

The Alteration of the Philippines Foreign Policy towards China over Disputes in the South China Sea

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Abstract

As one of the most protracted issues in the world politics, South China Sea (SCS) disputes have frequently sparked boiling tension among claimant states- China, Taiwan Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and in particular the Philippines - one of the most assertive claimant states aside China. During the administration of President Benigno Aquino III, the Philippines managed to internationalize the case of SCS disputes and ultimately won a victory over China in the Permanent Court Arbitration (PCA), the Netherlands. However, when a government transition occurred from Benigno Aquino III to Rodrigo Duterte in 2016, those PCA credits appeared to be not followed up by President Duterte. This ensued due to the differences in views and political will between Aquino and Duterte on foreign policy. This article aims to unravel and explain on the Philippines' foreign policy alteration towards China over SCS disputes under Duterte's administration, using the concept of Realpolitik and Rational Choice to comprehend why President Duterte decided to seemingly abandon his predecessor's policies. This research employed qualitative method - data collection was obtained from the secondary data and literature study, comprising written documents related to the Philippines foreign policy in responding to the disputes. The results showed that the reason why Duterte abandoned his predecessor's footpath is because he assumed that the way Aquino applied such assertive approach is not effective enough in resolving this prolonged maritime jurisdictional disputes between the Philippines and China. In this way, Duterte applied a more considerate diplomatic approach to China as his rational choice in a sense that he would rather take cooperative instead of confrontational way of settlement in resolving the disputes of maritime territory over the South China Sea.

Keywords: Philippines, Foreign Policy, China, Disputes, South China Sea.

Introduction

The South China Sea (SCS) dispute has been admitted as a major flashpoint worldwide by which this perpetual unresolved case has encompassed many countries, as well as their overlapping geopolitical interests in claiming islands and territory therein. Aside of disputing the territorial sovereignty of waters in South China Sea, the countries involved are also competing to gain the ownership over resources within the seabed which is potentially abundant in marine resources, energy and minerals.ⁱ The South China Sea dispute involves six parties (known as the claimant states); namely China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei who simultaneously claim the territorial waters of the South China Sea

so that overlapping claims and tensions are inevitable.ⁱⁱ Geographically, the Parcel Islands of the western sea part of the SCS are claimed by Vietnam and China, while the Spratly Islands on the south side of the South China Sea are claimed by the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam and China.ⁱⁱⁱ

In this sovereignty dispute, China and Taiwan are quite dominant players in claiming one of territories in SCS, in particular the Pratas island group.^{iv} The claim is inseparable from the historical claim based on the Eleven-Dash Line map in 1947 which covered most of the territory and a few years later became a Nine-Dash Line map. Unilateral claim was based on history by China in 1947, where the Kuomintang-China Party drew the territorial boundary line of the South China Sea formed a U line comprising eleven dotted lines on the map referred to as the Eleven-Dash Line, which then in 1953 two dotted lines, for some political reason, had been abolished on the map and changed into nine dotted lines by the Communist Party referred to as the so-called Nine-Dash Line.^v

This nail-biting tension continued for many years and escalated during the 1990s, especially between China and the Philippines. China unilaterally took on the disputed region of Mischief Reef in 1995, constructed octagonal huts which sparked huge protests from disputed countries, subsequently filed by the Philippines through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. In 1996, the Philippines became a bit more assertive by halting Chinese ship approaching the Scarborough Shoal area and also detaining Chinese fishermen several times.^{vi} Scarborough Shoal is one of the disputed areas claimed by China and the Philippines and also known as Huangyan Island of China, which is located about 230 kilometres from the Philippines and is 1200 kilometres from China.^{vii} Although the political situation heated up in the 1990s, it also experienced a brief decline due to Beijing's more flexible stance; China agreed to discuss the SCS disputes with ASEAN bilaterally and the results of discussion were predominantly documented in the Declaration on the Conduct (DOC) in 2002.^{viii}

The DOC in 2002 was a Chinese diplomatic commitment aimed at building rapport with disputed countries and at the same time promoting Confidence

Building Measures (CBM) cooperation in order to reduce regional strain related to China's rising economic, political and military power.^{ix} However, the success of DOC could not last long due to its unbinding nature and failure to meet the formal code of conduct as there was no agreement on the shared guidelines. Over the past few years, China has again been more assertive in consolidating its sovereignty or legal claims over the SCS, and since 2007 the tension has quite significantly increased between China and other disputing parties,^x particularly with the Philippines on the Scarborough Shoal incident in 1997.^{xi} This is inseparable from China's ambition and displeasure with the outcome of CBM's cooperation, namely the joint exploration of energy resources in the South China Sea and its assertive stance aimed at protecting major maritime routes or sea lines of communication that carry vital energy supplies from the Middle East and Africa to China through the South China Sea area.^{xii}

China made an effort to re-assert its sovereignty in the South China Sea region; the submission of a Nine-Dash Line map to the United Nations in 2009 as a sign of its undisputed sovereignty over territorial waters in the South China Sea.^{xiii} This exertion was also strengthened by a domestic law introduced by China in 1992 stating that the ownership rights over islands in the South China Sea such as the Paracels, Spratlys, Pratas, Bank Macclesfield, Scarborough Shoal and Diaoyutai completely belong to China's territorial sovereignty. The statement and submission certainly reaped protests from the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia since the claim was considered invalid and not based on the international law, according to

UNCLOS 1982.^{xiv} As a consequence, this action provoked all conflicting parties which impacted on the escalation of disputes and diplomatic tension among the claimants, especially between Manila and Beijing.

Amid the growing concern over Chinese aggression in 2010, the Philippines at the same time entered a period of presidential change from Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to Benigno Aquino

III.^{xv} Senator Francis Escudero and the president's key allies and lawmakers called on Aquino

to make the issue of the South China Sea dispute a major agenda during his administration. Aquino has successfully been taking over the government due to Aquino's success in convincing the public through a campaign promise to eradicate corruption and deal with the South China Sea dispute.^{xvi} In the final quarter of 2010, security analysts predicted that there was still hope of adopting a more conciliatory approach to dispute resolution in early 2011, as prosecutors including President Aquino agreed to put forward softer stances such as adopting a more flexible position, prioritizing the search for resolution through diplomatic, recalibration of policy.^{xvii} However in the first quarter of 2011, the Philippine coast guard reported that a Chinese patrol boat harassed a seismic survey ship

contracted by a Philippine company (PLC Corp) by the time it was conducting oil and gas exploration along the island territory of Reed Bank.^{xviii} The territorial waters of Reed Bank are claimed to be part of the Philippines territory located to the east of the Spratly island and about 80 nautical miles west of Palawan island and certainly within the Exclusive Economic Zone 200 miles from the Philippine coastline.^{xix}

The Reed Bank incident prompted President Aquino to take two crackdowns; sending Patrol aircraft into the waters of Reed Bank^{xx} as the incident was considered a violation of territorial integrity and sovereignty, so that it could not be left alone without fighting back. This refers to his State of the Union Address "what is ours and we are ready to defend what's ours".^{xxi} Firstly, submit a diplomatic protest memorandum to the office of the PRC Ambassador in Manila in accordance with the statement of Defence Minister Voltaire Gazmin, yet the memorandum of protest has not received a response from the Chinese side.^{xxii} Secondly, Aquino strengthened the presence of The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the Spratlys, not only that Aquino also pledged to channel about 255 million dollars in funds and hold meetings with the US. to strengthen the AFP and improve maritime security in Asia.^{xxiii} Strengthening AFP power and enhancing cooperation with the US. has been a top priority for the Aquino administration as it realizes that Philippine military power is far below China's military power.^{xxiv}

Meanwhile, despite the political rhetoric of ASEAN and China Members, they continued to show commitment in advancing regional peace and stability by holding a meeting of ASEAN and Chinese Foreign Ministers in Bali to discuss the development of special implementation regulations that switched from the DOC (Declaration of the Conduct) to COC (Code of Conduct).^{xxv} In 2012 after the Reed Bank incident, China re-sparked a dispute by taking control of Scarborough Shoal.^{xxvi} Scarborough's incident was triggered on April 8, when eight Chinese fishing vessels caught and block the Philippines vessels which were exploring the Scarborough area.^{xxvii} In the Scarborough incident, China relied on English-language media to disseminate messages delivered in front of the national press about China's military intervention globally, and the Philippines elevated the scale of its protests to be much louder in terms of diplomatic protests at the government level and also in the form of community-level demonstrations held in front of the Chinese embassy in Manila.^{xxviii}

Not only that, the Philippines also fortified its sovereignty claim over the territorial waters on Scarborough Island using military equipment supplied by the US and Aquino was willing to take the matter to the international level.^{xxix} In 2013, Aquino brought the issue of the South

China Sea dispute to "The Permanent Court Arbitration" (PCA) which is an arbitration panel in The Hague Netherlands.^{xxx} The Philippines has decided to

fight China and attempt to get support from Southeast Asian countries that are also involved in disputes to resolve the issue multilaterally. The Philippines in this case sued China for its historical claims and asked the court to declare that China's historical claim of the Nine-Dash Line map was invalid as it did not comply with UNCLOS 1982. Consequently, the Philippines' legal proceedings sparked Chinese outrage; China did not want to join the court and firmly rejected the court's jurisdiction and never recognized the legal decision.^{xxxii}

Since 2013, the issue of the dispute has been brought down to the PCA and continues until 2016 without China's presence. Although the court runs without the presence of China, it would still announce the arbitration decision on July 12, 2016.^{xxxiii} However, when the Philippines underwent a transition of government from Benigno Aquino III to Rodrigo Duterte on June 30, 2016 - though the PCA court's decision was favourable to the Philippines - the results of the arbitration decision were not followed up by the Philippines.^{xxxiii} This occurred due to the differences in views between Aquino and Duterte on sphere of foreign policy. According to Duterte, multilateral political pressure is not an important tool in foreign policy making for a militarily weak country or in other words the multilateral approach taken by the Aquino administration to pressure China is not effective to resolve disputes between the Philippines and China in the SCS.^{xxxiv} Although the court's decision benefited the Philippines, which the court had ruled that China's historical claims were invalid, China's act on building artificial islands and damaging SCS features & environment deliberately exacerbated the complexity of disputes in the SCS.^{xxxv} The PCA conviction, however, is deemed not strong enough to make China leaving the artificial buildings and islands in SCS which had been constructed to strengthen China's maritime legitimacy and sovereignty over the SCS territorial waters. The difference of leadership between Duterte and Aquino regarding the approach to look at SCS conflict management has been demonstrated since Duterte was mayor of Davao until the presidential campaign, even it was written in most of his proposals.^{xxxvi}

Given his campaign rhetoric in which Duterte spoke openly against international arbitration and chose to reopen bilateral discussions with Beijing,^{xxxvii} he aimed to in reaching an agreement with China which could support his ambitions of rebuilding the national economy. Hence it is obvious that he would abandon his predecessor's foreign policy without hesitation at the time of officially becoming President of the Philippines.^{xxxviii} President Duterte's attitude is inseparable from the populist image he built during his time as a politician, changing the direction of policy focus into domestic interests and even his foreign policy directed to how a foreign policy can provide a conducive international environment for the achievement of domestic interests, emphasizing on domestic infrastructure development programs in order to achieve national economic reforms.^{xxxix} However, when referring to President Duterte's SONA in his early tenure with his campaign, it seems considerably

inconsistent; at first he conveyed that he would strengthen the Philippines' claim in the SCS.xl However, the reality turns to be a bit different where President Duterte is inclined to pave the way for bilateral discussions.xli by establishing a bilateral commission between China and the Philippines. In addition, President Duterte also announced his efforts to have a close tie with China as the Philippines' economic partner in the future and stop relying on the US.xlii

In 2018, Duterte reopened energy exploration activities through the Joint Exploration Pact - which previously via CBM cooperation was banned by Aquino in the face of confrontation with China - and officially announced his cooperation with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) under a memorandum of understanding agreement.xliii President Duterte utilizes his right to

recalibrate his predecessor's policies – hard stance to China - to be a bit softer to China and willing to form a closer tie as the Philippines' main economic partner in the upcoming days.xliv Therefore, this paper will predominantly focus on the changes in the Philippines' foreign policy towards China regarding the approach to grapple with South China Sea dispute, under Duterte's administration period 2016 - 2018, using the concept of Realpolitik and Rational Choice as a classic and temporary foreign policy analysis unit to explain why president Duterte took the decision to abandon his predecessor's policies.

The conceptual framework

The concept of Realpolitik was first used by Thucydides to explain the dimension of power in the city-state interaction between Athens and Melos known as the Melia Dialogue, of which at time there was a war between Athens and Sparta that required other policies with relatively smaller and weaker powers to join Athens or with Sparta.xlv It is written in his book - 'The History of the Peloponnesian War - and mentions an adage "the strong do what they will, the weak suffer what they must".xlvi The basis of realpolitik is the ability to explain the interaction between two or more actors in international relations with asymmetrical power comparisons (unequal to each other) where relatively strong parties can do whatever they want, while relatively weak parties will only suffer the consequences of actions taken by relatively stronger or simpler parties whatever they want. As for the end of international politics, power becomes the main priority or as its most important essence aimed at expanding, maintaining, and demonstrating power. Thucydides conceived the adage based on conditions of the "Peloponnesian War" which described the interaction between the city-states of the Athenian and Spartan police who were fighting for supremacy in Greece and the Mediterranean region which eventually became a place to gain and show the power. Between the Athenian and Spartan Police Bloc there was a neutral party: Melos with relatively little force but decided to side with one of the great powers in the end. Melos chose to side with Sparta and against Athens which ultimately had a detrimental impact on Melos itself as Athens managed to

force his troops to kill all men in Melos; and made almost all women and children to be enslaved. Based on this explanation, we can position the two great powers: Sparta as US. & Athens as China, and Melos as developing countries with relatively low power.

Realpolitik is a synonym of "Political Power" and part of realist theory^{xlvii} which describes a state of political realism in pursuit of the interests and/or power of the country with restrictions caused by the international environment. Realpolitik emphasizes more on the politics of compromise, prioritizing pragmatic or politics based on practical issues rather than theoretical goals or ideological problems^{xlviii} and aims to remove illusions/utopians. The US. and China are two major powers in today's international political scene, the US. with its military might and China with its economic power. The two major global powers are competing to expand, maintain and demonstrate their power by maximizing their influence (dominance) in the international world. In the case of the SCS, Melos is positioned as Southeast Asian countries involved in maritime sovereignty disputes with China, including the Philippines. In this way, the author attempted to explain the interaction between China and the Philippines in the SCS, such as Athens and Melos during the Peloponnesian War as the case poses similarities. Like the Peloponnesian war, SCS disputes also involve between unequal parties, namely countries that have relatively large power (China) with countries that have relatively small power (Southeast Asian countries including the Philippines) which later drives the Philippines on two choices, namely submission or opposition.

Realpolitik has two core elements; namely Equity Norm and Risk-Benefit. Equity norm is a political teaching in establishing norms of equality of which it has been accepted and even expect countries with relatively weak strength will act more wisely (and subject to threats from countries of relatively greater power) referring to the importance of dignity in the international hierarchy.^{xlix} This norm is related to the discretion of decision makers of relatively small powers involved in disputes with larger powers, where such countries are expected to submit to the threat posed by the great powers. The Equity Norm further explains the need for a state to maintain prestige in the international hierarchy but with the support of others who have power equal to the opponent, so that the status of disputes turns into disputes between equal parties.

Meanwhile, the risk-benefit is an element within Realpolitik which is conceived based on rational thinking. Rational thinking refers to the cognitive psychology of individuals/leaders in making decisions and acting with focus on objectivity and consideration.^l Demanding a leader to think and act rationally in pursuit of the interests of the country taking into account the limitations that exist. Implicitly, Realpolitik is based on rational thinking that is the pursuit of selfish state interests.^{li} Given the structural constraints that are quite large due to the international environment that can limit the actions of the state, the

realists thereby tend to behave rationally but are also combined selfishly in achieving the interests to maximize the interests of the country by considering the existing restrictions.^{lii} Given the recipe for Realpolitik that suggests rationality "where statesmen should reduce risk and maximize profits", the equity norm is opposed at a time in which equal countries are facing each other. In accordance with the Realpolitik, this will lean towards war at which a leader should consider the risks and advantages, as political realism is not a paradigm of war.^{liii}

As Morgenthau states (1978:529) "Diplomacy that ends in war has failed in its primary objective: the promotion of the national interest by peaceful means."^{liv} This is still inseparable from the realpolitik understanding of compromise politics, so that the extent to which a leader is able to compromise and consider practical issues. Although the main goal can only be achieved by war but a leader must also be able to consider other problems that can be caused by war, especially for a country that has relatively low strength from the enemy faced then a leader is expected to make wise decisions as there is still another alternative that is to put forward negotiations. Furthermore, Rational Choice is a theory or concept that sharpens from economic studies & an economist, Adam Smith, developed a few principles underlying rational choice theory.^{lv}

Rational choice involves rational actors who are able to use rational calculations in making choices that are reasonable and aligned for the sake of achieving their own goals or personal interests.^{lvi} Rational Choice attempts to explain the behaviour of an actor/individual actively acting to maximize their profits under any circumstances and consigned to minimize losses.^{lvii} Therefore, rational choice is expected to provide the right decision and maximum profit, given the limited options they have. Based on the explanation, rational choice is related to the concept of Risk-Benefit from Realpolitik. Basically rational choice is employed to comprehend and predict the behaviour/actions of international actors in the future such as understanding the reasons of individuals/leaders in deciding a policy based on advantages and disadvantages factors as it is needed to give consideration, before making decisions or acting rationally, and decisions taken logically and impressed strategically and not rash in making decisions.

The Philippines' foreign policy change from the previous one to the United States to seek supportive protection from China's territorial expansion has fuelled tensions with some other

Southeast Asian countries. The Philippines should not feel threatened as China's aggressive military activity in the South China Sea is not intended to provoke the Philippines into a high-level political fight but rather to counter the dominance of the United States which consistently patrols to secure the SCS under the framework of Indo-pacific tagline (free navigation) over international waters that supposed to be free to pass through all parties, which can be explained through the perspective of political realism initiated by Thucydides or

better known as Realpolitik points of view. According to Morgenthau, realpolitik brings up three basic foreign policy objectives, namely to expand power, maintain power, and demonstrate power, and power is the most urgent goal in international political contests. Based on the concept of realpolitik there are two underlying factors in decision making, namely equity norm and risk- benefit that determine a country to submit or oppose.

Submission is interpreted as a wise action that must be taken by the weaker party to avoid threats and at the same time meet the demands of a stronger country. While opposing is the right of every country whose status-quo is threatened in order to maintain its self-esteem, especially in issues that are considered vital and violate the core interests of the parties to the dispute. In addition, the role of third parties that intervene and support the weak to be equal to the opposing party that has more power both economically and militarily often encourages the weak to show opposing action. This can be seen during president Aquino III's confrontational administration of China's activities in the South China Sea with the US military support as the back-up. Despite having the different policies, both Aquino III and Duterte encounter a superior state of both economic and military power which ultimately influences the choice of other national leaders between having to submit or oppose. Broadly speaking in the dimension of power, China and the Philippines' interactions bear similarities to the interactions of Athens and Melos by positioning China as Athens and the Philippines as Melos.

On the other hand in a realpolitik perspective, the changes in Philippine foreign policy under Duterte's leadership towards China can be explained through equity norms and risk-benefit comparisons.^{lviii} First, there is no longer an equity norm between the Philippines and China because the United States can no longer be relied upon as a counterweight to forces in the geopolitical contest between the Philippines and China in the South China Sea. Second, a recalculation by President Duterte of the Position of the United States threatened by Chinese power and any greater risk than Beijing might be if the Philippines continues to take opposition to China's territorial expansion in the South China Sea, ultimately returning to Thucydides and Morgenthau's philosophy of realism that power is the only meaningful one. In other words back to the basic that the strong will do what they want and the weak will suffer the consequences taken from the strong.^{lix}

This study used qualitative research methods. The object of research is the change of Philippines foreign policy towards China. The data collected is obtained through secondary data collection such as, literature study and existing archives/documents or written literature closely related to the research title. The collected data were analyzed descriptively qualitatively by describing and explaining through words and sentences the research results obtained in the qualitative data. The data analysis process was carried out through the

identification stage according to the research objective group, managing and interpreting the data, then carried out abstraction, reduction, and checking the validity of the data. The results of the analysis are then categorized and discussed according to the research concept.

Result and Discussion

The decline of the United States' position as a great power in the international system has raised the Philippines' view to no longer rely entirely on the United States for security in the South China Sea. From the beginning of his administration President Duterte has bluntly demonstrated his scepticism of the US. capabilities as a great power in case war breaks out between the Philippines and China. President Duterte has stated that there is no guarantees from the United States in terms of security in a way that he doubts the United States will continue to be on the side of the Philippines.

This was made clear by President Duterte's 2016 speech in China that the Philippines wanted to break away from its dependence on the United States' assistance in securing Philippine territory around the South China Sea and expressed that the Philippines had aligned itself with China in resolving the South China Sea conflict. Thereby, the Philippines' solution is to open up to China through a joint exploration pact on the maritime natural resources and halt being confrontational towards China over the disputed features in the South China Sea. This action is definitely contrast to Benigno Aquino III administration that strongly opposed China's territorial expansion in the SCS and even frequently cornered China in some international forums.

Duterte's opposing stance than has ever been taken by President Aquino III's administration can be seen from President Duterte's response through his 2018 speech to China's massive development activities, such as artificial islands that have been used as military bases that assert China's de facto control over the reclaimed island since 2014 in the Spratly archipelago by stating:

“Military bases, I must admit it, but is it intended for us? You must be joking. It’s not intended for us. It’s really intended for those who China thinks will destroy them and that is America, we aren’t part of that.”^{ix}

Likewise, the Philippines under the reign of Aquino III who faced China in the SCS, where the Philippines chose not to submit (against) to China and pursue "Balancing" by getting closer to US. military power to make the Philippine strength relatively balanced with China. Establishing defense ties with the US., the Philippines received great US. support in the form of military funding and support when bringing SCS dispute cases to the PCA. However, by the time President Duterte rose to power and took on government experts, he cast doubt on the US. even though the Philippines had secured the most funding in Southeast Asia during Aquino's reign, marked by increased military and defense cooperation with the US. during 2010-2015. However, the assistance provided to the

Philippines remains disproportionate to the assistance provided to US. partner countries in the Middle East. The Philippines which only gets surplus equipment is even a bit too old (does not use the latest technology) while US. partner countries in Middle East rendered modern technology equipment. This makes the circumstance of Philippine military power still under Chinese military power despite having received assistance from the US., China continues to upgrade their military technology with modern and best technology. Today China has become a country that is able to supply technology and develop technology services to the rest of the world. Besides, the assistance provided by the US. is quite insignificant in the case of "war on drugs" promoted by Duterte, in the sense that the US approach in resolving drugs cases is not effective enough to hunt drug dealers and other criminals.

President Duterte also considers the US. to have failed fulfilling her obligations as a key ally of the Philippines, prompting it to push it to recalibrate the Philippine foreign policy. Another reason that strengthens this argument is that the inability of the US. to suppress Chinese activity in the SCS, characterized by several times China continues to act and violate Philippine sovereignty in the SCS during Aquino's reign and often protests China. Not a few are starting to treat the US. as a long-time ally that serves as a counterweight to the Philippines' power with China so far and doubts the benefits obtained from the Philippine-US. defense relationship. In addition, there is uncertainty over US. alignment to the Philippines if this dispute enters the stage of war. President Duterte therefore decided to stop direct confrontation with China in the SCS case due to Duterte's awareness of the inequality of power that the Philippines has despite its ally with the US. But President Duterte has also not directly cut ties with the US. as a longtime ally, still maintaining Philippine-US. relations despite at the same time trying to get closer to China as it follows up on ratification of AIIB membership as a first step. President Duterte initially sought to keep working with both global powers at once but over time the performance declined and ultimately failed because of President Duterte's tendency to side with China. Especially after signing the MoU Belt and Road Initiative with China and starting to leave or no longer rely on the US.

Next is a foreign policy analysis unit based on rational choice theory that is inseparable from the calculation of profit and loss. Basically rational choice is used to explain the reasons, objectives, context of individuals / leaders in deciding a policy based on advantages and disadvantages factors as it is needed to give consideration before making a decision or acting, so that the decision taken is more rational and seems unhurried in making decisions. In terms of President Rodrigo Duterte's rational choice on changing the approach/policy, which makes the Philippines closer to China, Rodrigo Duterte cautiously realize that every step he takes has consequences and therefore he deliberately considered a decision that will give maximum benefit to the Philippines in the upcoming days. However,

the future and image of the Philippines is at stake in it. Switching the Philippines' side from being assertive and against China along with other countries involved in disputes with China to becoming more friendly with China, will certainly pose a risk that must be faced by the Philippines, let alone the case has been brought to the court PCA (The Permanent Court of Arbitration) which means it has been handled internationally.

Here's a table delineating good and harm from the approach taken by President Duterte.

Table Analysis of Advantages and Disadvantages of "Changes in South China Sea Dispute Policy" under President Rodrigo Duterte.

1.	<p>The Philippines is a member of the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the AIIB is a major source of funding for the Belt and Road Initiative so</p> <p>The Philippines receives a stream of funds/investments from the AIIB to realize national infrastructure development and close the financial gap between member states.</p>	<p>Involving Beijing and side-lining the South China Sea issue could undermine interests in the Philippines so far that it wants to strengthen China against the South China Sea and is certainly more profitable</p> <p>China.</p>
2.	<p>Assistance from China can build and develop potential infrastructure projects in the Philippines such as dams, bridges and transportation such as new railways and even the AIIB as well</p> <p>help fund flood control projects in Manila.</p>	<p>Could undermine ASEAN unity and centrality at a time when ASEAN's other countries involved in disputes from the beginning with the Philippines still want to continue to follow up on the impeachment of The Permanent Court Arbitration</p> <p>(PCA) instantly the Philippines turned and chose to be closer to China so if this continues there is a high probability of China to break up regional groups.</p>
3.	<p>Projects run with BRI can create employment for about 21,000 Filipinos.</p>	<p>Weakening global solidarity needed to limit China's assertiveness in the South China Sea or undermining ongoing international efforts to counter China over the Sea</p>

		South China.
4	The influx of Chinese companies and signing other agreements with Chinese companies could bring investments also worth about \$12 billion to the Philippines.	It can strain relations with the United States, which has been a partner in security cooperation.
5.	Success in sustainable infrastructure development can increase industry and entrepreneurship.	Providing more opportunities to China in expanding their territorial sovereignty in South China Sea.
6	Together with BRI, the Philippines can open trade in goods and services, technology development and logistics.	The current Philippines administration is appearing to be a staggeringly unpowerful in front of China's diplomatic strategy.

Based on the table above it can be viewed some reasons that prompted President Rodrigo Duterte to change the Philippines foreign policy as well as leaving a foreign policy legacy of his predecessor, President Benigno Aquino III by not wanting to follow up on the South China Sea case and preferring to be lenient to Beijing. Making and deciding on a foreign policy that

can realize its economic interests is to promote bilateral relations with China. President Duterte considers communist countries like China to be partners in cooperation to realize the national interest in economic matters. This is inseparable from the approach taken by President Duterte, namely putting domestic interests first. His policy direction is not to go outside but into "back to domestic" by prioritizing infrastructure development that is believed to help open up other economic routes.

The calculation of risk-benefit "maximizing profits and minimizing losses" is also a factor influencing President Duterte's decision to confront China over SCS disputes that include disputes between unequal parties. This calculation is inseparable from the economic aspect, where the Philippines easily accepts China's offer that can meet President Duterte's economic ambitions at home or in line with national economic interests, namely increasing the Philippines' economic income through infrastructure development programs. China comes with several benefits that will be obtained if the Philippines establishes bilateral relations with China, namely getting infrastructure investment through the AIIB and further infrastructure development through the BRI that can open wider Philippine economic opportunities on condition that President Duterte must be willing to stop Aquino's confrontation strategy against China. Conversely, if President Duterte continues Aquino's strategy of confrontation with China over the SCS dispute, the Philippines will be at greater risk and even harm to the

Philippines in all aspects. This is because the Philippines also cannot be sure if the SCS dispute enters the stage of war if it takes actions that continue to oppose China and on the other side the US. force is no longer reliable as the US. does not go away or refuses to give certainty of partisanship to the Philippines fully to face China.

Given China's growing power, it provides the ability for China to exert pressure on the Philippines by increasing its military activity in the Philippines' sovereign territory (Philippine EEZ territory), restricting the Philippines supply route through the Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the regional dispute, and actualizing its island reclamation plan in the Philippines EEZ region based on ancient historical claims. Based on that explanation and referring to President Duterte's calculations, the support from the US. and some other ASEAN countries that are also involved in the SCS dispute is not enough to help the Philippines in dealing with China if the dispute enters a stage of war emergency. In addition, the calculation of the risks that will be obtained is much greater if it continues to confront China to the stage of war compared to the benefits offered by China. Thus, as a wise country and aware of the power that is represented, President Duterte chose to take action that can get maximum profit and minimum risk. As a result, President Duterte chose to stop direct confrontation with China and in 2016 and even Manila-Beijing cooperation sealed a \$24 billion deal and 13 intergovernmental agreements, joined the AIIB and formalized cooperation with the BRI.^{ixi} It is reminiscent of Thucydides' adage; "the strong do what they will, the weak suffer what they must."^{ixii}

When the Philippines joined with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), it has already pass through a lengthy process since its planning in 2014 under Aquino's government, ranging from risk-benefit considerations coming from pro-cons to the process of membership ratification and initial capital payments of \$196 million to be paid to become AIIB members. Regardless of the SCS issue with China is a major point of consideration, as it is feared that it will affect the Philippines' membership in the AIIB. At the same time, Aquino also realized that the Philippines requires a lot of funds to implement infrastructure development programs. The AIIB presented an attractive offer for Manila, such as providing domestic infrastructure development funds so that Aquino made the decision to join as the AIIB's 57th founding

member. On December 29, 2015, Aquino expressed optimism towards the AIIB which is believed to be a financial institution (Multilateral Bank) that can handle investments and covering gaps that occur in many countries, therefore Aquino signed the Article of Agreements (AOA).^{ixiii} However, for the next ratification process that requires approval from the senate, it must be postponed because it is adjacent to entering the general election year. After the transition from Benigno Aquino III to Rodrigo Duterte in 2016 through elections, the

Philippines under Duterte's government chose to follow the process of ratification of membership until officially becoming a founding member.

At the end of 2016 with the approval of the Philippines senate, it officially became the 57th founding member of the AIIB. This is due to the interests of President Duterte who is willing to multiply Philippine foreign policy into an inward-looking foreign policy that returns to domestic (domestically oriented) and closer to China. The interest in question is inseparable from the national interest in the economic field. Duterte's ambition to open up other economic pathways or opportunities and eliminate public works gap in the Philippines that has crippled the local economy) through the realization of massive domestic infrastructure development (making the era of government an era of infrastructure glory).lxiv Based on the Advantage and Disadvantage table above, in the benefits column section has been mentioned about several advantages that the Philippines will get when it becomes a permanent member of the AIIB, such as ease to get funds flow (investment) or loans to realize national infrastructure development and close the financial gap between member countries.lxv Other benefits of AIIB membership, according to Finance Secretary Carlod Dominguez who has met with Jin Liqun as president of the AIIB, are obtaining huge budget and loans which can be utilized for the first two infrastructure & transportation projects in Manila such as new railways, bus rapid transit systems and flood control projects in the sense that can mitigate the flood which frequently occurs in the Philippines capital city.lxvi

After becoming an official member of the AIIB, President Duterte is still eager to develop more bilateral relations with China and decided to join the China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) program. In November 2018, the Philippines signed nine cooperation documents, one of which is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as the most important document in BRI cooperation. In the MoU, the Philippines and China agreed to hold a dialogue on key macroeconomic policies and development strategies to align the national interests of both with regional needs for the achievement of common goals. The BRI is a program in line with President Duterte's vision "Build, Build, Build Program" aimed at creating an "infrastructures heyday" in the Philippines during his government period.lxvii The initiative of BRI deliberately prioritizes infrastructure development that can increase the economic income of countries involved in BRI cooperation in various projects including development projects, people to people exchange projects, technology projects (digital silk road), etc., which can eventually leverage the Philippines national economy and productivity. The Philippines also signs agreements with Chinese companies that can bring in \$12 billion in investment to help realizing infrastructure development projects and expand job employment for the Filipinos, such as Alibaba Group's Lazada e-commerce company, one of the companies funding the retail industry as well as providing

jobs for about 8,000 workers and building rapport with the Philippines through the economic investment.lxviii

The BRI Infrastructure development projects, such as building airports, ports, railways, transportation, bridges, have much advantages to boost economic development, provide jobs for local communities (jobs for 21,000 people), increase the competitiveness of the Philippines in the global trade arena, open trade routes that can connect with the rest of Asia and Europe,

open markets for the Philippines along the corridor between China, the Middle East and Europe (ancient silk road) and also to increase number of exports and imports.lxix Through the people to people exchange project, it can elevate human resources for example by increasing the quota of Filipino-Chinese student exchanges, promoting the migration of the Filipino population, developing the tourism industry, promoting culture, etc. Through digital silk road-related technology projects that combine software and hardware technologies, it is capable of boosting trade through expanding digital market opportunities. Alibaba, Baidu and Tencent have globally dominated, and they are instrumental in advancing global trade through technology projects by developing e-commerce in member countries to advance their trade and improve supply chains that shorten delivery times between countries.lxx Based on this explanation, the development of innovative sustainable infrastructure through BRI can increase entrepreneurship and re-routing of global economic pathways that are able to create market opportunities, increase competition, productivity, trade in goods and services and the development of technology and logistics.

However, in the disadvantage section it shows a few negative impacts or risks that are likely to happen from getting closer to China by recalibrating Philippine foreign policy. Starting from before the Philippines' association with the AIIB, risk-benefit considerations include the AIIB believed to be Beijing's strategic vision to create a BRI that can connect China's economy with the entire Eurasian Continent and the AIIB is BRI's main source of funding. If the Philippines joins the AIIB, it is the Philippines which predominantly supports China's rise through the BRI. Joining the AIIB means a step closer to China that would benefit China. When Duterte took power, the Philippines not only joined the AIIB but also formalized cooperation with the BRI and decided not to follow through on the PCA results which means President Duterte has undermined international efforts to confront China over the SCS.lxxi President Duterte prefers to involve China in realizing the Philippines' national interests by accepting China's more attractive offer through AIIB and BRI proposals, halting Aquino's strategic confrontation with China that could have a direct impact on the Philippines' relationship with the US. as a long- time ally. The AIIB, which the US. considers a rival to the World Bank, has indirectly made the Philippines' relationship with the US. increasingly tenuous watermarked by the declining cooperation between the Philippines and the US. during 2016-2018.

President Duterte also realized that the decision he made in forming a closer tie with China will have implications over the Philippines relationship with Southeast Asian countries involved with the SCS dispute. While other Southeast Asian countries are pinning their full hopes on the Philippines and share the same goal of pursuing the PCA's decision to stop China's military & reclamation activity in the SCS, the Philippines seems turning to be in favor of China. Therefore, it has opened opportunities for China to realize its maritime silk road that passes through the SCS as a strategic vision to fortify Chinese Supremacy. China's rising is assumed to bring more harm in breaking down the solidarity of ASEAN centrality – served as a means for ASEAN member states to maintain regional stability, prosperity, peace, and security amid the rivalry of great powers. For this reason, Duterte's foreign policy made the Philippines being criticized for being equivocal and indecisive in determining its position on the SCS dispute, due to a change of foreign policy approach from opposing to subservience to China.

Conclusion

To recapitulate, the sovereignty territorial water disputes between the Philippines and China have considerably been acknowledged as a major flashpoint and have sparked for decades.

Different President, different approaches, that is what occurred in the Philippines administration, between the President Benigno Aquino III and President Duterte. The approach used by President Aquino III seems to be more confrontational and harder to China in a way that Aquino did not attempt to render any slight chance to build closer diplomatic approach to Beijing. However, at the same time the cooperation of AOA-AIIB signed by President Aquino implied that he still needs China to provide more funds and loans to support his massive infrastructure development in the Philippines, though he seems tough to China in terms of political security issues. On the other side, President Duterte – the successor of President Aquino III - employed a much softer and cooperative approach to China as he is inclined to avoid any confrontation with Beijing in the issue of maritime sovereignty territory. It is evident that after 2016 PCA, the Philippines seems not following up those jury convictions, which mostly in favor to the Philippines. In term of economic development, Duterte has applied some tactful strategies based on risk-benefits in Realpolitik and Rational Choice in the sense that he completely changed the direction of the Philippines foreign policy from being confrontational and aggressive to be more delicate and considerate in dealing with China. It is clearly seen that he prefers stop institutionalizing the issues of SCS in international forums, opts bilateral instead of multilateral discussion and even warmly accepts the China's BRI program. These actions are completely aligned with the tagline of his campaign trail, 'Back to Domestic; Build, Build, and Build' in which President Duterte is typically inward looking instead of outward looking and certainly prioritizes domestic infrastructure and economic development. That is why he relied more on these Chinese tremendous economic

incentives in realizing his vision and political program on boosting the Philippines economic welfare and prosperity. Therefore, he believed that the alteration of the Philippines foreign policy can bring more good than harm and of course can be utilized as a political maneuver to achieve of a win-win solution for both; where Beijing temporarily halts the Philippines being assertive to follow up the results of PCA derived from ICJ, and in exchange the Philippines can potentially actualize the strategic vision to have small political wins and the economic advantages in realizing the infrastructures heyday through China's BRI assistance.

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