due to its constant shifting. He claims, however, that these shifts in the relationship signal the young democracy's lack of a long-term plan. Rather, the natures of the bilateral relationships pursued with either country are subject to the whims of whoever is in power over a certain period. He opines that the relationships the Philippines has with both the United States and China are less about the grander scheme of international power concerns and that Sino-American power dynamics are “indispensable” and yet not a “deciding factor” in understanding the trilateral relationship. (Heydarian, 2017, p. 565) On the other hand, he maintains that these relationships revolve around the Philippines' “engagement and deterrence of China and its dependence and independence of the United States.” (Heydarian, 2017) This is consistent with the theories of asymmetry describing how each administration employs different novelties and hedging behavior to maneuver the strategic relationship between the United States and China.

This delicate game really started to kick off in the Marcos era (1965-1986) when the Philippines first extended warm regards towards a socialist China. The twenty-year dictatorship proved to be an undeniable time of growth for this bilateral relationship (Heydarian, 2017) as economic dealings with China skyrocketed to unprecedented numbers – only ever exceeded by the Arroyo administration. (Chiang, 2017)

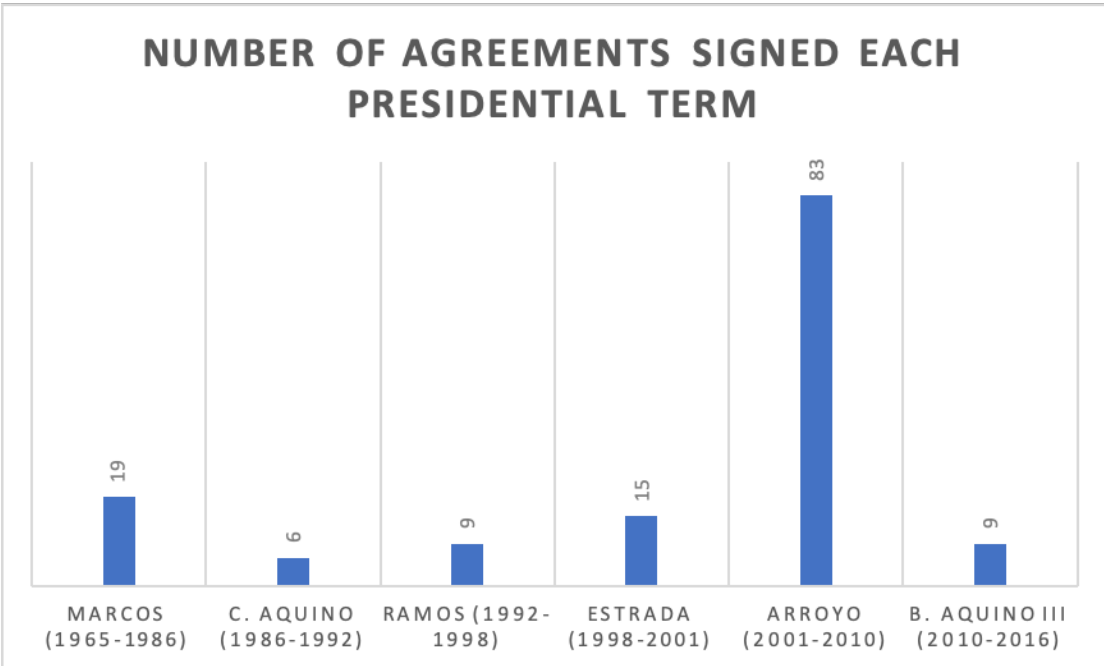


Figure 3: number of agreements signed in each presidential term

Source: Clemente (2016), rearranged for this study

Nonetheless, succeeding president Corazon Aquino put China-Philippine cooperation in reverse in the process of countering the harmful policies Marcos exploited in his term. Aquino would draw closer to the United States as her administration sought to maintain US military presence in the country. On the other hand, Fidel Ramos’s presidency saw the strengthening of ties with the country’s neighbors, meaning another shift in favor of China and members of the ASEAN. This, however, changed when in the early 1990s when China asserted its sovereignty in the West

Philippine Sea, prompting the Philippines to turn to the United States. (Heydarian, 2017) At the time, then Philippine president Fidel Ramos allowed a joint military exercise with US troops, claiming however that it had nothing to do with the maritime tensions. (de Castro R. , 2009) In the couple of years that Joseph Estrada was in power, the threat in the western waters still hung heavy. To refresh its supremacy in the region, the United States released a statement expressing its hopes of diplomatic resolution and the maintenance of the freedom of navigation. (de Castro R. , 2009) Following this, the Philippines made a more obvious turn towards the United States by awakening the Philippine-US alliance from its dormancy and reviving military cooperation between the countries. Before the turn of the century, in the absence of a resolution in the West Philippine Sea, the Philippine Senate signed into ratification the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA). The passing of the VFA recalled former agreements made in the Mutual Defense Treaty signed in 1951 and padded up US-Philippine military cooperation. (de Castro R. , 2009)

Only a couple of years later, during the Gloria Arroyo administration, the alliance would once again be bolstered in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack in the United States. The allies were both involved in the launching of the fight against international terrorism, which benefitted the Philippines as well, providing the country with tactical assistance given that insurgents were on the rise within its borders. The United States played a critical role in counter-insurgency measures well into the 2000s. At about the same time, in 2005 Chinese military spending went through the roof. (de Castro R. , 2009) The major course to modernize the People's Liberation Army raised concerns over the looming threat to the dominance of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region.

In spite of these concerns however, Arroyo would in her ten-year stint as president cooperate with China on the economic front like never before. Hers was called the golden age for diplomatic relations, after all. Arroyo secured an overwhelming eighty-three deals with China during her administration, dwarfing that of all her predecessors. The relationship between Philippines and China drew even more close as President Arroyo withdrew Filipino troops from Iraq following the hostage of a Filipino driver, causing some friction with Washington. Arroyo then turned to China, even securing military deals with the Asian superpower, a hat that once solely belonged to the United States. It was also under the watch of Arroyo that the Philippines signed the widely criticized Joint Maritime Seismic Undertaking (JSMU), which was a project undergone with China for oil exploration in the disputed islands.

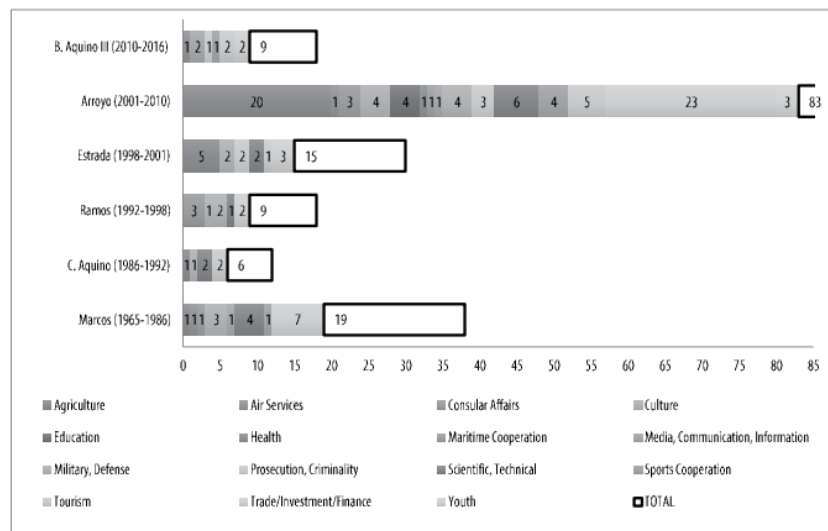


Figure 4: number of agreements signed in each presidential term, by area of concern

Source: Clemente (2016)

Over the years, the Arroyo administration would receive billions of dollars in Chinese cooperation. These deals were also President Arroyo's downfall, however, as one deal she had made with China, specifically involving a Chinese corporation called the ZTE Corporation with whom the

administration was working with to create a National Broadband Network, was uncovered to be riddled with corruption. Not only that, the JSMU was ruled to be unconstitutional by the Philippine Supreme Court.

As seen in this section, scholarly works from the past thirty years support that the Philippines has been cooperating more and more with China economically while also fighting for its sovereignty on the geopolitical front. At the same time the Philippines' longtime alliance with the United States continues to grow stronger especially with the active threat of China's push for ownership of the Scarborough Shoal and other disputed islands. Because of several hostile confrontations on the West Philippine Sea concerning Chinese vessel patrols and outright occupation of disputed areas, the archipelago continually looks towards the United States for military backing.

Things would take a turn, however, upon Benigno Aquino III's rise to presidency in 2010. Renato de Castro would describe his era as the end of the Philippines' equi-balancing strategy. (de Castro R. C., 2014) On the other hand, the administration that succeeded him would swerve back into traditional equi-balancing. (de Castro R. C., 2016) The following sub-section narrates this back-and-forth phenomenon beginning with Aquino.

The PH-US-CN relationship under Aquino and Duterte

Being the son of the Philippines' iconic faces of democracy (former president Corazon Aquino and Benigno Aquino II), Aquino's administration is colored by his strong condemnation of both his predecessor's corruption scandals and her handling of the South China Sea island disputes. This has led his regime to have been one of continuous and blatant disapproval of China's foreign

policy. In an intentional swerve from his predecessor, Gloria Arroyo's "sweeping under the rug" approach to the territorial contest, Aquino opted to pursue a more pointed approach.

Renato Cruz de Castro puts forward that under the Aquino presidency, the Philippines adopts a balancing strategy on China – cozying up to the United States for military assistance and breaking the country's long-standing policy of equi-balancing. De Castro asserts, moreover, that this balancing strategy is in view of domestic politics and Aquino's commitment to oppose the policies of the previous administration. In turn, President Aquino partnered with the United States to beef up the Armed Forces of the Philippines, riding the American hedging policies to bolster military presence in the region and later its pivot towards the Asia-Pacific. The Obama administration gave way to the strengthening of the maritime cooperation between Washington and Manila. (de Castro R. C., 2014) In spite of military ties, however, the US did little to assure its ally of support in the event of hostile encounters with its giant neighbor. Instead, it continued to hide behind vague statements. Nevertheless, the Philippines under Aquino kept with its balancing strategy until the end, spending billions of pesos in the modernization of its military equipment and in signing defense treaties. (de Castro R. C., 2014)

The waters of the West Philippine Sea (WPS) had not been quiet from the beginning of Benigno Aquino III's administration. Before the end of the first year of his presidency, there were reportedly at least nine incidents on the WPS, prompting the head of state to strengthen maritime security, funnel funds into the cause, and refocus the AFP towards the disputed territories. In his first presidential State of the Nation Address, Aquino made a strong statement declaring the Philippines' commitment to defending its territory saying, "What's ours is ours." (Tolentino & Ham, 2015)

Aquino did, however, try to maintain good diplomatic relations with China when he controversially boycotted the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony of 2010, where the Chinese dissident Lu Xiaobo was honored. (Cheng, 2010) (Heydarian, 2017, p. 576) And in 2011, the president paid a visit to China. (Tolentino & Ham, 2015) Nevertheless, tensions in the West Philippine Sea continued as both the Philippines and China never stopped increasing its military capacities and presence in the Sea.

On the other hand, Duterte resumes the passive stance of Arroyo in his current handling of the island disputes. Rather, Aquino's successor once again foils his predecessor's efforts in his version of maintaining the trilateral relationship of the Philippines with the US and China. This time, the president settles to villainize the United States in its meddling with southeast Asian regional affairs, giving the former president of the US, Barrack Obama, the butt end of his coarse language and dialing back on US military exercises in the country. In turn, Duterte strengthens the country's economic exchange with China and assumes a relaxed policy in terms of its geopolitical clashes with the hegemon.

According to Wen Chih-Chao, the Duterte administration resumes Arroyo's positive attitude towards the rising regional power and shuns its traditional ally, the United States. The author claims that the country's policies towards China and the US can be classified as hedging with balancing. He also takes into consideration public perception towards China and the Belt and Road Initiative, which are both negative in nature. On the other hand, businesspeople in the Philippines have a more positive outlook on the subjects, seeing the economic ties with China as a good

opportunity for business and overall economic growth in the country. The Duterte administration continues to pursue partnership with China in spite of public mistrust of the hegemon and its projects and has shelved the island disputes in favor of infrastructure development and the elimination of security threats in the WPS. (Wen, 2020)

In the same vein, Renato de Castro describes a similar turning away from the United States and a pivot towards China in his paper on the “Duterte Administration’s Foreign Policy.” He holds that the Philippines is in the midst of abolishing Aquino’s balancing act and instead restoring equi-balancing. De Castro’s argument, however, points to the fact that the Philippines is not moving towards a bandwagoning strategy towards China but is instead turning to Japan to hedge against its neighbor, China. (de Castro R. C., 2016)

Nevertheless, the literature seems to agree that Aquino’s administration was one of balancing against China and Duterte’s is characterized by a drastic shift towards China. In the next subsection, the methods by which these alignment strategies were measured are discussed to shed light on how scholars have traditionally assessed the Philippines’ behavior.

Measuring alignment strategy

In the literature above, there is much that scholars have to say about the Aquino and Duterte regime’s approaches to foreign policy and alignment behavior. De Castro uses the two presidents’ reactions to geopolitical matters in the West Philippine Sea to determine the country’s strategies over the years. Richard Heydarian similarly tracks the political strategies that the Philippines has taken over the current and past few administrations to illustrate the changing tactics of the nation.

On the other hand, Tina Clemente uses economic indexes such as ODA to track the country's reliance on China since the Marcos regime. Chih-Chao Wen uses the back-drop of increased Chinese cooperation and the existence of the BRI, and narrates the state of the nation in triangularly comparing government action, the opinions of businessmen, and that of the masses.

Having known all this, one might conclude that most scholars use political and economic indicators in testing the Philippines' leaning towards either China or the United States. Out of the handful of studies above, only one of them utilized social factors in determining alignment behavior.

As evidenced in the aforementioned studies, the phenomena of Duterte's shift from Aquino's foreign policy is well-documented and perhaps undisputed. The rationale behind the pivot, on the other hand, is not a subject that is often discussed. Nevertheless, some dialogue on it is brushed on in the following section.

Reasons for the shift

For this matter, Richard Heydarian alludes to the country's lack of a long-term policy direction that is a result of its minute amount of soft power. It then follows that each new administration assumes the liberty to re-course the country in terms of foreign policy according to each new president's personal views. (Heydarian, 2017) To this, de Castro proposes that Aquino's shift from Arroyo's foreign policy was due in part to his affinity to the United States, having lived there during his father's exile. Moreover, nationalistic notions he may have possessed prompted his aversion to China due to the regional power's assertiveness with regard to territorial disputes. Aquino in his campaign also openly criticized his predecessor and may have wanted to veer away

from Arroyo's policies. (de Castro, R.C., 2014) Similarly, Parameswaran describes Duterte's anti-US and pro-China foreign policy to be historically, personally, and ideologically rooted. He notes that Duterte is a self-proclaimed leftist and holds anti-colonial sentiments. Parameswaran also alludes to past hurts: Duterte being from the Southern moro-islamic region of Mindanao, harbors a grudge against the Western colonizers for having killed hundreds of his people back in the day. (Parameswaran, 2016)

C. Summary of related literature

When smaller powers are caught between two greater powers, they find themselves caught in a triangular relationship infused with asymmetry, a phenomenon that exists in every bilateral relationship. Relational asymmetry is an unevenness in the perception of one country towards another towards another, creating power dynamics and trilemmas. The small country must decide how it will juggle the attentions of the two larger powers, trying to win affections and battle for autonomy, while simultaneously working on behalf of its domestic interests. This is the dilemma explained by the theories of bandwagoning, hedging, and balancing: alignment strategies coloring the foreign policy of small and middle powers.

The Philippines has had a long-standing policy of equi-balancing the two powers vying for power in the Asia-Pacific region since the Marcos dictatorship, steadily increasing economic relations with China and yet partnering in security capacities with its traditional ally, the United States. This is consistent in the hedging behavior of most ASEAN nations and small powers caught in between security/autonomy and economic development. The complication of the island disputes played a great part in the creation of a triangular relationship among China, the aspiring regional power and

economic giant with a large presence in the WPS; the Philippines, a developing country in the region with claims to the disputed areas; and the United States, the world power scrambling for regional security.

This hedging strategy, however, was interrupted by the anti-corruption regime of Benigno Aquino III, who set the country on a course of balancing and turning its sights towards the United States. Though Aquino would still deal with China economically, it was to a lesser capacity to his predecessor Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. This would not be the only foreign policy Aquino would overturn, however, as he turned Arroyo's passive stance towards the WPS issues into an aggressive one, modernizing the country's military. Nevertheless, those efforts were again extinguished after Aquino's six-year stint. His successor and incumbent president, Rodrigo Duterte, would restore Arroyo's equi-balancing strategy, favoring economic relationship with China to fund his Build, Build, Build campaign which aimed to bolster domestic infrastructure. Duterte did not follow in Arroyo's footsteps exactly though as he pushed away from the United States whom he saw as an unreliable ally. Instead, he set his sights elsewhere.

D. Gaps in knowledge

After reviewing the literature on Philippine alignment behavior, one might find that there is at this moment a lack of literature on a wholistic approach towards gauging where the Philippines stands as a people and as maneuvered by the current and preceding heads of state. Though there is much literature on the geopolitical workings of the triangular relationship that exists among the United States, the Philippines, and China, some literature on that of its economic cooperation and the state of its social relationship, there is close to no literature that inspects all three aspects. Furthermore,

most of the literature on this triangular relationship is qualitative in nature. There exists a need for a more wholistic quantitative study on this matter, which this research intends to contribute to.



CHAPTER III

Research Design and Methodology

In light of this gap in literature, this study proposes the following framework and methodology to spearhead the exploration of this matter.

A. Theoretical Framework

Based on the literature above, it is fitting to take on the following theories to frame this study: There exists a triangular relationship between the US, China, and the Philippines. However, those relationships are characterized by double asymmetry, which J. Chiang talks about. That the Philippines has over-attention towards the US and China, but the US and China only have inattention for the Philippines and sometimes overattention when the country does something called a “novelty,” which can come in the form of territorial disputes, etc. The attention is both a result of and the reason behind the foreign policies of presidents, and their personal views of whose attention is more valuable. Therefore, they act in certain ways and pursue certain policies/novelities that as a result dictate the direction of their political, social, and economic leaning.

While thinking about this, we have to talk about the theories of hedging, equi-balancing, and bandwagon-ing to understand which strategy each regime adopts. This theory implies that presidents have a big role to play in foreign policy as opposed to just being a figurehead. With this in mind, I propose that with the changing whims of a country brought about by a change in leadership, political, economic, and social leanings shift along with it. With that in mind, this study would like to explore, and more specifically, quantify the change in the current Duterte administration’s shift in strategy relative to the preceding Aquino administration through the traditional aspects of politics, economics, and society.

B. Conceptual Framework

In order to measure the magnitude of any bilateral relationship, it is important to look at said relationship in its many different facets. After all, the complex identity of a “country:” a state, a market, and a people. All these different aspects affect its tendencies, and in some cases causes it to lean in different directions. Kuik elaborates in his work that especially in the case of small middle powers such as the Philippines, countries tend to have inconsistent strategies when it comes to dealing with superpowers – inconsistent in the sense that it tends to hedge economically with China, and yet maintain a strong relationship with the US in terms of geopolitics. Separate from this, however, is social leaning, which does not have much literature to its name when it comes to alignment behavior.

Diagram

Figure 5 proposes a model as to how one might evaluate the connection of two countries taking into consideration its many faces. In creating a somewhat solid shape of a country-to-country linkage, we first understand and measure their political, economic, and social relationship. Each aspect is equally important in forming an image of what the bilateral relationship between two countries could look like. The first two factors are well-established indicators of a country’s alignment behavior. However, a country is not just made up of its government officials and political elites. This study will also consider the opinions of the grassroots and their personal leanings. Though a separate entity from the political and economic, public opinion will give us a more wholistic view of how a country leans.

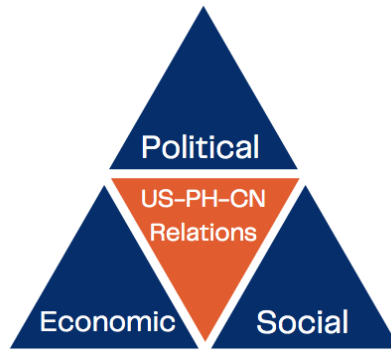


Figure 5: the makeup of the Philippine's foreign policy towards the US and China

Source: self-illustrated by author

Political strategy and foreign policy

In measuring political strategy, this study mainly dives into presidential visits made by each president. Presidential visits are not just visits after all; they are signs of friendship and cooperation. Furthermore, state visits can be an important factor for foreign policy as they are conducted by the heads of state, who are forerunners in national diplomacy. Presidents are important to international relations just as they are important in domestic affairs. The reception, invitation, and cooperation of two administrations can be a show of their good graces towards one another and a statement of the importance of their association. The coming and going of heads of state are influential in international relations as they are considered effective in developing bilateral relations and swiftly resolving conflict. (Nitsch, 2005)

Volker Nitsch furthermore reports that in his study of large economies, France, Germany, and the United States from 1948 to 2003, presidential and state visits are positively related to trade volumes between two nations. (Nitsch, 2005) Similarly, Goldsmith, Horiuchi, and Matush study the effects of state visits on foreign public opinion. The researchers find that when high-ranking officials visit a country, the visit results in the citizens of the country exhibiting a more positive public approval rate towards the official's country of origin. (Goldsmith, Horiuchi, & Matush, 2021) Roseanne

McManus also finds a positive relationship between state visits and the deterrence, meaning the avoidance of the use of military force. (McManus, 2018)

In these papers, state visits are used as intentional tools for diplomacy and also result in positive outcomes in bilateral relations. As such, state visits can be viewed as evidence of existing state relations as well as a tool for its birth and progress. In light of this, this study will look at state visits as an indicator in assessing the political strategy that the Philippines adopts as it is caught between the United States and China.

Theoretically, if nation A visits nation B, the call expresses a public strengthening of ties and favor from the visiting country towards the visited. This said, it seems that not only is the occurrence of presidential visits significant, but so are the directionality and the frequency of these visits. The larger the number of correspondence between the two countries, the stronger are their perceived ties. On the other hand, when visits are few or non-existent, it is an indication of the possibly perceived unimportance of an administration towards a nation. What is more, as there may be a disconnect in how countries view one another, it is worth noting also to differentiate between the number of visits and the number of receptions.

Economic strategy and foreign policy

Countries are not only tied politically, but also have economic relations. As for economic strategy, this paper will make use of trade and foreign direct investments (FDI) to gain insight into how the Philippines aligns itself between the two superpowers.

Alan Wolff affirms the positive relationship of trade and foreign policy in his study of the American trade policy. In his paper, Wolff discusses the history and effectiveness of the use of liberal trade policies, saying it has been a tool for bettering bilateral relations and also stands as a result of already existing relations. Conversely, Wolff also touches on the imposition of trade sanctions as punishment in the midst of the downturn of country-to-country relations. Economic sanctions or closed-off policies such as these can either be a result of enmity or the cause of it. (Wolff, 2018) Kleinberg and Fordham furthermore report that trade also affects the way the citizens of a country may perceive a trading partner-country. They elaborate by saying that exports towards another country have a positive relationship with public perception towards the importing nation. (Kleinberg & Fordham, 2010) With regard to FDI, Gangi and Ahmen look towards the case of Sudan, in which their study finds that amicable bilateral relations are key in attracting FDI. On the other hand, when these same relationships went sour, investments were withdrawn, and FDI goes down. (Gangi & Ahmed, 2017)

Based off of these studies, it seems reasonable to conclude that trade and FDI are good economic indicators for the state of foreign policy or bilateral relations. To measure economic strategy for the purposes of this study, the research examines approved foreign direct investment and trade from both the United States and China during the times of Aquino and Duterte. The trends that show through from this data will inform the economic leaning of the country during each presidential term. In theory, if the Philippines has larger dealings with country A compared to country B, it can be said that it leans towards country A more than it does on B.

Social leaning and foreign policy

In the case of social leaning, this study will look at public opinion, although the effect that public opinion has on foreign policy is debatable. Sharifullah Durani considers the liberalist and the realist view of the matter. According to Durani, the realist view consists of the notion that the general public is emotional, ill-informed, and irrational when it comes to policy and that policymakers and leaders are on the other hand wise and expedient. Therefore, for the realist, leaders have sole ownership of the foreign policy-making process. The liberalist, however, is of the opinion that the citizenry's opinion is usually stable, structured, and sound. In this light, public opinion is key in and often has a stake in the creation of foreign policy. In short, in the realist view, a president leads; in the liberalist view, the president follows. Nevertheless, Durani does not offer a solution to the long-disputed issue, but offers the validity of the "Conditional Theory of Political Responsiveness" which states that either theory may be true on a case-to-case basis. (Durani, 2018)

While the ability of public opinion to influence foreign policy is not clear-cut, the factors that influence it are a bit more tangible. Reiterating Goldsmith, Horiuchi, and Matush, the movement of presidents have an effect on public opinion. When presidents come to visit or upon the report of bilateral meetings, public opinion of a bilateral relationship tends to observe an upturn. (Goldsmith, Horiuchi, & Matush, 2021) Furthermore, Kleinberg and Hordham have found that an increase in exports toward a nation may increase the exporter nation's public opinion on the importer nation. (Kleinberg & Fordham, 2010) These along with other acts of foreign policy directly affect public opinion. It can be said then that a more positive public opinion is an indicator of bettered foreign policy between two nations.

In a supposedly democratic country such as the Philippines, the voice of the people is arguably of utmost importance. Though the previous two facets of a country are mostly run by political elites and business giants, this section gives way and weight to the masses. This certainly will give us a better idea of how the Philippines sides between the two giants in accordance with or perhaps in contrary to economic and political leanings. The aspect of social leaning will be measured through opinion polls. Hypothetically, an upward trend in public opinion towards another country may signal better bilateral relations. On the other hand, when public opinion falls, it may signal a temporary or permanent change in the relationship for the worse.

C. Data Collection Methods

This study uses secondary data that was taken from various sources including the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO), World Bank, Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, PEW Research Center, and Social Weather Station (SWS). All data was sourced online from each organization's respective official web pages due in part to restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. All data is subject to availability as provided by each independent organization.

CHAPTER IV

Data and Analysis

A. Political Strategy

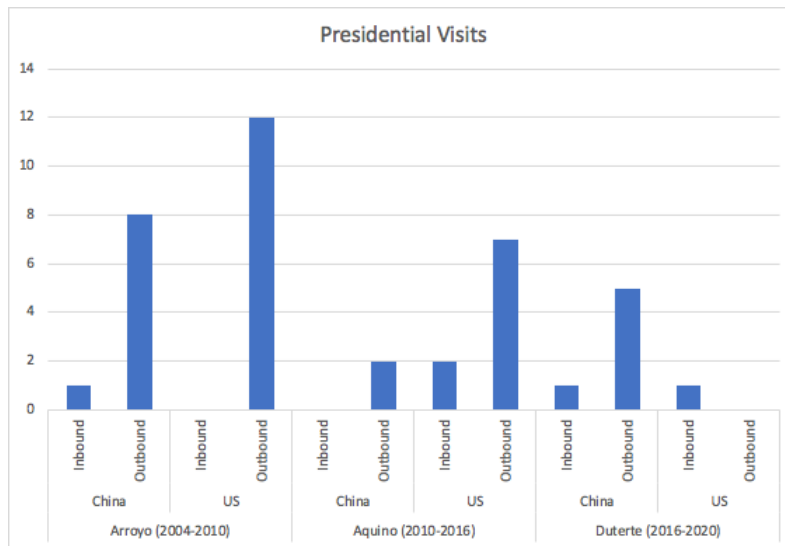


Figure 6: inbound and outbound presidential visits, by administration

Source: organized for this study

Figure 6 is a graph of the presidential visits that took place spanning from the Arroyo administration until the current Duterte administration. Narrowing our gaze on the Aquino and Duterte administrations, it is quite easy to see the contrast in diplomatic relations between each regime. The Aquino administration saw a striking number of outbound visits to the United States. On the other hand, Duterte, despite being more than halfway into his term, has never visited the US and has visited China a whopping five times.

Presidential Visits and Receptions of Benigno Aquino III

In September 2010, Benigno Aquino III made a trip to the United States, having been inaugurated into office a mere three months before the nation was to address the UN General Assembly with regard to the country's progress in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals. This three-day

working visit marked his first trip as Head of the nation. (DFA-65th UNGA Session opens, President Aquino to address general assembly, 2010) In August of the following year, Aquino made his way to China to give his remarks in the Philippines-China Economic and Trade Forum upon the invitation of then president Hu Jintao. There, Aquino spoke before both Filipino and Chinese businesspeople and investors and witnessed the signing of several Memoranda of Understanding. After the bilateral forum, Aquino also spoke before the exclusive group, Yangtze River Delta Economic Zone's officials and entrepreneurs. (The President's state visit to the People's Republic of China, August 30 to September 3, 2011 , 2011) Aside from economic activities though, the two leaders met to ease tensions. In the year 2011, at least nine incidents involving the disputed islands and waters occurred, including an episode of one Chinese vessel firing three warning shots at Filipino fishermen in the Jackson Atoll (near the Spratly Islands). (Tolentino & Ham, 2015)

In the same year, the former president would visit the United States twice. Once was to participate in the Open Government Partnership, where the Philippines is one of the eight-country steering committee. Aquino subsequently made several other public appearances and speaking engagements along the west coast during the visit. Later in the year, the president would go to the US territory of Honolulu to take part in the APEC Summit of the year and would for the same reason set foot in US soil in 2012. Aquino would again travel to attend the regional meet in 2014, this time in China.

Twenty-fourteen was also the year that the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) was signed. Then president Barack Obama made a less than 24-hour trip to the Philippines on his

Asia tour in August. He was received in the presidential palace and made a speech addressing American troops and war veterans in the Fort Bonifacio Gymnasium. (Downing, 2014) The agreement would provide funding for the Armed Forces' refurbishing, maintenance, and acquisition of equipment, and the enhancement of capacities in the West Philippine Sea. However, in spite of the signing of the controversial agreement, there was a stark lack of a concrete statement of support from Washington over the archipelago's claim to the disputed islands, which is what Aquino presumably would have wanted to accomplish through the EDCA. Nevertheless, diplomatic relations remained strong between the two allies as President Aquino would go to the United States about a month later mainly to attend the United Nations Climate Summit, but also to grace several speaking engagements. This string of meetings included a roundtable discussion with the US Chamber of Commerce, the US-ASEAN Business Council, and the US-Philippines Society, as well as business meetings with big corporations to discuss investments and economic expansion in the Philippines. (The President's official visits, September 2014, 2014)

Another meeting with the same composition took place again the following year as Aquino continued his pursuit of US investment. Sources say that many large companies expressed their interest in investing in the country especially in the areas of agriculture, mining, and infrastructure development. This is following a 6.9% growth in GDP and high praise from investors with existing ties to the Philippines. (US firms express interest in PH investments, 2015) Six months after his visit to the US, Aquino then welcomed President Obama along with other world leaders to Philippine soil for the annual APEC Summit. Afterwards, Obama would visit the archipelago's South Harbor to visit the US-made BRP Gregorio del Pilar, the Philippine Navy's flagship vessel,

emphasizing the “ironclad commitment” of the US to help defend the Philippines from external attacks. (Suarez, 2015)

In 2016, the last year of Benigno Aquino III’s administration, the then president once again made a trip to the United States for US-ASEAN Summit – his only official visit to any country in the year and his last presidential visit as head of state.

Presidential Visits and Receptions of Rodrigo Roa Duterte

Current president Rodrigo Roa Duterte’s first escapade to China was in October of his first year in office. It was in this trail-blazing meeting that the president – with an audience of hundreds of Chinese and Filipino businessmen and public officials – would issue a hard statement of cooperation with its neighbor, loosening ties with its long-time ally, the United States. (Blanchard, 2016) The visit came in the wake of former president Aquino’s diametrically opposed foreign policy towards China, and instead sought to strengthen bilateral relations. What’s more, Duterte and Xi expressed their mutual agreement to pursue diplomatic solutions regarding the disputed islands – veering away from the military tension witnessed (and perhaps pursued) during the previous administration. With the promise of more stable ties, Duterte and his delegation came home with thirteen deals made with Chinese investors and businessmen, valued at twenty-four million dollars and predicted to create two million jobs for Filipinos. (President Duterte’s State Visits to China and Brunei enhance trade ties, 22 Oct. 2016, 2016) With his first visit to his country-investor of choice, Duterte jumpstarted funding for his administration’s major infrastructure project: Build, Build, Build.

The following year, President Duterte would again go to China to attend Xi's One Belt One Road forum. There, Duterte participated in several roundtable discussions concerning economic ties, energy and resources, industrial investment, financial support, people-to-people exchanges, maritime cooperation, and more. He subsequently had bilateral meetings with the Chinese Premier Lu Keqiang and with President Xi Jinping, further demonstrating countries' bolstered cooperation. Taking it a step further, the two countries signed the Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation which provided a grant for about P3.6 billion in infrastructure investment. (Corrales, 2016)

Later in the year, the Philippines would host the ASEAN-US Summit, which was attended by then US president, Donald Trump, who was also on his first year in office. The two, often compared to one another, exchanged warm regards despite Duterte's open chastisement of Trump's predecessor, Obama, and the Philippine president's anti-US sentiments. During the summit, the US president expressed the country's interest in strengthening alliances and maintaining close bilateral relations in the ASEAN region. (Viray, 2017) Notably, this is the first and last interaction the two leaders had on either US or Philippine soil, though they met in passing on several other occasions elsewhere.

Instead, Duterte (PRRD) was true to his word as he shifted his gaze onto his eager-to-invest Asian powerhouse, China. In 2018, PRRD once again flew to Beijing and, in a speech delivered in the Boao Forum for Asia, encouraging the partnership of "responsible" foreign companies with home-based ones in a push to see the growth he imagined. (Gita, Duterte seeks partnerships between homegrown, foreign firms, 2018) As a result, at least eleven Chinese investors signed a letter of

intent by the end of the forum. (Villanueva, 2018) In turn, Chinese president Xi Jinping paid a visit to the country later in the year – the first visit from a Chinese president in over a decade. The historic meeting on Philippine soil was quite productive in the strengthening of bilateral relations. The two countries signed 29 deals ranging from joint exploration for oil and gas in the West Philippine Sea and local infrastructure projects. Still, there was no mention of the Hague arbitration. (China's Xi says 'deeply touched,' 'impressed' by Duterte during Manila visit, 2018)

Duterte's pursuit of Chinese investment was not quelled in his third year of presidency as 2019 would prove to be the most eventful year in the country's bilateral relations with China in the Duterte administration.

Two visits to China would transpire on this year. President Duterte would attend the second Belt and Road Forum as one of the key speakers upon the invite of President Xi. This meeting, however, occurred with a backdrop of rising tensions in the West Philippine Sea. Over the three months prior to the forum, a plethora of Chinese fishing vessels numbering in the hundreds could be seen on the body of water. With them came continued reports from Filipino fishermen of experiencing harassment from the intrusive neighbors, and accounts of aggressive clam harvesting near Scarborough Shoal. (Merez, 2019) In response to this, in an interesting turn of events, Duterte invoked the Hague ruling at the Belt and Road Forum, asserting the country's claim to authority over its exclusive economic zone. This, however, was met with deaf ears as China reiterated its rejection of the verdict and abided by its push for joint exploration. (Xi to Duterte: China doesn't recognize pro-PHL ruling on South China Sea claims, 2019) Nevertheless, in spite of disagreements over the disputed islands, the spring visit yielded twelve billion dollars in

investments with Chinese businessmen. The president witnessed the signing of nineteen memoranda of understanding which are expected to create over 20,000 jobs for Filipinos in the years to come. (Gita, 2019)

Wooing China was not over yet, however, for 2019. Only a few months after the Belt and Road Forum, PRRD would return to China for another state visit. He would again bring up the Hague ruling, which was again shot down by Xi. Even so, the two national leaders would hold exchanges about the Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation between the two countries and would go on to release a statement reinforcing the strengthening of their economic ties. After these “productive talks,” the president would arrive home having signed six bilateral agreements with China. (Mercado, 2019)

The year 2020, Duterte’s fourth year of presidency, was uneventful in terms of presidential visits, in- or -outbound, but was a handful nonetheless with the outbreak of COVID-19.

In summary, President Duterte’s pivot to China is clearly documented, having visited China five times just in the first year of his presidency. Had the virus not have hit, it may have been more. Notably, no such visit has been made to the United States. In fact, a bilateral meeting was once cancelled by former president Barack Obama. This is following Obama’s condemnation of Duterte’s bloody war on drugs campaign, and Duterte’s subsequent bad-mouthing of the former president in response. (Obama cancels meeting with Philippines president after Duterte calls US leader ‘son of a b*****’, 2016) Four years later, Duterte again declines Trump’s invitation to visit

the US for the US-ASEAN Summit that would have taken place in March 2020, saying he would never visit “lousy” America. (Tomacruz, 2020)

In full view of the political aspect of this study, we see how each administration has pursued foreign policy with regard to the two regional powers through diplomatic meetings. Interestingly, many of these visits included the bettering of economic ties, the success of which is measured in the next section.

B. Economic Strategy

Foreign direct investment

The United States and China have consistently been two of the Philippines’ top import and export partners for decades. Both countries have also invested significantly in the domestic market. Below is a graph of approved foreign investments by the United States and China as reported by the Philippine Statistics Authority.

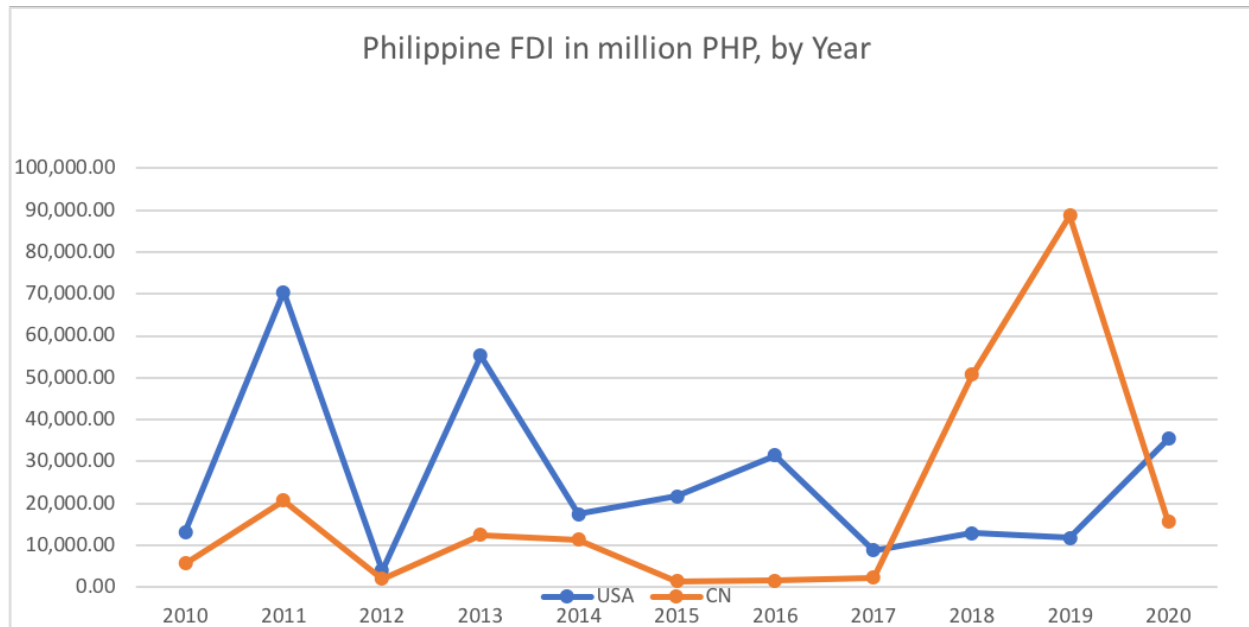


Figure 7: Philippine FDI in million PHP, by year

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, organized for this study

The PSA defines Approved Foreign Investment (AFI) as “the amount of proposed contribution or share of foreigners to various projects in the country as approved and registered by” the relevant agencies. AFI does not represent actual foreign investment; rather, it the existing commitments to invest in the near future.

Based on Figure 7, one might immediately see the general trends in approved foreign investments in the administration of Benigno Aquino III compared to that of Rodrigo Duterte’s presidency. All throughout Aquino’s reign and a year into Duterte’s, approved foreign investment from the United States is higher than China’s approved foreign investments. This points to the idea that more memoranda of agreement were signed with institutions in the United States as compared to MOUs with Chinese corporations. This is consistent with the fact that Aquino would often visit the US to seek partnership with US-based corporations and that China and the Philippines were not on the

best terms during Aquino’s time. As seen in the previous section, there was also a stark difference in presidential visits and economic agreements between the Chinese and Filipino heads of state at the time as compared to that of Filipino and US presidents.

Conversely, in 2017 to 2019, Chinese AFI skyrocketed indicative of the better economic relations that the Duterte administration ushered in. Citing the previous section, many visits of economic nature were made to China, raising Chinese investment. Meanwhile, US AFI simmered down perhaps owing to the distanced relationship that the administration also pursued. Things changed, however in 2020 with the onset of COVID-19, Duterte’s administration fell back into higher AFI with the US, and a lower AFI with China.

Foreign trade dependency

We observe a similar trend in the Philippines’ foreign trade dependency (FTD). FTD, on the other hand, refers to the share of a country’s total trade in the overall gross domestic product. To obtain this number, the following formula was used:

$$\text{foreign trade dependency} = \frac{\text{total imports} + \text{total exports}}{\text{gross domestic product}}$$

Equation 1: foreign trade dependency

Source: Wang, Wang, and Tzeng (2020)

We first obtain the value of imports and exports that the Philippines has with a particular nation and add them together to get total trade in that bilateral relationship. After this, we divide that number with the Philippines’ gross domestic product. The number obtained from the working out of this equation expresses the by-country percentage share of the Philippines’ gross domestic

product; the higher a number is, the greater share it has of the Philippines’ economy and based on Wolff (2018), the greater the bilateral relationship between the two countries.

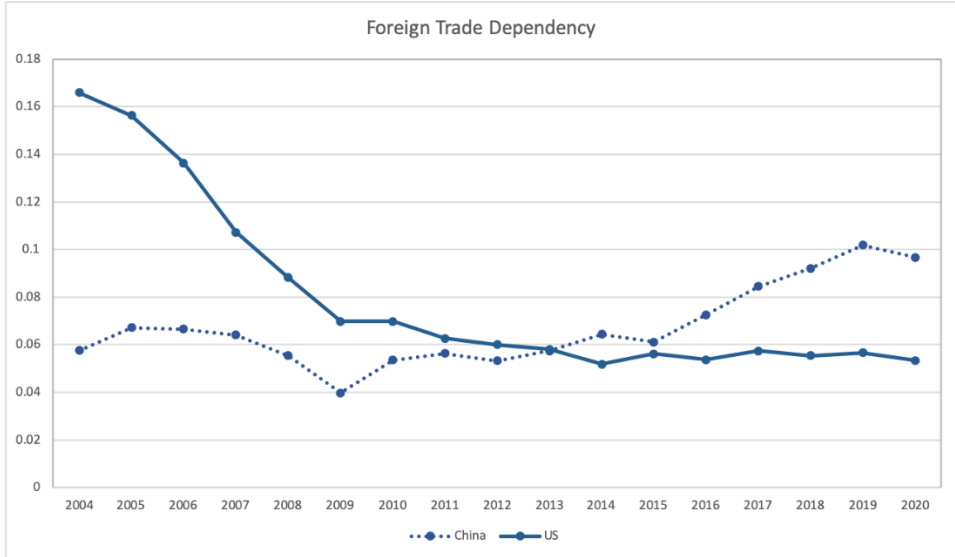


Figure 8: Foreign trade dependency
Source: World Bank, organized for this study

During the Aquino administration, the country was often lauded for fostering a high GDP growth rate. According to Schnabel, throughout his administration Aquino was able to keep interest rates low, expand public sector services, implement an anti-corruption campaign, and enacted new laws to foster growth – all of which contributed to impressive GDP growth rates. (Schnabel, 2016) In his term, the United States had a higher total trade as compared to China until 2014, most likely indicative of better relations with the Western power.

On the other hand, though the GDP growth rate is still high but relatively lower upon Duterte’s assumption of power, some allude to his policies as counter-active to economic growth. William Pesek narrates that Duterte’s neglect of anti-graft campaigns, his assault on media, and his

pursuance of a war on drugs fosters instability and endangers GDP growth. (Pesek, 2020) Nevertheless, GDP has remained relatively high throughout Duterte’s administration (although it did not sustain the same growth as in the past), with China continuing to buy into Philippine economy as the country’s trade reliance on China continue to push upward while trade with the United States took a downward turn. This is in line with the administration’s pursuits in foreign policy.

Economic strategy score

Continuing the examination of economic strategy, this following indicator is borrowed from Wang and fellow researchers. In their paper called “Between a Rock and a Hard Place,” the authors solve for a country’s yearly Economic Strategy Score through this formula:

$$\text{Economic Strategy Score} = \frac{FTD_{(US-CN)it} - FTD_{(US-CN)i(t-1)}}{FTD_{(\max)i}}$$

Equation 2: economic strategy score

Source: Wang, Wang, and Tzeng (2020)

This formula tells us how a nation has decided to have more or less trade with the US as compared to with China in a particular year. If the economic strategy score comes out negative, this means that the country has tended more towards Chinese trade rather than US trade. The opposite is true when the values are worked out to be positive. (Wang, Wang, & Tzeng, 2020) Mapping out these points for the years of Aquino and Duterte will show us how each administration has chosen.



Figure 9: Economic strategy score

Source: organized for this study

Here, we can observe how Arroyo’s administration illustrates an economic strategy score that is entrenched in Chinese trade, parallel to her push for closer cooperation with the regional power. We also see that Duterte’s administration is quite clear in its “loyalties,” only deviating from favoring China in the time of pandemic. The Aquino administration, however, is not as clean-cut although there are a couple of instances (such as in 2012 and 2015) that the economic strategy score tends towards Aquino’s ally of choice.

These observations in the trends in economic strategy score are not as clear as the trends in trade. Nonetheless, the stability and instability of the numbers still point towards the individual foreign policy pursuits that both administrations had. Overall, the economic indicators seem consistent with the established shifts in alignment strategy. The next section then looks into social leaning.

C. Social Learning

Table 1 shows data taken from the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute regarding by country data on perceptions of world powers:

Which country/regional organisation is the most influential economic power in Southeast Asia?		
	2020	2021
China	61.30%	59.70%
US	16.10%	10.40%
What is your view of China's economic influence on your country?		
	2020	2021
Welcome	17.90%	22.50%
Worried	82.10%	77.50%
What is your view of the US's economic influence on your country?		
	2020	2021
Welcome	63.60%	85.70%
Worried	36.40%	14.30%

Table 1: Philippine perception on economic influence of the United States and China, on a regional and domestic level

Source: ISEAS – Yusof-Ishak Institute, organized for this study

Based on this data, it would seem that most Filipinos (59.70%) agree that China is the most influential economic power in Southeast Asia. The poll goes on to report that 77.50% of Filipinos would say that they are worried about its growing regional influence while 22.50% say they welcome it. This indicates that though the Philippines recognizes the rise of China, a vast majority is still perhaps distrustful, concerned, or afraid of what its rise to power would entail. On the other hand, 10.40% of the Filipinos surveyed point to the United States as the region’s most influential economic power. Furthermore, 36.40% would say they are worried about its growing regional influence while 85.70% say that it welcomes it. From the results of the survey, it can be said that

while the public perception of economic regional power in the region is towards China, the United States’ regional influence is more welcome by a significant number.

Which country/regional organisation has the most political and strategic influence in Southeast Asia?		
	2020	2021
China	35.80%	29.90%
US	38.00%	38.80%
What is your view of China's political and strategic influence on your country?		
	2020	2021
Welcome	12.20%	5.00%
Worried	87.80%	95.00%
What is your view of US's political and strategic influence on your country?		
	2020	2021
Welcome	61.50%	73.10%
Worried	38.50%	26.90%

Table 2: Philippine perception on the political and strategic influence of the United States and China on a regional and domestic level

Source: ISEAS – Yusof-Ishak Institute, organized for this study

When it comes to political and strategic influence over the region, 29.90% of the participants opine that China has a larger presence and 38.80% think the US does. Down the same line, the survey asks if it either welcomes or worries about the growing regional political and strategic influence of the two countries. Towards China, an overwhelming percentage (95.00%) relate more to being worried about its rise to power. For the Bald Eagle, on the other hand, the majority (73.10%) welcome their influence. In light of these results, we can conclude a similar outcome on the survey questions for economic strategy: about 10% more Filipinos believe that China has the most political and strategic influence in the region, but over 90% of respondents are worried about its

dominance in the country. On the flip side, though not as many recognize the United States as the strategic and political superpower in the region, they are more welcoming than they are towards China.

The Pew Research Center conducted a similar survey by country in 2019 on a more global scale. For the question “__ is the world’s leading economic power,” the Filipino survey respondents recorded 28% choosing China and 34% choosing the United States. Furthermore, the survey details that 27% of the Filipino respondents think that it is more important for the country to have strong economic ties with China. Conversely, 65% are in the thinking that the United States is more important when it comes to economic ties. A separate survey under the center also asks the surveyed to fill in the blank: “Having __ as the world’s leading power would be better for the world” (the choices being among US, China, the EU, and Japan). In 2018, 77% of Filipinos surveyed chose the United States, and 12% opted for China.

__ is the world's leading economic power		
	2018	2019
China	31%	28%
US	40%	34%
Having __ as the world's leading power would be better for the world		
	2018	
China	12%	
US	77%	
% who say it is more important for their country to have strong economic ties		
		2019
China		27
US		65

Table 3: the Philippine perception on world powers

Source: Pew Research Center, organized for this study

Though these set of survey questions are slightly different, we can infer that the popular opinion in the Philippines is that, 1) the United States is the world power, 2) the country should align itself economically with it, and 3) that America would make a better world power. In this light, it is quite clear that the people have a preference towards the traditional Western power and are more comfortable with it being the major power globally as well as regionally.

This sentiment is also clearly reflected in a survey administered domestically by the Social Weather Station. The team of SWS researchers conduct over one thousand eight hundred (1800) face-to-face interviews over a three-day period. They are armed with the question: “For the following, please indicate if your trust/faith in (country) is Very much, Somewhat much, Undecided if much or little, Somewhat little, Very little, or You have not heard or read anything about the (country) ever? You may indicate your answers by placing each card on the appropriate box on this rating board (SHUFFLE CARDS).” Figure 10 outlines the net trust of Filipinos towards the two competing regional powers divided by administration, year, and yearly quarter. Net trust, according to the SWS is the value obtained from subtracting the percentage of respondents who had little trust from the percentage of respondents who had much trust. (SWS July 3-6, 2020 National Mobile Phone Survey, 2020) One can immediately and clearly see the stark difference in net trust towards the two countries. The country has had a historically low trust in China since the survey first started gathering data during the presidency of Fidel Ramos and a sustained high net trust in its traditional ally.

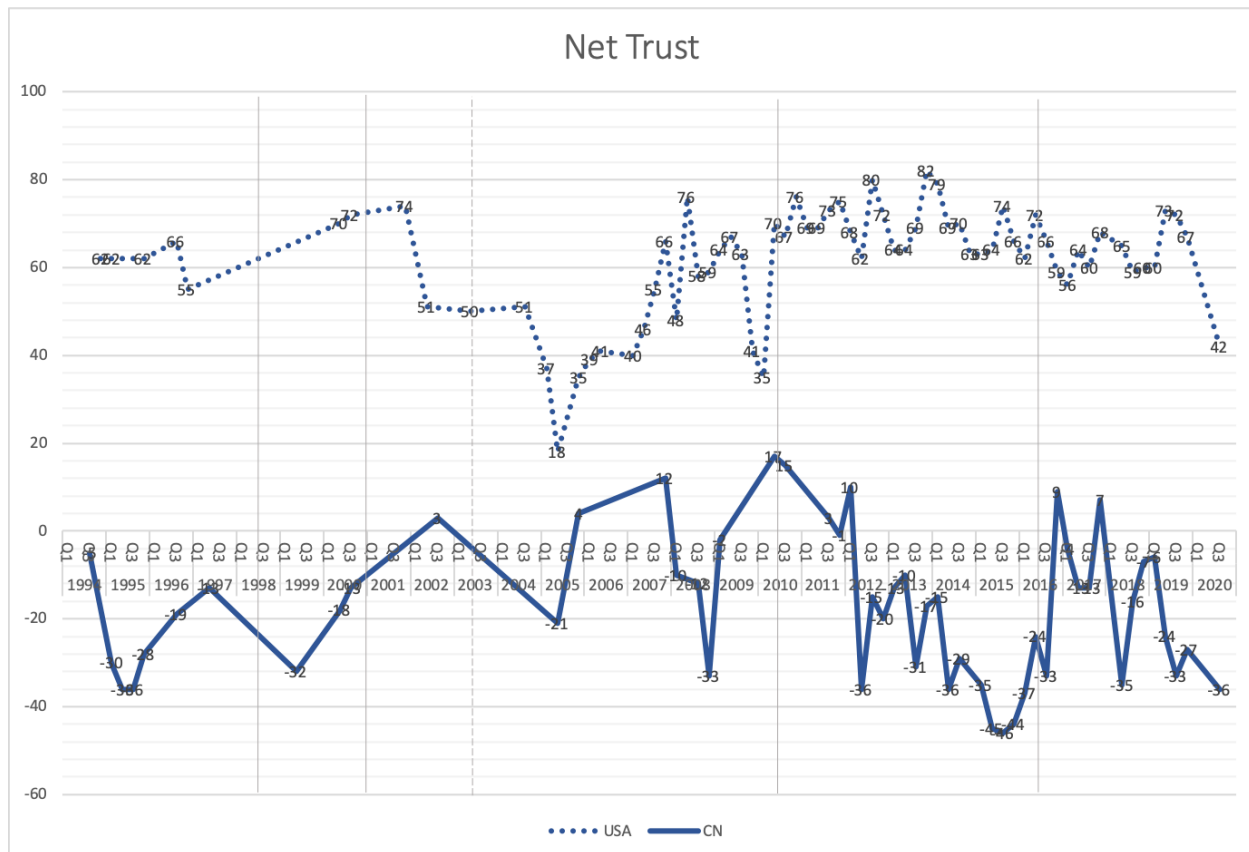


Figure 10: the Philippines' net trust towards China and the United States

Source: Social Weather Station, organized for this study

For the purposes of this study, we now zoom in to the Aquino and Duterte administrations. It would be interesting to note that even at the beginning of the Aquino's term, net trust already began to fall. And in the second quarter of 2012, things took a turn for the worse after a short-lived spike in net trust. On April 8th of that year, a ship of the Philippine Navy intercepted Chinese fishing boats that were on Scarborough Shoal, an area which China, Taiwan, and the Philippines lay claims over. The boat contained illegally obtained giant clams, sharks, turtles and corals. The navy tried to arrest the fishermen but were promptly intimidated by Chinese maritime vessels. This led to a two-month standoff on the Shoal. (Dancel, 2016)

Since then, the net trust towards China continued to trend towards the negative as the Philippines continued to express its rights over the disputed waters and China continued to assert its dominance. Trust levels hit record lows in the third quarter of 2015, possibly caused by the UNCLOS's releasing of statements about arbitration case which was filed by the Philippines in 2013. In this document, China expressed its rejection of the case, saying the maritime disputes were not a case of international concern, but bilateral agreements and of sovereignty. (Permanent Court of Arbitration, 2015) And just when net trust was beginning to trend upwards once more, they again went down in the third quarter of 2016 – a mere few weeks after Aquino would finish his term – as the Hague ruling on the case would be released in favor of the Philippines and in condemnation of China's actions in the West Philippine Sea. Beijing would not take this lightly, however, reiterating its rejection of and non-adherence to the tribunal's decision. (Beijing rejects tribunal's ruling in South China Sea case, 2016)

On the other hand, net trust towards the United States remained at steady fluctuations in the whole of Aquino's administration and into the first years of Duterte's term. Meanwhile, the waters are stirred in the West Philippine Sea as newly-inaugurated Duterte makes his first visit across the pond in October 2016. It was then that he announced his plans of separation from the United States in favor of stronger ties with China and Russia. The president brought home with him restored bilateral relations with China, many business deals between Chinese and Filipino businessmen, and an agreement with Xi for peaceful talks regarding the island disputes. (Ranada, 2016) The upturn did not last very long, nonetheless, as Duterte's second visit to China in April of 2017 would not prove as successful. Despite a number of signed memoranda of understanding, the

president would report that China had threatened to wage war on the Philippines if it was to drill for oil in Reed Bank. (Mogato, 2017)

Things did seem to get better though in the fourth quarter of 2017, when Xi and Duterte would meet in a bilateral meeting in Vietnam during the ASEAN Summit, once again committing to handle maritime issues bilaterally. (Reuters Staff, 2017) Nevertheless, net trust would once again plummet fast in the second quarter of 2018, perhaps due in part to aerial images of China's building activity and suspected militarization in the West Philippine Sea's Spratly Islands (Phillips, 2018). Net trust would once again recover briefly in the coming months though, until Jun 2019, when a Chinese fishing vessel collided with a Filipino boat, leaving 22 men in the water who were later saved by a Vietnamese group nearby. (Jennings, 2019) After that, net trust towards China would not recover since the onset of COVID-19, said to have originated from China's province of WuHan. The same fate is suffered by the United States as net trust is recorded to have plummeted in data for the third quarter of 2020.

Overall, this data shows that the Filipino people have had a rooted trust in the United States. During Aquino's administration, net trust was in a steady high, while under Duterte's rule it went for a slight, but still steady downturn; only wavering for the worse in 2020. Relations with China, however, have been mostly negative and have not been as smooth-sailing. While Aquino was president, relations with China were rocky at first, but eventually continued south. Duterte's presidency has been just as colorful but average trust in its neighbor has increased in spite of the valley it is currently in.

D. Scoring and Comparison

The previous section outlined the political, economic, and social factors in this study of the Philippines' alignment behavior for the Duterte and Aquino administrations. This section now draws a comparative analysis of the two administrations' measurements.

Political strategy

This study measured political strategy through presidential visits made by Aquino and Duterte to their counterparts in China and the United States during their respective administrations. Presidential visits can be a statement of trust, a recognition of the importance of a bilateral connection, a building of relationships. With this in mind, data shows that during his time, Aquino had bilateral meetings with the United States on either country a total of nine times. On the other hand, Aquino had only two of the sort with China.

Conversely, Duterte has had six bilateral meetings with China either on Philippine or Chinese soil, while it has only had one such meeting with the United States. The difference in number among these visits sets a striking display of political strategy: Aquino in favor of the United States, and Duterte towards China.

	Presidential visits			
	China		US	
	Inbound	Outbound	Inbound	Outbound
Aquino	0	2	2	7
Duterte	1	5	1	0

Table 4: collated presidential visits

Source: organized for this study

Therefore we calculate by how much Duterte has pivoted towards China and turned away from the United States. For each country, we calculate growth or shrinkage in visits compared to the base administration (Aquino). The result is as follows:

	Presidential visits	
	China	US
Change in political leaning relative to the base administration	+200%	-88%

Table 5: change in political leaning relative to the base administration

Source: organized for this study

This means that relative to the Aquino administration, Duterte leans on China 200% more politically. With regard to the US, Duterte politically favors the US 88% less than Aquino did.

Economic Strategy

In measuring economic strategy, this study took into consideration three sets of data: approved foreign investment, foreign trade dependency, and economic strategy score. The following table contains average of all yearly values of these three indicators during either administration:

	Approved Foreign Investment (AFI) in million PhP		Foreign Trade Dependency (FTD)		Economic Strategy Score (ESS)
	China	US	China	US	
Aquino	8,919.72	30,343.32	0.058	0.060	-0.035
Duterte	31,763.32	20,025.72	0.090	0.055	-0.046

Table 6: collated economic strategy indicators

Source: organized for this study

The following data informs us of the relative changes based on Aquino's administration:

	AFI in million PhP		FTD		ESS
	China	US	China	US	
Change in economic strategy relative to the base administration	+256.10%	-34%	+55.32	-7.43%	+32.17%

Table 7: change in economic strategy relative to the base administration

Source: organized for this study

In light of these values, we can conclude that if we consider AFI as our main tell for economic strategy, it can be said that Duterte’s administration leans more towards China than Aquino did by 256.10%. Conversely, so far in his administration, Duterte has veered away from China by 34% as compared to Aquino. If we were to use FTD, however, the data connotes that Duterte has taken to China 55.32% more than Aquino, and steps back from the US by 7.43% relative to Aquino’s economy. When we use the economic strategy score, we come up with +32.17%, which means that although both averages for either administration is negative (meaning they mostly align with China), Duterte deviates even more from the United States by 32.17%.

Social leaning

Below is the summary of data for the opinion polls taken by the Social Weather Station. The values are an average of the net trust the Filipino people had towards both China and the US. The data is divided into administrations.

	Public Opinion	
	US	CN
	Average	Average
Aquino	69.67	-21.3
Duterte	62.21	-16.5

Table 8: collated public opinion

Source: organized for this study

As aforementioned, historical trust towards the United States has been and remains high, and the opposite is true for net trust towards China. However, there are notable changes in averages over

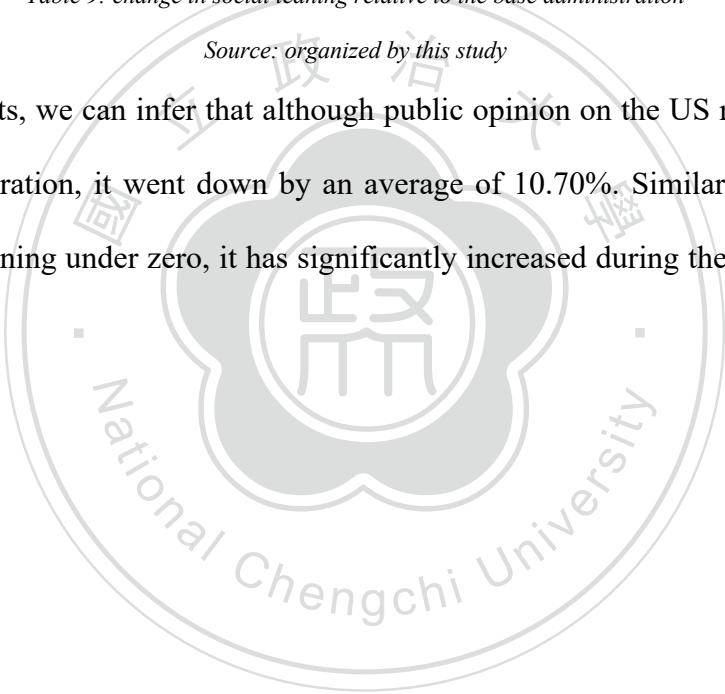
the two administrations, indicating perhaps not a radical, but an incremental difference. The following table reports on these differences:

	Public Opinion	
	China	US
Change in social leaning relative to the base administration	-10.70%	-22.54%

Table 9: change in social leaning relative to the base administration

Source: organized by this study

Based on these results, we can infer that although public opinion on the US remains high during the Duterte administration, it went down by an average of 10.70%. Similarly, despite net trust towards China remaining under zero, it has significantly increased during the Duterte presidency (22.54%).



CHAPTER V

Conclusion

Since the rise of China as a regional power, threatening the prowess of the United States in Southeast Asia, the Philippine archipelago has been caught in the middle along with most if not all countries in the region. From the Marcos era to the current administration, there have been many fluctuations in the way each national leader has juggled the two hegemons, and this study takes interest in the Aquino and Duterte administrations.

By triangulating the data reported in this study, the research may come to a conclusion that the during Aquino's time, relations with the United States were positive on all fronts: political favor, economic dependence, and the voice of the people all sided with the Western power. Meanwhile under Duterte, economic and political factors were both turned towards China, but the social factor was not, as China continued to earn low net trust in Philippine soil (- and water). A closer analysis, however brings us to a difference in the social leaning factor, and a wholistic picture of the Philippines' alignment behavior under the two presidents.

Benigno Aquino III's foreign policy was characterized by balancing against its not-so-friendly neighbor and was hell-bent on defending the West Philippine Sea. The administration spent billions on the modernization of the AFP and went on to pursue a case against China in the Permanent Court of Arbitration. To supplement its lacking military capacities, former president Aquino cozied-up to the US, who was similarly setting its sights on hedging against growing Chinese influence in the region. As Aquino charted the course, his favor towards Washington was quantitatively evident in the frequency of bilateral meetings and the scale of economic cooperation.

	China	US
political	+200%	-88%
AFI	+256.10%	-34%
FTD	+55.32%	-7.43%
ESS	-32.17	
social	-22.54%	-10.70%

Table 10: summary of data

source: organized for this study

His successor, on the other hand, went a different direction by shelving the PCA's ruling (which condemned China and ruled in favor of the Philippines) and renounced ties with the US in no less than in the presence of China's Xi. Duterte (relative to the Aquino administration), from 2016-2020 led a 200% increase in political relations with China and retract 88% of its political dealings with the United States. Furthermore, on the economic front, Duterte pursued a 256% increase in foreign investment, hanging back from the US by 34%. The Duterte administration in the first five years also experienced a 55.32% increase in trade dependency towards China and a drop of 7.43% in US trade dependency. Its economic strategy score also experienced a 32.17% move closer to China. In conclusion, based on the analysis of the data, the shift of the Duterte administration towards China and away from the United States relative to the Aquino administration's stance is quantifiably observed through this study.

Limitations and Recommendations

Nevertheless, definitive answers as to why the shift happened as well as the implications of the pivot have yet to be pinpointed. Though this study shed light on the magnitude of the economic, political, and social re-angling of the Duterte administration vis-à-vis the Aquino administration,

more research is required to explore the explanatory variables behind the shifts in foreign policy not only from Aquino to Duterte, but also that of their predecessors. Furthermore, due to data and scope limitations, many other aspects of bilateral and trilateral relationships are not covered by this research – including but not limited to a comprehensive comparison of military agreements and partnership capacities, actual foreign direct investments, visits by lower-ranking officials, academic/education diplomacy, and other possible indicators of country-to-country affinity. In light of this, the researcher hopes that more studies can be done in these areas to enrich and further the dialogue of Philippine relations with competing regional powers.



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