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Table of Contents

Friend or Foe: Explaining the Duterte Administration's China Policy in the South China Sea

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Introduction

The nature of the Philippines' foreign policy towards China in the South China Sea is puzzling.[1] In the same year he was sworn into office as the President of the Republic of the Philippines on June 30, 2016, Duterte not only sparked international attention with his fervent rhetoric, but also confusion when he untangled his administration from the Aquino administration's geopolitical agenda.[2] Departing from his predecessor's more confrontational policy,[3] he announced the Philippines' military and economic separation from the United States,[4] and significantly downplayed its diplomatic win at the Permanent Court of Arbitration by describing the 2016 arbitral ruling on Beijing's claims in the South

[1] Brenda Tan is a recent graduate of the London School of Economics. Her research interests include foreign policy analysis, China-Southeast Asia relations, and Chinese history.

[2] Renato C. de Castro, "Explaining the Duterte Administration's Appeasement Policy on China: The Power of Fear," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 45.3–4 (2019): 2, https://doi.org/10.1080/00927678.2019.1589664

[3] The Aquino administration is often interpreted by scholars as one that actively seeks to challenge China's expansionism in the South China Sea. Examples commonly cited include the tightening of US-Philippine military relations via the signing of the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, and its prosecution of China in the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016. Renato C. de Castro, "The Duterte Administration's Appeasement Policy on China and the Crisis in the Philippine–US Alliance," *Philippine Political Science Journal* 38.3 (2017): 162, https://doi.org/10.1080/01154451.2017.1412161

[4] Barbara Demick and Tracy Wilkinson, "Philippine President Duterte: 'I Announce My Separation From the United States,'" *Los Angeles Times,* October 20, 2016, https://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-philippines-us-20161020-snap-story.html

China Sea as a "piece of trash paper."[5] Yet, tighter US-Philippine military relations, in the form of bilateral defense exercises, military aid, and intelligence sharing targeted at bolstering maritime security against Chinese threats have seemed to contradict Duterte's Beijing-friendly foreign policy.[6] This contradictory trend is also observed across various flashpoints with China during Duterte's administration. When the Philippine Navy was "harassed by a Chinese chopper in the Second Thomas Shoal in June 2018,"[7] Foreign Secretary Cayetano responded with a diplomatic protest and complaint, whereas Duterte claimed to assume no knowledge of the incident in an effort to pander to Chinese interests.[8] In Scarborough Shoal, China's harassment of Filipino fishermen was responded to in a similarly divided manner. While the Philippine military unit responsible for the Scarborough Shoal encouraged local fisherman to "explore and maximize the maritime resources in their immediate waters" as a means to assert its sovereignty in the region,[9] Duterte and his spokesperson Harry Roque conceded to Chinese involvement in the shoal so as to prove the fruits of Sino-Philippine friendship.[10]

How can we make sense of the Philippines' anti-China policies despite its pro-China rhetoric in the South China Sea? To that, I argue that there is a logic underlying the contradictions of Philippine foreign policy. By analyzing the role conceptions of key stakeholders as independent variables in the Duterte administration, I will utilize role theory as

[5] Richard J. Heydarian, "Duterte's Game in Beijing," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, August 29, 2019, https://amti.csis.org/dutertes-game-in-beijing/
[6] de Castro, "The Duterte Administration's Appeasement," 177.
[7] Paterno Esmaquel II, "China Chopper Harasses PH Rubber Boat in Ayungin Shoal–Lawmaker," *Rappler*, May 30, 2018, http://www.rappler.com/nation/203720-chinese-helicopter-harass-rubber-boat-ayungin-shoal-spratly-islands
[8] Camille Elemia, "The Many Times Duterte and His Cabinet Contradicted Each Other," *Rappler*, June 20, 2018, http://www.rappler.com/nation/205028-issues-duterte-and-cabinet-members-contradicted-each-other
[9] Carmela Fonbuena, "PH Military Encourages Fishermen to Return to Scarborough," *Rappler*, April 25, 2018, http://www.rappler.com/nation/201069-nolcom-maritime-forum-lingayen
[10] Pia Ranada, "To Prove Fruits of PH-China 'Friendship,' Roque Brings Fishermen to Press Briefing," *Rappler*, June 11, 2018, http://www.rappler.com/nation/204647-harry-roque-zambales-fishermen-china-coast-guard-scarborough-shoal

a theoretical framework to assert the presence of horizontal intra-role contestation between the President, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), and the Philippine defense establishment. This approach eschews the assumption that the Philippines behaves as a unitary actor with a consensus on its China policy in the South China Sea, and thus is able to unpack foreign policy behavior within its key decision-making agents. For clarity, pro-China attitudes could be encapsulated by Duterte's pragmatic pivot to China, where maritime disputes are downplayed in favor of pursuing closer economic and political ties with China. Such attitudes are also often ones that leverage new political realities in the South China Sea and seek to reflect the new strategic status quo in practice.[11]

In contrast, anti-China policy would refer to behavior that does not disregard maritime disputes to preserve the budding Sino-Philippine friendship. Beyond fostering closer relations with China, other expressions of anti-China behavior such as reliance on the joint US-Philippine military alliance or instruments of international law could be adopted to address the maritime disputes in the region.[12] In order to demonstrate how tensions within the Duterte administration could be attributed to horizontally contested national role conceptions, national role conceptions will first be assigned to Duterte and the Philippine bureaucratic and military establishments through an analysis of primary and secondary materials. These roles will subsequently be connected to foreign policy behavior to illustrate how these contested role conceptions have manifested into the resulting tensions within the Duterte administration.

The central argument will be developed over the next five sections, where the second section provides a literature review of existing scholarship on Philippine foreign policy and role theory. It also introduces role theory and horizontal role contestation as a theoretical framework. The

[11] "Manila's Pivot to Pragmatism on the South China Sea," editorial, *East Asia Forum*, August 14, 2017, https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2017/08/14/manilas-pivot-to-pragmatism-on-the-south-china-sea/
[12] Ibid.

third section lays out the methodology that I have adopted, while the following two sections will apply the theoretical framework to empirical evidence. The fourth section focuses on identifying role conceptions of the president as well as bureaucratic and military establishments, while the fifth section utilizes a case study example to demonstrate how tensions within the Philippines' China foreign policy could be attributed to the differing role conceptions among the decision-making political elites. The concluding section will reflect on the methodological and empirical approach and identify areas for improvement.

Literature Review

The first section provides an overview of existing scholarship on Philippine foreign policy and highlights the gap in the scholarship that I aim to address. The next section will introduce role theory and horizontal role contestation, and subsequently, its relevance in the context of Philippine foreign policy.

Philippine Foreign Policy

Existing scholarship on Philippine foreign policy can be categorized into two distinct groups. The first group, more generally, provided explanations for changes in Philippine foreign policy across successive presidential administrations. Meanwhile, the second group has been characterized by debates regarding the type of strategy the Duterte administration has employed in dealing with an "increasingly assertive" China.[13] However, existing scholarship has yet to provide sufficient insight into divergent strands of policy within a single president's administration. Thus the explication of foreign policy tensions within a single administration serves as a unique contribution to existing Philippine foreign policy studies. This area of study is especially salient given increased Chinese assertiveness in the form of offshore drilling, land reclamation and militarization activities, and harassment of foreign fishing and oil exploration ships, which have led the Philippines to cautiously

[13] Nian-chung Chang Liao, "Winds of Change: Assessing China's Assertive Turn in Foreign Policy," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 53.6 (2018): 881, https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909618762477

assert its sovereignty in the region to prevent an armed conflict or a recurrent episode like those of the 1994 Mischief Reef and 2012 Scarborough Shoal incidents.[14]

Expanding on existing scholarship, scholars in the first group have explored reasons for shifts in Philippine foreign policy across the Aquino and Duterte administrations through various levels of analysis. In line with Waltz's three "images" of international relations, as outlined in his seminal work, "Man, the State and War," scholars in this group have accounted for changes in foreign policy through the lens of the individual, the state, and the international system.[15] Adopting a systemic approach, Chiang proposes that changes in Philippine foreign policy could be attributed to the presence of asymmetric power relations with the US and China.[16] Rather than highlighting the significance of systemic shifts as a possible explanation for policy changes under the Duterte administration, Heydarian and Trinidad instead posit domestic factors as the main explanatory variable responsible for these changes. Heydarian proposes that the evolution of Philippine foreign policy remains a "function of changes in both the domestic political calculations of the ruling elite factions" as well as changes in the balance of power in the regional security environment.[17] Trinidad echoes the opinion that domestic factors were crucial in strengthening the Philippines' strategic partnership with Japan.[18] In this case, shifts in power balances were used as convenient

[14] Felix Chang, "Comparative Southeast Asian Military Modernization," *ASAN Forum*, October 1, 2014, http://www.theasanforum.org/comparative-southeast-asian-military-modernization-1/

[15] *See* Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1959).

[16] Jeremy Chiang, "Philippine Foreign Policy in the 21st Century: The Influence of Double-Asymmetric Structure," conference paper, ISA International Conference 2017 (Hong Kong, CHN), *International Studies Association*, June 15-17, 2017, http://web.isanet.org/Web/Conferences/HKU2017-s/Archive/e35950e1-db89-4726-b72e-671a86b59ca3.pdf

[17] Richard J. Heydarian, "Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy," *Asian Security* 13.3 (2017): 221, https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2017.1354569

[18] Dennis D. Trinidad, "Domestic Factors and Strategic Partnership: Redefining Philippines-Japan Relations in the 21st Century," *Asian Politics & Policy* 9.4 (2017): 615,

reasons to explain the trajectories of the Philippines' evolving relationships. At the individual level, Tran has stressed the importance of the president's preferences in facilitating and hindering foreign policy decisions.[19] Similarly, de Castro argues that foreign policy shifts are an extension of different perceptions and "reference points" held by president Duterte and then-president Aquino.[20] However, despite the significance of this analytical framework in highlighting the utility of systemic, domestic, and individual factors as key instruments to explain different foreign policy paths, its arguments have not been sufficiently developed to account for different paths within a single presidential administration.

Scholars in the second group have focused their analysis entirely on the Duterte administration and through their analysis, have to some extent, alluded to the foreign policy tensions within the administration. These scholars, through the exploration of concepts such as hedging, balancing, accommodation, burden-sharing, and bandwagoning, have acknowledged both the Philippines' reorientation towards China and its enduring alliance with and reliance on the US.[21] However, their works

https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12352

[19] Thi Bich Tran, "Personalising the Philippines' China Policy: Where Individuals Matter," working paper, *Afrasian Research Centre*, Ryukoku University, in *Studies on Multicultural Societies* 36 (2018): 2, https://afrasia.ryukoku.ac.jp/phase3/english/news/59ea9d51367bcf5ecf9573ba35529067e4b6f833.pdf

[20] Castro, "Explaining the Duterte Administration's Appeasement Policy on China," 21.

[21] Aileen Baviera, "President Duterte's Foreign Policy Challenges," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 38.2 (2016): 205, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24916629; Renato C. de Castro, "Twenty-First Century Philippines' Policy Toward an Emergent China: From Equi-Balancing to Strategic Balancing," *Asian Politics & Policy* 8.2 (2016): 305–328, https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12249; Malcolm Cook, "The Duterte Administration's China Tensions," report, *ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute*, in *ISEAS Perspective* 62 (2019): 1, https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2019_62.pdf; Mark B.F. Manantan, "Pivot Toward China: A Critical Analysis of the Philippines' Policy Shift on the South China Sea Disputes," *Asian Politics & Policy* 11.4 (2019): 647, https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12498; Ann M. Murphy, "Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages," *Asian Security* 13.3 (2017): 175, https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2017.1354566

have failed to sufficiently consider the underlying reasons for the Philippines' contradictory foreign policy. By introducing role theory as a viable framework in the subsequent sections, I seek to leverage role theory's analytical strengths to address this scholarship gap.

Role Theory

Originating from sociology, social psychology and anthropology, role theory has since been adapted by international relations scholars to argue that states, like individuals in society, perform certain roles when they interact with other state and non-state actors.[22] The systematic reconceptualization of role theory into FPA was pioneered by Holsti, whose seminal work on national role conceptions provided a landmark study for subsequent generations of role theory literature. He defined role conceptions as:

> The policymakers' own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions, suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems.[23]

Holsti's work has also introduced the "role" as a central concept, where states play a role, which is dictated by expectations for appropriate behavior on the international stage.[24] Similar to individuals, a state's conception and interpretation of its role is also heavily influenced by material and ideational factors such as its external environment, relative

[22] Kalevi J. Holsti, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy," *International Studies Quarterly* 14.3 (1970): 235, https://doi.org/10.2307/3013584; Marijke Breuning, "Role Theory Research in International Relations, State of the Art and Blind Spots," in *Role Theory in International Relations: Approaches and Analyses*, ed. Sebastian Harnisch, Cornelia Frank, and Hanns W. Maull (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011): 25, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203818756; Cristian Cantir and Juliet Kaarbo, "Unpacking Ego in Role Theory: Vertical and Horizontal Role Contestation and Foreign Policy," in *Domestic Role Contestation, Foreign Policy, and International Relations*, ed. Christian Cantir and Juliet Kaarbo (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016): 16. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315623580

[23] Holsti, "National Role Conceptions," 246.

[24] Ibid., 246.

power, identity, perceptions, and the value and attitudes of its decision makers. Apart from a singular role, his study has also identified the ability for states to play dual or even multiple roles in the international system, where the roles greatly extend beyond the dichotomy of conflict or cooperation.[25] Holsti has further identified seventeen major roles expressed by states on the international stage.[26] These roles include, but are not limited to, regional leader, active independent, anti-imperialist agent, faithful ally, and independent.[27] Holsti's definition of national role conceptions and role typology has accentuated the interactive dimensions of role theory, where a state's ability to enact a "role" is contextualized in relation to its interactions with another state. Harnisch adds clarity to this interactive dimension by defining state interactions through the self and the other, where the self parallels the state' role conceptions while the other reflects the expectations that other states have with respect to the state's foreign policy behavior.[28]

However, Holsti's seminal work has faced both methodological and analytical criticisms. Methodologically, work from scholars focused on enhancing the original role typology. As the existing role typology was formulated exclusively for the period during the Cold War, Chafetz, Abramson and Grillot have proposed additional role conceptions such as "global system collaborator" and "global leader" to accommodate changes in the post-Cold War international system.[29] Similarly, Wish provides an arguably more systematic way of characterizing national

[25] Ibid., 243; *see also* Breuning, "Role Theory Research," 30.
[26] Ibid., 260-270.
[27] Holsti's complete 17-role typology consists of: regional-subsystem collaborator, independent, liberator-supporter, faithful ally, mediator-integrator, internal development, developer, anti-imperialist agent, active independent, defender of the faith, bastion of the revolution, liberator, regional protector, isolate, regional leader, bridge, protectee, and other.
[28] Sebastian Harnisch, "Dialogue and Emergence: George Herbert Mead's Contribution to Role Theory and his Reconstruction of International Politics," in *Role Theory in International Relations*, 39.
[29] Glenn Chafetz, Hillel Abramson, and Suzette Grillot, "Role Theory and Foreign Policy: Belarussian and Ukrainian Compliance With the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime," *Political Psychology* 17.4 (1996): 742, https://doi.org/10.2307/3792136

role conceptions.[30] Her typology proposes thirteen different national role conceptions that are based on states' motivational orientation, status perceptions, and issue or substantive problem area, rather than the extent of states' international involvement.[31] Analytical criticisms have largely refined role theory scholarship, where scholars have moved away from structural explanations to the development of symbolic interactionist approaches, where more emphasis is placed on the extent to which agents can influence structural roles, and subsequently a state's role conception.[32] According to Stryker and Statham, structural angles of analysis prioritizes social structures as the main determinant in influencing state behavior, where individuals are subsequently socialised into existing roles.[33] Meanwhile, symbolic interactionist approaches justify the ability of individuals to define both their roles and social structures.[34]

Building on Holsti's observations that states could play multiple roles that were incompatible with one another, Brummer and Thies have utilized role theory to conceptualize conflict between multiple roles held within a state.[35] They define the study of inter-state conflict to represent "an actor occupying two or more roles simultaneously that have incompatible expectations."[36] In rightly identifying the lack of domestic

[30] Naomi B. Wish, "Foreign Policy Makers and Their National Role Conceptions," *International Studies Quarterly* 24.4 (1980): 534, https://doi.org/10.2307/2600291
[31] Ibid., 536.
[32] Juliet Kaarbo, "Foreign Policy Analysis in the Twenty-First Century: Back to Comparison, Forward to Identity and Ideas," *International Studies Review* 5.2 (2003): 159, https://doi.org/10.1111/1521-9488.5020012; Valerie M. Hudson, "Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1.1 (2005): 2, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1743-8594.2005.00001.x
[33] Sheldon Stryker and Anne Statham, "Symbolic Interaction and Role Theory," in *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, ed. Gardner Lindzey and Elliot Aronson (New York, NY: Random House, 1985): 312.
[34] Ibid., 313.
[35] Holsti, "National Role Conceptions," 303; Klaus Brummer and Cameron Thies, "The Contested Selection of National Role Conceptions," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 11.3 (2015): 279, https://doi.org/10.1111/fpa.12045
[36] This should not be confused with intra-role conflict, which is defined by Brummer and Thies in the same article as "incompatible expectations held either by the actor or others regarding a single role." Brummer and Thies, "The Contested Selection of Na-

consensus over a state's role conception, Cantir and Kaarbo's work has looked to concepts of horizontal and vertical role contestation to investigate the cohesiveness of role conceptions within a collective entity as an empirical question.[37] Horizontal role contestation, which will be applied in the subsequent sections, explores role conceptions and contestation along the intra-elite nexus, while vertical role contestation explores the same process from an elite-masses perspective.[38]

Horizontal role contestation has since been applied by scholars to explain conflicting foreign policy. Brummer and Thies have utilized horizontal role contestation to argue that the foreign policy of post-war Germany was largely a result of national role contestation between the government and opposition, instead of bureaucratic and coalition politics.[39] They have also analyzed role contestation within main political parties, between different branches of government, and between the government and political opposition to account for Australia's foreign policy between 1945 and 1952.[40] Likewise, Breuning has examined tensions between Belgium's role as a trading state and its role as a developmental partner to explain its lacklustre commitment to development cooperation during the prime ministership of Jean-Luc Dehaene.[41] Beyond the West, scholars like Hirata have analyzed horizontal role contestation in Asia between the Liberal Democratic Party and Democratic Party of Japan in order to make sense of the changes and continuities in Japanese security policy.[42] Additionally, although horizontal role contestation has rarely been used to explain intra-role conflict among Southeast Asian states, Huang's recent work examining Vietnam's China policy via vertical role contestation makes some headway into role theory's applicability in Southeast Asia.[43]

tional Role Conceptions," 279.

[37] Cantir and Kaarbo, "Unpacking Ego in Role Theory," 6.

[38] Ibid., 6.

[39] Brummer and Thies, "The Contested Selection of National Role Conceptions," 274.

[40] Klaus Brummer and Cameron Thies, "Active Independent or Faithful Ally? The Domestic Contestation of National Role Conceptions in Australia After World War II," in *Domestic Role Contestation, Foreign Policy, and International Relations*, 40.

[41] Marijke Breuning, "Contesting Belgium's Role in Development Cooperation," in *Domestic Role Contestation, Foreign Policy, and International Relations*, 73.

[42] Keiko Hirata, "Role Theory and Japanese Security Policy," in *Domestic Role Contestation, Foreign Policy, and International Relations,* 56.

Ultimately, role theory and horizontal role contestation are utilized as they provide more analytical value than existing analytical frameworks in two areas. First, traditional Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) theories such as bureaucratic politics and psychological theories have focused on investigating phenomena at the individual, state, and systemic level, and have yet to transcend beyond a single level of analysis.[44] Meanwhile, role theory's ability to focus on both agency and structural factors renders it an attractive and organizationally unique framework. It encapsulates the impact of material capabilities such as country size and economic performance, as well as ideational factors including identity, culture, and history,[45] thereby bridging the gap between agency and structure in the agent-structure divide.[46] Role theory's utility is further reflected by Kaarbo and Cantir's analyses of Danish and Dutch decision-making over their involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan respectively, where they argue that the use of role theory to understand foreign policy can only connect agents and structures if it takes domestic agents and internal political processes seriously.[47]

Second, role theory's value lies in providing new insight into small-state foreign policy making. As literature concerning small-state foreign policy making have often prioritized structural factors over the perceptions of small states, viewing agents of the state as the reference point for for-

[43] Chiung-Chiu Huang, "Interpreting Vietnam's China Policy from the Perspective of Role Theory: Independent Role Versus Interactive Role," *International Relations* 34.4 (2020): 528, https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117820904602

[44] Kostas Ifantis, Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, and Andreas Kotelis, "National Role and Foreign Policy: An Exploratory Study of Greek Elites' Perceptions towards Turkey," report, *Hellenic Observatory*, London School of Economics European Institute, in *GreeSE Papers* 94 (2015): 2, http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/63265

[45] Breuning, "Role Theory Research," 27.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Juliet Kaarbo and Cristian Cantir, "Role Conflict in Recent Wars: Danish and Dutch Debates over Iraq and Afghanistan," *Cooperation and Conflict* 48.4 (2013): 478, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836713482815

eign policy making allows analyses to shake off the yoke of disparate relational factors and power projection abilities as main determinants of small-state foreign policy making.[48] Since structural factors alone have not provided comprehensive explanations of foreign policy dynamics between small states and great powers, role theory may better explain small state behavior from a different perspective and with more precision. Role theory and horizontal role contestation are therefore suitable frameworks to account for the tensions within the Philippines' foreign policy towards China, especially when evidence reflecting disagreements among the Philippine political elites over foreign policy making exists, and is relatively accessible and transparent. The next section will explain how tensions within the Philippines' China foreign policy can be demonstrated via horizontal role contestation as a theoretical framework.

Methodology

The utilization of horizontal role contestation as a theoretical framework to explain the tensions within the Philippines' China policy in the South China Sea is divided into two stages. The first stage involves the identification of roles for selected foreign policy decision makers while the second stage provides an illustration of the theoretical argument through linkages between the established roles and actual foreign policy. This section will further expand on how these two stages will be established.

Role Identification

To explain horizontal role contestation among key Philippine foreign policy decision makers, it is imperative to first identify the relevant foreign policy agents. I have identified the President, the DFA, and the Philippine defense establishment, where the Philippine Department

[48] Alan Chong, "Small State Soft Power Strategies: Virtual Enlargement in the Cases of the Vatican City State and Singapore," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 23.3 (2010): 383, https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2010.484048; Matthias Maass, *Small States in World Politics: The Story of Small State Survival, 1648-2016* (Manchester, GBR: Manchester University Press, 2017): 12, https://doi.org/10.7228/manchester/9780719082733.001.0001

of National Defense (DND) exercises executive supervision over the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), as key foreign policy agents. Notwithstanding scope constraints, this distinction takes into account the given political hierarchies, but falls short of assuming that ministries and the military are simply implementers of the President's foreign policy. This distinction also recognises that major institutional actors can impose their preferred roles in political processes, and provides the capacity to analyze alternative opinions in the event that foreign policy implementation corresponds with presidential advice.[49]

These agents are selected for a variety of reasons. Apart from the availability of data and feasibility of data collection, all four agents are often involved in the making and implementation of foreign policy. The President is recognized as the "sole organ and authority in external relations and is the country's sole representative with foreign nations."[50] This *de facto* position has been upheld by the Supreme Court in rulings concerning the chief executive's power to determine foreign relations and policy in relation to other state actors.[51] The relevance of the DFA stems from its mandate to preserve and enhance national security, promote and attain economic security, and protect the rights and promote the welfare and interests of Filipinos overseas.[52] Meanwhile, the DND's legitimacy lies in its defense against "external and internal threats to territorial integrity and sovereignty," so as to "create a secure and stable environment conducive to national development."[53] Though the influence of the AFP has waned, as it has remained insulated from partisan politics since the overthrow of Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, its historical and en-

[49] Leslie E. Wehner and Cameron Thies, "Role Theory, Narratives, and Interpretation: The Domestic Contestation of Roles," *International Studies Review* 16.3 (2014): 416, https://doi.org/10.1111/misr.12149

[50] *Pimentel v. Romulo*, G.R. No. 158088, 501 Phil. 303 (S.C., July 6, 2005), https://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/1/42912

[51] Ibid.

[52] An Act Revising Republic Act No. 708, As Amended, Rep. Act No. 7157, §3 (September 19, 1991) (Phil.), https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra1991/ra_7157_1991.html

[53] "Department of National Defense: Citizen's Charter," document, *Republic of the Philippines*, 2nd ed. (2020): 3, https://www.dnd.gov.ph/FilesUploaded/Ckeditor/file/UPDATED_CITIZEN_CHARTER-4.pdf

during military relations with the US renders it an important foreign policy actor in this context.[54]

While I do not seek to deny the significance of the Philippine legislative and judicial branches in constraining the decision making autonomy of the President and the executive body, both agencies have been omitted as it could be argued that the legislative and judicial branches have increasingly little effective control over the executive body.[55] Even though the Philippine Congress, which consists of both the Senate and the House of Representatives, is directly involved in foreign policy, it has been largely dominated by supporters of Duterte since the midterm elections in 2016 and 2019. In fact, PDP-Leban and Kilusang Pagbabago representatives have won twenty seats out of the twenty-four-member Senate, as well as 271 out of 300-odd seats in the lower house.[56] Though the Congress has indeed been critical of and involved in making major foreign policy decisions, as exemplified by the Senate vote leading to the closure of US military facilities in 1991, and the Senate ratification of the Philippines-US Visiting Forces Agreement in 1999, it arguably is "a rare institution to have shown effective resistance against the president."[57]

Duterte's liberty in shaping the composition of the Supreme Court has also resulted in a lack of judicial independence, as the judiciary has often opted for restraint on significant cases. Salient examples include the Administration's withdrawal from the International Criminal Court and its handling of the territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea.[58] The overwhelming power of the executive is further illuminated considering that the general public is relatively indifferent to international developments except for when "the interests of certain social groups are directly involved."[59] This is the case as the general public is, as Baviera argues, often not perceived to be active or knowledgeable in foreign policy concerns.[60] Although there are indeed certain organized networks, non-governmental organizations, and other relevant stakeholders that are both vocal and knowledgeable about Philippine foreign policy in the South China Sea, their impact on foreign policy will be significantly less consequential when compared to other foreign policy decision makers such as the President, DFA, DND and AFP.

The identification of role conceptions for the selected foreign policy actors forms the core of role theory. However, as there is no unified database on keywords that could help identify role typologies and national role conceptions, roles can only be identified through induction based on close reading of source material.[61] Often, scholars have analyzed oral sources, parliamentary debates, and utilized machine-coded content analysis, or resorted to interviews and surveys to identify role conceptions.[62] I ultimately seek to identify national role conceptions via induction, and to be explicit about the content examined, and how the roles are identified, despite facing methodological limitations in my ability to code or survey. The time frame of the materials surveyed ranged from Duterte's election to the presidency in 2016, to 2019 and have primarily

[54] Aileen Baviera, "The Influence of Domestic Politics on Philippine Foreign Policy: The Case of Philippines-China Relations since 2004," working paper, *S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies*, Nanyang Technological University, in *RSIS Working Papers* 241 (2012): 9, https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/rsis-pubs/WP241.pdf

[55] Susan Rose-Ackerman, Diane Desierto and Natalia Volosin, "Leveraging Presidential Power: Separation of Powers without Checks and Balances in Argentina and the Philippines," *Faculty Scholarship Series* 31, (2010): 2, http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss_papers/31; Vergel O. Santos, "The Philippines Just Became More Authoritarian, Thanks to the People," *New York Times*, May 24, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/24/opinion/philippines-duterte-election-senate.html

[56] Kilusang Pagbabago refers to the multi-party umbrella coalition headed by PDP-Leban and formed by supporters of Duterte and the 17th Congress of the Philippines. *See* Gil C. Cabacungan, "From 3 to 300, PDP-Laban Forms 'Supermajority' in House," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 26, 2016, https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/787547/from-3-to-300-pdp-laban-forms-supermajority-in-house

[57] Santos, "The Philippines Just Became More Authoritarian, Thanks to the People."

[58] Edcel J. Ibarra, "Is There Judicial Independence in Duterte's Philippines?" *Democratic Erosion*, December 2, 2019, https://www.democratic-erosion.com/2019/12/02/is-there-judicial-independence-in-dutertes-philippines/

[59] Evan Medeiros, Keith Crane, and Eric Heginbotham et al., *Pacific Currents: The Responses of U.S. Allies and Security Partners in East Asia to China's Rise* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008): 98, https://doi.org/10.7249/MG736

[60] Ibid.

[61] Cantir and Kaarbo, "Unpacking Ego in Role Theory," 19.

[62] Ibid.

been in English and occasionally mixed with Tagalog and Bisaya. The materials surveyed include secondary research as well as primary sources such as public statements, policy documents, transcripts, and speeches. To aid the induction process, Holsti's original role typology will be utilized as a reference to assign national role conceptions. In the event that references to particular roles are not entirely consistent with their academic definitions, role conceptions can still be obtained through the interpretation of implied roles.[63]

More than 40 sources were retrieved from online archives of the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO), Radio Television Malacañang (RTVM), and the Official Gazette. The sources examined include speech transcripts from Duterte's Inaugural Address, State of the Nation Address (SONA) from 2016 to 2019, official statements following his official visits to Vietnam and Russia, and media interviews held during various formal and informal events. The sources were selected for their relevance to foreign policy, the South China Sea or inter-state relations with China, or the US. Other materials reviewed include the Philippines' National Security Policy (2017-2022) document and the Philippine Constitution. A similar approach is adopted to determine the role conceptions of the DFA, DND and AFP despite publicly available information being generally less accessible. Although I am cognizant of the possible competing role conceptions within single bureaucracies, given feasibility considerations, role conceptions will be inferred based on representatives of each agency. The representatives include the Secretary of National Defense, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, and military leaders from the Philippine Army, Navy, and Air Force, wherever applicable. The materials surveyed include official news articles, press releases, and documents retrieved from government agency websites. Remarks and quotes from interviews were also retrieved from news sources such as the Philippine News Agency (PNA).

Link to Foreign Policy

Role conceptions of the identified agents will be mapped to actual policy

[63] Brummer and Thies, "Active Independent or Faithful Ally?" 44.

behavior to explain the tensions within the Philippines' China policy in the South China Sea. Though scholars have achieved this by employing various quantitative methods, process tracing and case study methods have largely dominated this area of research. Within case studies, one examines the mechanisms through which role contestation has affected policy behavior. Rather than viewing the Philippines as a unitary actor, this process should highlight the puzzling and contradictory behavior of the state as a result of the roles played by stakeholders in the Duterte administration. The 2019 Reed Bank Incident is used as a case study to highlight the contrasting actions taken by Duterte, the DFA, DND, and the AFP. Apart from general observations suggesting role contestation, this episode, which focuses on Philippine fishing rights in the region, represents the latest and arguably the most serious incident that has affected Chinese-Philippines rapprochement under the Duterte administration.

Roles in the Duterte Administration

This section identifies the role conceptions of the identified foreign policy actors based on Holsti's classic typology of national role conceptions. Four competing role conceptions can be identified over the course of the timeframe examined: active independent, anti-imperialist agent, independent, and faithful ally.

Active Independent and Anti-Imperialist Agent: Duterte

According to Holsti, the active independent role goes beyond the mere pursuit of an "independent" foreign policy.[64] Instead, it emphasizes "at once independence, self-determination, possible mediation functions, and active programs to extend diplomatic and commercial relations to diverse areas of the world."[65] In the Philippines, Duterte's goal was to establish the country as an independent regional and international actor that has the ability to make decisions based on its national interests rather than act based on the interests of other states. Given the rise of China, this would also mean independence from the United States for-

[64] Holsti, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy," 262.
[65] Ibid.

eign policy and the flexibility to enhance diplomatic and economic relations with China. Moreover, the "active" component of the role entails the expansion of relations with other states within and beyond Southeast Asia. The active independent role is largely supported by Duterte, and is clearly reflected in state documents and his SONAs from 2017 and 2018. In his 2017 SONA, Duterte expressed that the Philippines has:

> Embarked on various initiatives to advance [its] national interest in the global community. [It] pursue[s] good relations with all nations anchored on an independent—on an independent foreign policy—and the basic tenets of sovereign equality, mutual respect and non-interference. As an independent nation, [it] will uphold and promote [its] national interests in the international community. [It] will strengthen and seek partnership with those who share [its] values.[66]

In the same speech, he has also expressed that the Philippines is cultivating "warmer relations with China through bilateral dialogues and other mechanisms, leading to the easing of tensions between the two countries and [an] improved negotiating environment on the West Philippine Sea."[67] His 2018 SONA similarly reflects his desire to pursue an active and independent foreign policy:

> On international relations, we shall continue to assert and pursue an independent foreign policy. Our long-term national development and national security goals come first. We shall continue to reach out to all nations regardless of their prevailing political persuasions or proximity to or distance from our shores so long as these nations wish us well.[68]

While his 2019 SONA did not reflect this sentiment to the same extent, official statements following his official visits to India and the Russian

[66] Rodrigo R. Duterte, "Second State of the Nation Address," *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines,* July 24, 2017, https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2017/07/24/rodrigo-roa-duterte-second-state-of-the-nation-address-july-24-2017/

[67] Ibid.

[68] Rodrigo R. Duterte, "Third State of the Nation Address," *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines*, July 23, 2018, https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2018/07/23/rodrigo-roa-duterte-third-state-of-the-nation-address-july-23-2018/

Federation have been fairly consistent with speeches from earlier years:

> India: Just as India is deepening its presence in our region through the "Act East Policy," the Philippines is also expanding the boundaries of its diplomacy in pursuit of a truly independent foreign policy, as mandated by our Constitution. We are diversifying partnerships—rebalancing old ones and strengthening those that have traditionally been on the margins of our diplomacy.[69]

> Russia: This visit generated greater momentum for Philippine-Russia relations. [This] is a key element of our thrust to rebalance Philippine foreign policy towards independence, balance, and diplomatic agility. The gains we have made in this visit bring us a step closer to our objective of a stable, comfortable, and secure life for all Filipinos. That is my vision for and bounden duty to the nation and I will do everything to achieve that.[70]

The National Security Policy (NSP) 2017-2022, which establishes the strategic policy goals and objectives of the Duterte administration, has also emphasized the importance of an independent foreign policy anchored in international law in order to achieve national security in the context of an expansive global community.[71] The National Security Strategy (NSS) 2018 further complements the NSP 2017-2022, where Duterte has expressed his desire to bolster the Philippines' position "in the community of nations by strengthening diplomatic relations with [its] traditional allies, engaging non-traditional partners and pursuing an independent foreign policy that gives primacy to [its] national inter-

[69] Ram N. Kovind, "Joint Press Statement of President of the Republic of India Ram Nath Kovind," speech, October 18, 2019, https://pcoo.gov.ph/presidential-speech/joint-press-statement-of-president-of-the-republic-of-india-ram-nath-kovind/

[70] Rodrigo R. Duterte, "Arrival Statement and Press Conference of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte Following His Official Visit to the Russian Federation," speech, October 6, 2019, https://pcoo.gov.ph/presidential-speech/arrival-statement-and-press-conference-of-president-rodrigo-roa-duterte-following-his-official-visit-to-the-russian-federation/

[71] "2017-2022 National Security Policy for Change and Well-Being of the Filipino People," document, *Republic of the Philippines National Security Council* (April 2017): 2, https://itms.pnp.gov.ph/main/storage/2020/06/NSP-2017-2022.pdf

est."[72] Duterte's statement following his 2016 visit to Vietnam, his speech during his 2016 meeting with the Filipino community and his media interview following the oath taking ceremony of newly appointed government officials in 2019 also provide further evidence of Duterte's active independent role.[73] Beyond the emphasis of a rebalancing towards an independent foreign policy, Duterte's active independent role is showcased via his desire to expand and enhance the Philippines' engagements with other countries. Under Duterte, the Philippines has notably expanded its political and economic relations with China, Russia, and Japan, where the Philippine-Japan strategic partnership has reached its "golden age" in recent years.[74] The active choice to broaden the Philippines' non-traditional engagements with other states provides Duterte with more flexibility when engaging with its traditional American ally, enabling Duterte to undertake policies which he believes are most sensible for the Philippines on the international stage.

Concomitant with the active independent role, Duterte also, to some extent, exemplifies that of an anti-imperialist agent. Holsti describes an anti-imperialist agent as one who perceives imperialism as a "serious threat."[75] Though his work largely referred to communist states which viewed themselves as agents of struggle against American imperialism during the Cold War, his analysis is not limited to communist states or

[72] "National Security Strategy: Security and Development for Transformational Change and Well-Being of the Filipino People," document, *Republic of the Philippines National Security Council* (May 2018): 2, https://apcss.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Philippines-National_Security_Strategy_2018.pdf

[73] Rodrigo R. Duterte, "Departure Speech of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte," *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines*, September 5, 2016, https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2016/09/05/departure-speech-of-president-rodrigo-roa-duterte-sept-5-2016/; Rodrigo R. Duterte, "Joint Press Statement of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte," speech, October 18, 2019, https://pcoo.gov.ph/presidential-speech/joint-press-statement-of-president-rodrigo-roa-duterte/

[74] Dennis Trinidad, "Domestic Factors and Strategic Partnership: Redefining Philippines-Japan Relations in the 21st Century," *Asian Politics & Policy* 9.4 (2017): 615; Richard J. Heydarian, "The Golden Era of Japan-Philippine Relations Has Arrived," *National Interest*, June 16, 2019, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/golden-era-japan-philippine-relations-has-arrived-62572

[75] Holsti, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy," 264.

the Cold War.[76] Although the Philippines has not been an American colony since 1946, Duterte remains uncomfortable with the vestiges of American colonialism. This role was perhaps most strongly expressed in the early years of Duterte's presidential term. While focused more on domestic policy than foreign policy, his 2016 SONA alluded to his anti-imperialist sentiments with regard to the exploitation of Mindanao:

> [I]t's an imperialism thing. There's a historical injustice committed against the Moro people. We have to correct it. But it is well possible now . . . *iyong nakuha ng mga Amerikano, Español, pati yung mga Pilipino, mga kapitalista* [you get American, Spanish, as well as Filipino capitalists], those who exploited Mindanao with that thing sloganeering go to Mindanao because it is a land of promise.[77]

Duterte's anti-imperialist sentiment is also evident in the 2017 SONA, which referenced the American seizure of the Balangiga Church bells. He emphasized that the bells represented Philippine national heritage and the heroism of those who resisted the American colonizers, and demanded for the bells to be rightfully returned to the Philippines.[78] His speech commemorating National Heroes' Day in 2016 is also a testament to his discomfort with the revival of the Philippines' imperial past:

> I do not say "Malacañan," I just say, "The People's Palace." Sometimes, they call it "Malacañan." The word "Malacañan" is one of the vestiges of imperialism. I'm not comfortable with it, actually and they should understand when I say I do not ever mention "Malacañan," I just say it's the "People's Palace." It is the People's Palace, actually.[79]

[76] Ibid., 264.

[77] Rodrigo R. Duterte, "First State of the Nation Address," *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines,* July 25, 2016, https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2016/07/25/rodrigo-roa-duterte-first-state-of-the-nation-address-july-25-2016/

[78] Duterte, "Second State of the Nation Address."

[79] Rodrigo R. Duterte, "President Rodrigo Roa Duterte During the Commemoration of the National Heroes Day," *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines,* August 26, 2016, https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2016/08/29/speech-president-rodrigo-roa-duterte-during-the-commemoration-of-the-national-heroes-day/

Stronger references to US imperialism can also be found in a speech at Davao International Airport in 2016, in which he criticized Filipino columnists for their loyalty to the US and emphasized his accountability to the Filipino people:

> You know, the Philippines is not a vassal state. We have long ceased to be a colony of the United States…[the columnists] look upon Obama and the United States as if we are the lap dogs of this country. I do not respond to anybody but to the people of the Republic of the Philippines…I am not beholden to anybody…I am a President of a sovereign state, and we have long ceased to be a colony. I do not have any master, except the Filipino people, nobody but nobody.[80]

By analyzing Duterte's keynote speeches, his desire to sever the Philippines from its colonial past so that it could act independently in pursuit of its best interests is revealed. It is also interesting to note Duterte's self-contradictory hyperbole. Despite his threats, anti-US rhetoric, and support for changes to Philippine foreign policy, he has acknowledged the Philippines' deep ties with the US and clarified his support for US-style liberalism as the "best pathway to a just and fair society."[81]

Faithful Allies: Philippine Armed Forces

The faithful ally role conception involves the entering of alliance commitments by two governments, whereby one "makes a specific commitment to support the policies" of another.[82] Holsti's findings apply to states that share various relative power relations, such as when a more powerful state provides external security guarantees to the less powerful state. Along with the formation of alliance relationships, Holsti also stresses

[80] Duterte, "Departure Speech of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte."
[81] Pia Ranada, "If Duterte Remark Is 'Illogical,' He's Joking—Panelo," *Rappler*, April 12, 2018, http://www.rappler.com/nation/218169-panelo-says-if-duterte-remark-illogical-joking; Rodrigo R. Duterte, "Speech of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte at the Plenary Session of the Forum of the Valdai International Discussion Club in Russia," speech, October 3, 2019, https://dfa.gov.ph/dfa-news/statements-and-advisoriesupdate/24566-speech-of-president-rodrigo-roa-duterte-at-the-plenary-session-of-the-forum-of-the-valdai-international-discussion-club-in-russia
[82] Holsti, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy," 267.

the importance of reciprocity, which requires the less powerful state to support the guarantor state.[83] In the Philippines, the AFP plays the role of a faithful ally, considering its history of friendship and reliance on the US for military support. A sharp contrast between role conceptions held by Duterte and the AFP is also notable at this stage. While Duterte has been fairly critical and sought to detach the Philippines from its security ally, the US-Philippines alliance has often been positively emphasized by the AFP. Until 2019, the resilience of the US-Philippine alliance was characterized by the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT), the 1998 Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). The core of the alliance is Article IV of the MDT, which dictates that both nations would support each other if either one is attacked by an external party.[84] These arrangements have arguably led to a "substantial degree of tactical synchronization and interoperability" between the AFP and its American counterparts, which have long been embedded in the Philippine defense architecture.[85] The relationship was confirmed by Duterte himself, who admitted during an interview that, "pro-American *talaga ang mga sundalo natin* [our soldiers are pro-American], that I cannot deny."[86] As such, the Americanized AFP remains close to its traditional security ally, despite adjustments to the military alliance and recent attempts to enhance its relations with other non-traditional allies.

AFP representatives have also expressed their preference for the military alliance through interviews. For example, US-Philippine military dynamics were revealed by Vice Admiral Alexander Lopez, who acknowledged US assistance and its role in "being a big brother" in light of the

[83] Ibid., 267-268.
[84] "Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of the Philippines," in *American Foreign Policy: 1950-1955*, vol. 1, General Foreign Policy Series 117, Publication 6446 (Washington DC: US Department of State, 1957): 873-875.
[85] Tran, Personalising the Philippines' China Policy," 10.
[86] Pia Ranada, "Duterte: No Denying It, PH Soldiers Are pro-US," *Rappler*, June 12, 2017, https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/inside-track/172687-duterte-philippine-soldiers-pro-united-states

Philippines' "less capable armed forces in the region."[87] Lieutenant-General Edgar R. Fallorina also expressed his belief that the US "will always be at the service of [its] aspiration to build a vibrant, peaceful and progressive Filipino nation" during the C-130T aircraft acceptance ceremony at Colonel Jesus Villamor Air Base.[88] Brigadier-General Restituto Padilla's statement after Duterte's call for the withdrawal of US special forces in the South Philippines is another example of how such views are often illuminated after a President-initiated alternation to bilateral military relations. He expressed that "the recent pronouncement will affect only a token number of American servicemen who are confined mainly in Zamboanga City,"[89] and assured the people and allies that "US-Philippine defense relations remain rock solid."[90] Highlighting the importance of continuity and the concerns surrounding interoperability with new military partners, former AFP Chief Eduardo Oban Jr. has similarly conveyed his preference for US-Philippine military exchanges following Duterte's decision to terminate Balikatan 2017:

> Perhaps the President may reconsider to allow the holding of non-traditional exercises like humanitarian assistance and disaster response, counter-terrorism, and other transnational crimes like drug trafficking under the Security Engagement Board.[91]

Commentaries on joint exercises further reveal the US and AFP's shared

[87] Simone Orendain, "Philippine-US Military Exercises Begin With Greater Regional Presence," *Voice of America*, April 4, 2016, https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/philippine-us-military-exercises-begin-greater-regional-presence

[88] "PAF To Boost Its Airlift Capability; Formally Accepts the Second and Last C-130T Aircraft From the US," website, *Philippine Air Force,* May 7, 2018, https://www.paf.mil.ph/news-articles/paf-boost-its-airlift-capability-formally-accepts-second-and-last-c-130t-aircraft-us

[89] "Philippine Military Says Defence Relations with US 'Rock Solid,'" *Straits Times*, September 13, 2016, https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/philippine-military-says-defence-relations-with-us-rock-solid

[90] Ibid.

[91] Carmela Fonbuena, "Duterte's Pivot to China Won't Be Easy for Americanized AFP," *Rappler*, September 30, 2016, http://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/147783-duterte-pivot-china-military-war-games

spirit of unity and the AFP's support for the US in its diplomatic and military objectives. Brigadier-General Edgard Arevalo saw the Balikatan exercises as a fitting tribute to "Filipino and American soldier-patriots as they fought side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder, against seemingly insurmountable odds" in World War II.[92] He has further acknowledged that the "friendship and fight continues alongside one another" even in the face of contemporary challenges.[93] AFP Chief-of-Staff General Benjamin Madrigal Jr. likewise highlights the camaraderie fostered by the "enduring defense partnership," where "troops train[ing] together and hurdl[ing] developed scenarios" have "relive[d] the times when Filipinos and American soldiers fought side by side in defense of peace, freedom and democracy."[94] He has also stressed his desire for both militaries to "shoulder the load together" to amplify the alliance and enhance its interoperability in order to combat security threats.[95] Arevalo and Madrigal's views were also consistent with that of many AFP commanding officers,[96] who deem the US-Philippine partnership to be an exceptional opportunity for both parties.

Independent Role Conceptions: The Departments of National Defense and Foreign Affairs

Statements affirming commitment to making "policy decisions accord-

[92] Priam Nepomuceno, "'Balikatan 2019,' Tribute to PH, US WW2 Veterans," *Philippine News Agency*, April 4, 2019, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1066461

[93] Ibid.

[94] Priam Nepomuceno, "'Balikatan' Highlights Historic PH-US Military Ties," *Philippine News Agency*, April 1, 2019, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1066156

[95] Priam Nepomuceno, "'Balikatan' 2019 to Focus on Territorial Defense, Counter-Terror," *Philippine News Agency*, April 2, 2019, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1066242.

[96] Priam Nepomuceno, "More PH-US Military Cooperation in 2019," *Philippine News Agency*, September 28, 2018, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1049399; Priam Nepomuceno, "Navy Admiral's Visit Reaffirms Strong US-PH Alliance," *Philippine News Agency*, October 29, 2018, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1052450; Priam Nepomuceno, "Annual Military Exercises Enhance PH Security," *Philippine News Agency*, May 8, 2018, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1034523; "US Army Alaska Deputy Commanding General Visits HPA," *Philippine Army*, September 23, 2019, https://www.army.mil.ph/home/index.php/press-releases-2/513-us-army-alaska-deputy-commanding-general-visits-hpa

ing to the state's own interests rather than for the objectives of other states" are definitive of an independent role conception.[97] Unlike the active independent role, which requires actors to actively expand relations with other states, independents often stress the element of self-determination.[98] The DND and the DFA arguably embody the independent role conception and their roles are largely deduced from the views of the National Defense Secretary and the Secretary of Foreign Affairs respectively. Though both departments have individual bureaucratic interests, both are similar in that, unlike Duterte, they respect time-honored protocols and are more deliberate and measured in their policies.[99] The analysis of sources from the DND and DFA suggests some alignment with Duterte's independent foreign policy.[100] The DND's desire to maintain an independent foreign policy is exemplified by Lorenzana's critical review of the MDT, in which he suggested either to "maintain [the MDT], strengthen it, or scrap it."[101] His comment during a press briefing at Malacañang Palace further suggested a basic desire to eschew US-led conflict in the South China Sea:

> It is being involved in a war that we do not seek and do not want. The Philippines is not in a conflict with anyone and will not be at war with anyone in the future. But the United States, with the increased and frequent passage of its naval vessels in the West Philippine Sea, is more likely to be involved in a shooting war. In such a case and on the basis of the MDT, the Philippines will be automatically involved.[102]

[97] Holsti, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy," 268.
[98] Ibid., 268.
[99] Glenda M. Gloria, "Where Does the Military Stand with Duterte?" *Rappler*, April 16, 2017, http://www.rappler.com/thought-leaders/166768-military-stand-duterte-commander-in-chief
[100] Priam Nepomuceno, "'Balikatan' Evolving through the Years," *Philippine News Agency*, May 7, 2018, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1034398
[101] Eimor P. Santos, "Scrapping Mutual Defense Treaty With US an Option—Lorenzana," *CNN* (Philippines edition), December 28, 2018, https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2018/12/28/Mutual-Defense-Treaty-with-U.S.-review.html
[102] Malcolm Cook, "The Philippines' Alliance Problems with the USA," report, *ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute*, in *ISEAS Perspective* 48 (2019): 3, https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2019_48.pdf

Similarly, the DFA's commitment to an independent foreign policy has been emphasized by past Secretaries over the years. Locsin reinterprets Philippine foreign policy as being "friends to friends, enemy to enemies, and a worse enemy to false friends,"[103] and is one that involves "getting off your knees, on your feet to stand up for [one's] country" rather than "switch the master [it is] kneeling before."[104] Locsin's independent approach can also be deduced from his welcome remarks at the 2019 Global Conference of Heads of Posts:

> All our presidents have wanted an independent foreign policy; some waited for what could not happen given the representative democracy we adopted at our birth and in successive rebirths...it remains a constant of Philippine politics that the vast majority of its people across all generations are intensely pro-American...our national interest can never be the same interest as that of a foreign power. And I've always been wary of pursuing projects for mutual benefit between weak countries and big powers. The terms of endearment may seem fair but the nature of the relationship is ultimately one-sided and detrimental to the weaker party. Let them get close enough to caress you and they're too close for comfort because they can as easily strangle you.[105]

However, other policy discussions reveal a more moderate position on Philippine foreign policy in the DND and DFA. While the DND recognises that its most advantageous course is to "always be prepared to act alone" despite the maintenance of shared interests with the US against

[103] Ivy J. Vibar, "Locsin: US Remains Philippines' True Friend, Natural Ally," *ABS-CBN,* July 3, 2019, https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/07/03/19/locsin-us-remains-philippines-true-friend-natural-ally; Teddy Locsin Jr., "Friend to Friends, Enemy to Enemies, Worse Enemy to False Friends," *Business Mirror,* October 16, 2019, https://businessmirror.com.ph/2019/10/16/friend-to-friends-enemy-to-enemies-worse-enemy-to-false-friends/
[104] "Locsin Tells DFA Personnel: I Am Fortunate and Humbled to Serve With the Best in the Government," *Republic of the Philippines, Department of Foreign Affairs*, October 31, 2018, https://dfa.gov.ph/dfa-news/dfa-releasesupdate/18385-locsin-tells-dfa-personnel-i-am-fortunate-and-humbled-to-serve-with-the-best-in-the-government
[105] Locsin, "Friend to Friends, Enemy to Enemies."

common threats,[106] it nonetheless recognizes the value of strengthening long-standing relations with the US.[107] In fact, Lorenzana has acknowledged that both countries will "continue to stand together as friends, as partners and as allies" in the face of "many adversities through the years of [their] long, close friendship and security alliance." [108] The DFA has also emphasized the importance of a friendly US-Philippine relationship. Locsin has described the Philippines as the US's "true friend in challenging times" and expressed that both countries are "images of one another," as both "like freedom and hate subservience to other countries."[109] Cayetano has further justified Philippine independence as a move that could strengthen the Philippines' ability as an ally so that it could be "of more use to the [US] and the American people."[110] He has also compared US-Philippine relations to a parent-child relationship, suggesting that the Philippines' existing "love" and "respect" for the US should not be seen as mutually exclusive, despite its pursuit of its own interests.[111] As the DND and DFA have adopted more measured approaches, it could be argued that both agencies embody independent role conceptions.

These different roles indicate some contrast in perspective between the

[106] Nepomuceno, "'Balikatan' Evolving through the Years."
[107] Natashya Gutierrez, "PH, US: Military Ties Remain Strong, Fighting ISIS Together," *Rappler*, June 4, 2017, http://www.rappler.com/nation/171929-us-ph-military-ties-fighting-isis; Priam Nepomuceno, "PH Troops Told to Learn Everything From 'Balikatan' Allies," *Philippine News Agency*, May 8, 2018, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1034503; Priam Nepomuceno, "US Still PH's Major Ally in Defense Build-up: DND," *Philippine News Agency*, February 7, 2019, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1061245
[108] Priam Nepomuceno, "'Balikatan,' A Venue for PH to Demo Best Military Assets," *Philippine News Agency*, May 18, 2018, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1035693; "U.S. and Philippine Forces Come Together for the Opening Ceremony of Balikatan 2019," *U.S. Embassy in the Philippines*, April 2, 2019, https://ph.usembassy.gov/us-and-philippine-forces-come-together-for-the-opening-ceremony-of-balikatan-2019/
[109] Vibar, "Locsin: US remains Philippines' True Friend, Natural Ally."
[110] Alan P. Cayetano, "A Conversation with Alan Peter Cayetano," speech, *Council on Foreign Relations*, October 2, 2017, https://www.cfr.org/event/conversation-alan-peter-cayetano
[111] Ibid.

President, the AFP, and the DND and DFA. Duterte's interpretation of "active independence" and "anti-imperialism," underscores a defiance against the US and its imperialist baggage, and seems to project a pro-China slant, rather than a neutral and principled stance. On the other hand, the AFP appears to be the most anti-China, while the "independence" of the DND and DFA presents a more nuanced, reconciliatory, and neutral middle ground. These role conceptions will subsequently be studied in the context of the 2019 Reed Bank Incident to demonstrate that horizontal role contestation can account for the tensions within the Philippines' China policy in the South China Sea.

Tensions in Foreign Policy: The 2019 Reed Bank Incident

This section provides an illustration of role theory and horizontal role contestation by mapping the identified role conceptions to Philippine responses during the 2019 Reed Bank incident. Although the incident was heavily downplayed by Duterte and did not escalate into a military confrontation or trigger US-Philippine military cooperation, horizontal role contestation was arguably present in the debate leading up to its resolution. The incident in question occurred from the ninth to the twenty-second of June, as a result of a collision between an anchored Filipino fishing boat, the F/B Gem-Ver, and a suspected Chinese militia vessel, the Yuemaobinyu 42212. The accident took place in Reed Bank, within the Philippines' EEZ and China's contested nine-dash line in the South China Sea. The Philippine vessel sank, leaving its twenty-two crew members abandoned. They were subsequently rescued by a Vietnamese fishing vessel. In the handling of the crisis, tensions within the Duterte administration surfaced primarily in two areas, where parties involved were unable to reach a consensus on firstly, the nature of the incident, and secondly, the Philippines' position on the joint investigation proposed by China.

The nature of the incident was disputed by Duterte, the DFA, and the Philippine defense establishment. While the latter two saw the incident as a deliberate act, Duterte sought to trivialise the collision. Shortly after the incident occurred, Duterte immediately avoided apportioning

blame to the Chinese to avoid a diplomatic spat with Beijing.[112] Like China, who claimed that it was counterproductive to make assumptions out of the "accidental collision" which would affect the China-Philippines friendship,[113] Duterte likened the "little maritime accident" to a road crash that should not be interpreted as "a confrontation of armed men and machines or ships."[114] He further downplayed the incident's impact on Philippine sovereignty and China-Philippine bilateral relations, continued to allow the Chinese to fish in the Philippines' EEZ, and insisted that the Philippine Navy not start a war with China over the incident.[115] On the other hand, Lorenzana was the first to denounce the Yuemaobinyu 42212 for abandoning the twenty-two Filipino crew members to "the mercy of the elements."[116] Locsin took his cue from Lorenzana and filed a diplomatic protest over the incident to investigate if the collision was a mere collision or a case of ramming,[117] and criticized China for its lack of "moral and possibly legal" imperatives and its violation of Article

[112] Richard J. Heydarian, "Duterte Shrugs Off Reed Bank Incident to Defend His China Policy in Speech," *South China Morning Post*, July 27, 2019, https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3020140/defiant-rodrigo-duterte-shrugs-reed-bank-incident-defend-his

[113] Chinese Embassy Manila, "Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Remarks on China-Filipino Fishing Vessels Collision Incident," text post with image, *Facebook*, June 17, 2019, 9:49pm EST, https://www.facebook.com/ChinaEmbassyManila/photos/a.916511061879302/1055807334616340/

[114] Heydarian, "Duterte Shrugs Off Reed Bank Incident"; Pia Ranada, "Duterte Skirts PH Sovereign Rights in Recto Bank," *Rappler*, June 21, 2017, https://www.rappler.com/nation/duterte-skirts-philippines-sovereign-rights-recto-bank

[115] Pia Ranada, "Duterte Skirts PH Sovereign Rights in Recto Bank." *See also* Richard J. Heydarian, "Why China's 'Militarisation' of the South China Sea Needs a Review by the Philippines-US Alliance," *South China Morning Post,* July 20, 2019, https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3019060/why-chinas-militiasation-south-china-sea-needs-review

[116] Jeoffrey Maitem, "Philippine Defence Chief Urges 'Diplomatic Protest' after Chinese Vessel Sinks Fishing Boat in Disputed Waters," *South China Morning Post*, June 12, 2019, https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/3014237/philippines-slams-suspected-chinese-vessel-sinking-fishing

[117] Paterno Esmaquel II, "Locsin Hits 'Collision' of Philippine, Chinese Vessels," *Rappler*, June 12, 2019, https://www.rappler.com/nation/dfa-reaction-chinese-vessel-sinks-filipino-boat

98 of the UNCLOS.[118] Philippine Navy Chief Robert Empedrad similarly insisted that "the ship was rammed" and disputed the incident as a "normal maritime incident," given that the F/B Gem-Ver was stationary when the collision occurred.[119] Locsin also refuted Malacañang's statement that suggested an acceptance of China's apology, arguing that presidential spokesperson Panelo merely "expressed satisfaction with the Chinese apology and the offer of compensation and nothing more."[120] The Philippines' position on China's proposal for a joint investigation reveals similar differing perspectives between Duterte and his administration. While Duterte did not respond in a manner that could potentially disadvantage Sino-Philippine relations, and welcomed China's offer to conduct a joint investigation that could satisfactorily conclude the episode,[121] Locsin insisted on separate investigations on the basis that a joint investigation would encroach upon the sovereignty of both countries.[122]

Different national role conceptions held by Duterte and his administration can be used to explain contradictory policy language and perspectives in the Reed Bank. Duterte's active independent role conception played out clearly from his sustained pursuit of a supposedly biased "independent foreign policy" that emphasized greater autonomy and steered the Philippines away from the American orbit. In this episode,

[118] Joyce A.L. Rocamora, "Locsin Reports Collision of Filipino, Chinese Vessels to UN," *Philippine News Agency*, June 18, 2019, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1072590

[119] Frances Mangosing, "Ramming an Anchored Boat 'Not Normal Maritime Incident'—PH Navy Chief," *Inquirer*, June 14, 2019, https://globalnation.inquirer.net/176324/ramming-an-anchored-boat-not-normal-maritime-accident-ph-navy-chief

[120] Dona Z. Pazzibugan, "Locsin Refutes Palace, Says PH Did Not Accept Chinese Apology," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, August 30, 2019, https://globalnation.inquirer.net/179472/locsin-refutes-palace-says-ph-did-not-accept-chinese-apology

[121] Christina Mendez, "Duterte OKs Joint Probe on Fish Boat Sinking," *Philstar*, June 23, 2019, https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2019/06/23/1928762/duterte-oks-joint-probe-fish-boat-sinking; Mia Gonzalez, "Duterte Agrees to Joint Probe of Recto Bank Incident," *Rappler*, June 22, 2019, http://www.rappler.com/nation/233647-duterte-agrees-philippines-china-investigation-recto-bank-incident

[122] Teddy Locsin Jr., "China-PH relations consists of anything and everything that transpires…" text post, *Twitter*, June 15, 2019, 6:01am EST, https://twitter.com/teddyboylocsin/status/1139835369124294658

he has also remained fairly silent relative to his counterparts, as he believes this could help preserve the budding China-Philippine friendship and de-escalate the situation in the South China Sea. To a lesser extent, Duterte's anti-imperialist role was demonstrated by his unpopular decision to eschew the invocation of the MDT – a move which was widely supported by opposition politicians, independent senators, and even his allies, who favored a tougher Philippine position in the contested waters.[123] In contrast, the DFA and DND spoke out as strong advocates of an independent approach that upheld the Philippines' interests. Both agencies justified their positions through a strong, neutral, and principled stance based on fundamentals of international maritime law. Apart from contesting Chinese fishing rights in the Philippine EEZ, Locsin and Lorenzana condemned China for its failure to render assistance to distressed mariners and to protect life at sea.[124] This independent role is further accentuated by Locsin's decision to conduct independent investigations through the Filipino maritime agencies. Both departments have refrained from openly supporting US military intervention in the region, despite American promotion of the MDT as a viable solution to Chinese aggression.[125]

Even though the AFP's role as a faithful ally was not apparent during the debate, its role became apparent after the incident took place. As the collision reinforced the threat of Chinese militarization and provided the Philippines with evidence of China's expansionism in contested waters, the crisis strengthened the AFP's support for closer cooperation with the US against China.[126] This is evidenced by Lieutenant-General Macairog Alberto and the US Army Pacific Command's decision to

[123] Heydarian, "Duterte Shrugs Off Reed Bank Incident."
[124] Joyce A.L. Rocamora, "Protect Life at Sea, PH Asks IMO States after Reed Bank Incident," *Philippine News Agency*, June 16, 2019, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1072458
[125] Christia M. Ramos, "US Stands by Obligations to PH Under MDT—Envoy," *Inquirer*, July 4, 2019, https://globalnation.inquirer.net/177458/us-stands-by-obligations-to-ph-under-mdt-envoy
[126] Richard J. Heydarian, "The Reed Bank Crisis: A Call for Upgrading the Philippine-US Alliance," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*. July 10, 2019, https://amti.csis.org/the-reed-bank-crisis-a-call-for-upgrading-the-philippine-u-s-alliance/

expand Exercise Salaknib in preparation for bigger joint exercises with the presence of more American troops, to address large-scale conflicts under the provisions of the MDT.[127] The Filipino defense establishment has also welcomed Washington's growing strategic clarity in the region. Apart from more clarity surrounding the US's alliance commitments in "the Pacific," revised MDT guidelines have remained committed to the alliance's ability to respond to "grey zone" aggression, that is, acts of action that falls short of formalized state-level military conflict,[128] thus enabling both countries to introduce new operational guidelines that can specifically target emerging threats in the South China Sea.

The Reed Bank incident therefore demonstrates the impact of horizontal role contestation on the Philippines' China policy in the South China Sea. In dealing with the nature of the incident and the Philippines' position on China's proposal for a joint investigation, the differing roles and perspectives held by Duterte and his administration have resulted in simultaneous and contradictory pro-China and anti-China policies that cannot be sufficiently explained by a single role conception. Given the contrasting roles within the administration, the Philippines' eventual adoption of an anti- or pro-China policy in response to developments in the South China Sea will likely rest on the ability of the administration to temper Duterte's pro-China tendencies. In the event that multiple roles dominate, horizontal role contestation within the Duterte administration would possibly provide some explanation for the inconsistencies towards China in the South China Sea.

Conclusion

I have attempted to use role theory, and more specifically, horizontal role contestation, as a theoretical framework to account for the Duter-

[127] Frances Mangosing, "Philippines, US Plan Bigger Joint Army Exercises in 2020," *Inquirer*, May 8, 2019, https://globalnation.inquirer.net/175192/philippines-us-plan-bigger-joint-army-exercises-in-2020
[128] GMA News, "LIVESTREAM: FYI with Richard Javad Heydarian: Exclusive Interview with Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, Face-to-Face," video, *Youtube*, May 28, 2019, 36:37-48:58, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2fHZ1f0x0A

te Administration's contradictory pro and anti-China foreign policies in the South China Sea. Using the 2019 Reed Bank incident as a case study, contrasting roles held by Duterte, the DFA, and the Philippine defense establishment have revealed inconsistencies in perspective and purpose within the administration, which I argue is a microcosm of Philippine foreign policy towards China in the South China Sea. Through an analysis of the role conceptions held by Duterte, the DFA, and the DND and AFP, the Philippines' pro-China attitudes are largely attributed to Duterte's goal of "active independence" from long-standing US-Philippine bilateral relations. Though relevant as a general policy framework within the administration, "anti-imperialism" plays an ancillary role that sought to reinforce Duterte's anti-US and conversely, pro-China attitudes. Meanwhile, the "independent" roles of the DFA and DND have highlighted that sentiments towards China and the US are non-binary. More importantly, the "independence" of both departments is key to a recalibration of Philippine foreign policy based on their perceived national interests and is likely responsible for suppressing unwarranted anti-US or pro-China sentiments during policy formulation. In the area of military cooperation, the loyalty of the AFP towards the US could perhaps account for the solid and ever-deepening ties, despite changes to their terms of collaboration.

While insights can be gained from the application of role theory and horizontal role contestation, I am aware of this study's methodological and analytical shortcomings. Methodologically, the inability to conduct thorough content analysis has limited my ability to accurately infer role conceptions of Duterte and his administration across time. While I have sought to compensate for this by expanding the data collection process, the quality of results is likely to be compromised. Given research constraints, the lack of focus on public opinion and the Philippine legislative and judicial branches would also suggest that more sophisticated analyses can be achieved if both horizontal and vertical role contestation frameworks are applied more rigorously. Future research can also benefit from more robust analysis in several areas. By assuming homogeneity both across and within departments, I have simplified the inherent complexities and nuances of the bureaucratic structures and

compositions of the DFA, DND, and AFP. From 2016 to 2019, multiple Secretaries and military leaders have taken the reins of each department, each with their own distinct interests, goals, and roles. As such, a deeper analysis of each individual leader's time in office and their cross-department connections would reveal even more precise role conceptions within the administration as a whole.

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Normative Rapprochement and Security Cooperation Between China and the European Union

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Introduction

In the last half century, the world has shifted from a bipolar, to a unipolar, and now a multipolar order.[1] The post-Cold War era has been characterized by profound and complex changes, leading to the rise of non-traditional security threats that require new responses and enhanced cooperation between international security actors.[2] Today, two of the most important actors are the People's Republic of China and the European Union. The European Union emerged as a key international security actor in the 1990s with the establishment of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in 1992, and the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) in 1999, which was later revised into the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) within the 2009 Lisbon Treaty. On the other hand, in conjunction with its rising economic might, China has developed into a key global actor within the last decade by expanding its participation in peacekeeping operations, conducting more multilateral exercises beyond East Asia, and investing heavily in military projection through the construction of overseas bases.[3]

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[2] Mary Kaldor, Mary Martin, and Sabine Selchow, "Human Security: A New Strategic Narrative for Europe," *International Affairs* 83.2 (2007): 279, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2007.00618.x

[3] *See* Zhu Liqun, "China's Foreign Policy Debates," *Chaillot Papers* 121 (2010): 38-

Since the PRC and the EU first established formal diplomatic ties in 1975, economic and political globalization have pushed the two powers closer. Economic and political aspects of the EU-China relationship remain dominant pillars in the relationship, but international security issues have come to the forefront in recent years.[4] Bilateral and multilateral agreements, such as the 2003 EU-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and the EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation, have institutionalized security cooperation between China and the EU. In particular, the 2003 Strategic Partnership marks a crucial turning point in EU-China relations, and is of particular importance for the study of security cooperation. As the document states, one of its main objectives is the "deepening and broadening [of] cooperation and enhancing bilateral collaboration on a wide range of policy areas at the global level."[5] Such enhanced cooperation implicates key domains of international security like the fight against terrorism and nuclear non-proliferation.

However, despite its newfound importance, EU–China security relations have received limited scholarly attention thus far. To this point, studies of EU-China relations have primarily focused on economic factors, such as trade and economic development, and have largely sought to highlight systemic differences between the two powers, while framing their relationship as fundamentally competitive.[6] But this is

40, https://doi.org/10.2815/19538; Mikko Huotari, Jan Gaspers, and Thomas Eder et al., "China's Emergence as a Global Security Actor: Strategies for Europe," report, *Mercator Institute for China Studies*, in *MERICS Papers on China* 4 (June 2017): 15, https://merics.org/en/report/chinas-emergence-global-security-actor; Sven Biscop and Liselotte Odgaard, "The EU and China: Partners in Effective Multilateralism," in *The International Politics of EU-China Relations*, ed. David Kerr and Liu Fei (Oxford University Press, 2006): 1, https://doi.org/10.5871/bacad/9780197264089.001.0001

[4] Emil Kirchner, Thomas Christiansen, and Han Dorussen, "EU-China Security Cooperation in Context," in *Security Relations Between China and the European Union*, ed. Emil Kirchner, Thomas Christiansen, and Hans Dorussen (Cambridge, GBR: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 1.

[5] Jing Men and Ramon P. Pardo, "Convergence and Divergence Between the EU and China," *Asia Europe Journal* 12.1-3 (2014): 1-3, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-014-0377-7

[6] *See* Richard Maher, "The Elusive EU-China Strategic Partnership," *International Affairs* 92.4 (2016): 959-976, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12659; Ramon P. Pardo,

a mistake—as Xu argues, examining the root causes and cascading effects of EU-China cooperation in the realm of international security is important for several reasons.[7] First, cooperation could lead to greater international stability in an increasingly complex and uncertain global order. Second, mutual cooperation benefits both powers by increasing their influence and insulating them from other threats and rivals. Third, increasing security cooperation could relieve tensions between the two powers and bolster cooperation across other areas, such as trade and economic development. Fourth, cooperation could prevent the deleterious effects of security competition between the EU and China. As Xu asserts, EU-China cooperation in international security "is not only an effort towards a better relationship, but also a necessary insurance against negative developments."[8]

To fully understand the nature of China-EU security cooperation, we need to examine the ways in which the two powers understand each other's goals and interests in the realm of international security. In other words, we must understand the extent to which Chinese and European norms on international security have converged over the past decades.[9] Through a macro-analysis of key Chinese and European policy documents, I argue that since the signing of the 2003 Strategic Partnership, China and the European Union have experienced a moderate level of normative convergence. This convergence has occurred primarily due to three main factors: first, the EU and China have developed shared

"EU-China Relations in Financial Governance: Cooperation, Convergence or Competition?" *Asia Europe Journal* 12.1 (2014): 63-77, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-014-0372-z; Liu Lei, Wu Tong, and Wan Ziqianhong, "The EU-China relationship In a New Era of Global Climate Governance," *Asia Europe Journal* 17.2 (2019): 243-254, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-018-00530-2

[7] *See* Xu Qiyu, "Managing Uncertainties: China-EU International Security Cooperation," occasional paper, *Institute for Security and Development Policy*, in *Asia Papers Series* (September 2009): 14-17, https://www.isdp.eu/content/uploads/publications/2009_qiyu_managing-uncertainties.pdf

[8] Ibid., 15.

[9] *See* Gustaaf Geeraerts, "The EU-China Partnership: Balancing Between Divergence and Convergence," *Asia Europe Journal* 17.3 (2019): 282-283, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-019-00554-2

threat perceptions, particularly in regard to non-traditional security threats; second, both powers have recognized the effectiveness of multilateral action through the United Nations and other international organizations; and third, Chinese understanding of sovereignty and non-interference has become more flexible in response to pragmatic considerations.

In this paper, I will first review current academic approaches towards international security cooperation between China and the EU and detail the historical background of EU-China security cooperation and each power's respective approach towards security issues. I will then apply a constructivist framework of normative rapprochement towards a discursive analysis of post-2003 policy documents from both China and the EU, as well as case studies of international peacekeeping missions on the African continent. This research will not only further the academic debate on normative rapprochement, but also add to the literature on China vis-à-vis Western perceptions and international power structures.

The EU as an International Security Actor

The changing post-Cold War landscape has emboldened the European Union's global security ambitions. Under the auspices of the CFSP, CSDP, and the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS), the EU has begun to play a more active role in international security by engaging in several military and civilian CSDP operations across the world.[10] In 2003, the EU launched its first coordinated peacekeeping operation, Concordia, in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and has since then undertaken several similar missions on three continents.[11] As the ESS proclaims, "in a world of global threats, global markets and global media, our security and prosperity increasingly depend on an effective multilateral system."[12] The ESS highlights the EU's commitment

[10] *See* Sonia Lucarelli, Luk Van Langenhove, and Jan Wouters, *The EU and Multilateral Security Governance* (Abingdon, GBR: Routledge, 2013).

[11] Trineke Palm and Ben Crum, "Military Operations and the EU's Identity As an International Security Actor," *European Security* 28.4 (2019): 513, https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2019.1667769

[12] "A Secure Europe in a Better World," document, *Council of the European Union*

to multilateralism and cooperation, and has set the tone for the EU's conduct in foreign and security policy in recent decades. As noted by a 2008 follow-up report on the implementation of the ESS, though the EU is still adapting its role in international security, it has made substantial progress since 2003, and is "recognized as an important contributor to a better world."[13]

The EU's increasingly prominent international role has also become a subject of academic debate. Palm and Crum identify three main academic stances toward the EU's security role: Normative Power, Realist Power and Liberal Power.[14] In particular, the concept of Normative Power Europe (NPE) by Manners and the concept of civilian power by Duchêne have received significant attention. Manners' concept of NPE and its social-constructivist approach is based on the assumption of a distinctive EU identity and focuses on the importance of values, principles, and norms for understanding the EU's international behavior.[15] NPE details the idea that the EU has the "ability to shape conceptions of 'normal' and can thus promote and defend universal values.[16] On the other hand, Duchêne's conception of civilian power envisions a Europe that advances its agenda through non-military means like trade and diplomacy.[17]

Despite the prevalence of the NPE concept in academic discourse, realist and liberal scholars have offered alternative perspectives on the

(December 2003): 9, https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15895-2003-INIT/en/pdf

[13] "Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy: Providing Security in a Changing World," report, *European Union* (2008): 2, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/reports/104630.pdf

[14] Palm and Crum, "Military Operations and the EU's Identity," 517.

[15] *See* Kamil Zwolski, "The EU and a Holistic Security Approach after Lisbon: Competing Norms and the Power of the Dominant Discourse," *Journal of European Public Policy* 19.7 (2012): 988-1005, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2012.662057

[16] Manners, "Normative Power Europe," 239.

[17] *See* Francois Duchêne, "Europe's Role in the World," in *Europe Tomorrow,* ed. Richard Mayne (Glasgow, GBR: Fontana, 1972): 32-47; Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40.2 (2002): 235-258, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5965.00353

EU's security identity. Realist scholars question the distinctiveness of the EU' security identity, and stress the interest-driven nature of EU foreign policy as opposed to the values-based position described in Manners' work.[18] Liberal scholars, on the other hand, recognize the distinctiveness of the EU, but argues that this is due to economic factors—particularly, its single market—as opposed to EU-specific norms and principles.[19]

While I acknowledge the relevance of diverging views of the EU's identity as a global actor, for the purpose of this research, we will utilize a norms-based approach, as it more accurately reflects the EU's self-identification as a normative global power.[20] Normative promotion on an international scale is central to the EU's foreign policy, considering its aim for international security through the promulgation of European norms. The EU's self-prescribed role as a normative power and aspirations to be a global actor are reflected in the ESS, which advances two main normative principles: effective multilateralism and a rule-based international order in an increasingly multipolar and complex world.[21] As Palm and Crum have noted, most overseas EU military operations were not initiated to fulfil geostrategic or economic objectives, but rather, were initiated in accordance with normative principles.[22] In other words, the international security actions taken by the EU reflect its discursive conceptualization as a normative power.

China as an International Security Actor

China's approach to international security issues has evolved over time. During the Cold War, the Chinese government largely focused on domestic issues, such as safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, following 1970s economic reforms and the economic boom in subsequent decades, China has adopted a wider outlook towards international security, becoming a key actor within the new multipolar global order.[23] Initially, China has focused on regional issues and multilateralism through cooperative organizations, including the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).[24] But in recent years, China has sought to further internationalize its approach to security. Over time, China has reconstructed its identity as a peaceful and cooperative global actor, shifting from a 'norm taker' to a 'norm maker."[25]

The 2003 Chinese New Security Concept (NSC) illustrates China's changing international security policy, emphasizing mutually beneficial cooperation, rather than self-determination and national sovereignty. The core components of China's 2003 NSC are mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, and coordination.[26] This new approach complements China's overall foreign policy of peaceful ascent and peaceful development. For instance, the NSC closely parallels the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which can be understood as key Chinese foreign policy norms: "mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each-others internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence."[27] These concepts serve to counter growing international skepticism of China's rise, as it

[18] Palm and Crum, "Military Operations and the EU's Identity," 517.
[19] *See* Chad Damro, "Market Power Europe," *Journal of European Public Policy* 19.5 (2012): 682-699, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2011.646779
[20] Palm and Crum, "Military Operations and the EU's Identity," 513.
[21] *See* "A Secure Europe in a Better World."
[22] Palm and Crum, "Military Operations and the EU's Identity," 534.
[23] *See* Song Xinning, "Security and the Role of China," in *The Palgrave Handbook of EU-Asia Relations*, ed. Thomas Christiansen, Emil Kirchner, and Philomena Murray (London, GBR: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Chu Shulong, "China's Perception and Policy About North Korea," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 37.5-6 (2015): 273-278, https://doi.org/10.1080/10803920.2015.1162065; Jörn-Carsten Gottwald and Niall Duggan, "Hesitant Adaptation: China's New Role in Global Policies," in *Role Theory in International Relations*, ed. Sebastian Harnisch, Cornelia Frank, and Hanns W. Maull (London, GBR: Routledge, 2011).
[24] Song, "Security and the Role of China," 472.
[25] *See* Reuben Wong, "China's Security Thinking," policy paper, *EU-China Security Cooperation*, University of Essex, in *EUSC Policy Paper Series* (2015): 2-4, https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/research/eu-china/eusc_security_china_wong.pdf; Chris Alden and Daniel Large, "On Becoming a Norms Maker: Chinese Foreign Policy, Norms Evaluation and the Challenges of Security in Africa," *The China Quarterly* 221 (2015): 123-142, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741015000028
[26] Alden and Large, "On Becoming a Norms Maker," 474.
[27] Liu Guoli, "Leadership Transition and Chinese Foreign Policy," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 8.1 (2003): 107, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02876952

emphasizes that the Chinese government does not aim to threaten the existing international order but instead, are helping to maintain a harmonious and cooperative global environment.[28] This evolution of Chinese foreign policy has also had practical implications, as the country has become more supportive of international intervention. For instance, China has become increasingly active in UN peacekeeping missions abroad, and is now one of the leading contributors of peacekeeping personnel.[29]

Debates on EU-China Security Cooperation

We will now engage with the academic debate on EU-China rapprochement on global security issues to provide further insights on the practical implications of cooperation between the two powers. While some scholars doubt the potential for cooperation between major powers, others have argued—based on official statements and policy papers—that cooperation between the EU and China is both deepening and widening.[30] Realist scholars tend to disregard the prospects of such cooperation between key international players, and instead, focus on theories of competition and great power rivalry. The realist school identifies the rising importance and assertiveness of China as a threat to the existing international system, rather than an opportunity for global stability.[31]

However, many scholars foresee potential benefits of EU-China cooperation, noting various factors that could impact the likelihood of cooperation: including the role of the US, the ongoing EU arms embargo

[28] Peer M. Christensen and Li Xing, "China's Self-Perception of Its Security Situation: The Nexus of the Internalities and Externalities," *Journal of China and International Relations* 1.1 (2013): 32, https://doi.org/10.5278/ojs.jcir.v1i1.215

[29] Miwa Hirono and Marc Lanteigne, "Introduction: China and UN Peacekeeping," *International Peacekeeping* 18.3 (2011): 245-246, https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2011.563070

[30] *See* Jing and Pardo, "Convergence and Divergence between the EU and China," 1-3; David Scott, "Environmental Issues as a 'Strategic' Key in EU-China Relations," *Asia Europe Journal* 7 (2009): 211-223, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-009-0227-1

[31] *See* Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape the Thucydides Trap?* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2017); Abramo F.K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958).

on China, national interests, and certain normative factors.[32] Geeraerts, for instance, notes the mixed nature of EU-China relations, arguing that although certain factors indicate that competition exists between the two powers, others indicate converging trends that denote prospects of cooperation.[33] He further argues that competition and cooperation are compatible, as power relations and conflicts of interest explain the competitive nature of the relationship, but shared rules and norms serve to undergird bilateral cooperation.

This correlation between normative convergence and levels of cooperation has been established by other authors as well. Finamore hypothesizes that, based on social constructivist theory, normative differences could explain a lack of cooperation between different powers.[34] Accordingly, for concrete security cooperation, "a convergence of interests is not enough; there is also a need for a convergence of ideas about security and the way to provide it."[35] Other authors have analyzed prospects of EU-China security cooperation by focusing on the role of norms and interests, and the potential impact of normative convergence on de facto cooperation. Most argue that Chinese and European norms are in fact diverging, or that there is only a limited rapprochement of norms and conceptual understandings.[36] For example, Stumbaum finds that

[32] *See* Emil Kirchner, Thomas Christiansen and Han Dorussen, *Security Relations Between China and the European Union: From Convergence to Cooperation?* (Cambridge, GBR: Cambridge University Press: 2016): 1-18; Simone Dossi, "The EU, China and Nontraditional Security: Prospects for Cooperation in the Mediterranean Region," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 26.1 (2015): 77-96, https://doi.org/10.1215/10474552-2872988; Salvatore Finamore, "Normative Differences in Chinese and European Discourses on Global Security: Obstacles and Opportunities for Cooperation," *Chinese Political Science Review* 2 (2017): 159-178, https://doi.org/10.1007/s41111-017-0049-z

[33] *See* Gustaaf Geeraerts, "The EU-China Partnership," 281-294.

[34] Finamore, "Normative Differences in Chinese and European Discourses on Global Security," 159-178.

[35] Dossi, "The EU, China and Nontraditional Security," 78.

[36] *See* Salvatore Finamore, "Normative Differences in Chinese and European Discourses on Global Security," 159-178; Francesco S. Montesano, "EU-China Security Relations: Discourse vs Practice and the Role of EU Member States," *The International Spectator* 54.2 (2019): 139-158, https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2019.1572356; Daniela Sicurelli, "Competing Models of Peacekeeping: The Role of the EU and China in Af-

although the two powers' threat perceptions have aligned, they nonetheless have diverging connotations of core terms, such as multipolarity, and core concepts, such as human rights and democracy.[37] While Stumbaum questions the probability of comprehensive EU-China security cooperation in the future, she identifies areas in which future cooperation is more likely to happen. These include areas of human security lime environmental disasters and pandemics, as well as humanitarian interventions like peacekeeping.[38]

In a similar fashion, Montesano highlights the discrepancy between official discourse and actions on the ground when it comes to EU-China security cooperation, arguing that "convergent perceptions have not translated into convergent responses" due to differing approaches to most security issues.[39] Nevertheless, his analysis of European and Chinese peacekeeping has led him to claim a slowly evolving normative rapprochement, particularly due to recent Chinese pragmatic flexibility in its security approach. Montesano's finding of growing flexibility and potential for future normative rapprochement is strengthened by Kerr and Xu's research, which reveals not only the mobility of norms of security governance between China and the EU, but the gradually closing gap between them.[40] Similarly, Kirchner et al.'s study of ten security dimensions found that while there is no high or uniform level of convergence across the different dimensions, the overall impression of low and medium levels still indicates a significant degree of positive normative

rica," conference paper, *Fifth Pan-European Conference on EU Politics* (Porto, PRT), *ECPR Standing Group on the European Union*, June 23-26, 2010, http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.462.9906&rep=rep1&type=pdf

[37] Montesano, "EU-China Security Relations," 139-158; Kirchner, Christiansen, and Dorussen, "Security Cooperation in EU-China Relations," 1-18; *see* May-Britt Stumbaum, "Opportunities and Limits of EU-China Security Cooperation," *The International Spectator* 42.3 (2007): 351-370, https://doi.org/10.1080/03932720701567570

[38] Stumbaum, "Opportunities and Limits of EU-China Security Cooperation," 351-370; Xu, "Managing Uncertainties," 5-40.

[39] Montesano, "EU-China Security Relations," 143.

[40] David Kerr and Xu Yanzhuo, "Europe, China and Security Governance: Is There Evidence of Normative Convergence?" *Asia Europe Journal* 12 (2014): 79-93, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-014-0371-0

rapprochement.[41] Finally, Xu also supports this line of argumentation, asserting that not only have the EU and China adopted similar threat perceptions, but that China "increasingly resembles the EU in terms of its security approach, providing a better groundwork for cooperation."[42]

However, it is important to note, as Kirchner et al. do, that generalizations on convergence and cooperation are difficult, and that analyses and conclusions need to be made on a case-by-case basis.[43] The literature on EU-China security cooperation and normative rapprochement is still relatively new, with a limited amount of current research. Most scholars have focused on cases where levels of cooperation between the EU and China are expected to be high, such as anti-piracy cooperation in Somalia and joint action in relation to the Iran Nuclear Deal have been highlighted.[44] Similarly, some authors have sought to study peacekeeping missions in African countries, such as Mali and Sudan.[45] Xu, for instance, has argued that EU-China security cooperation could be particularly significant in African peacekeeping missions.[46]

Methodology: Analyzing Normative Convergence and Levels of Cooperation

Norms and their convergence can have a tangible impact on facilitating international cooperation.[47] In recent years, the concept of normative rapprochement has begun to spread in the literature on globalization

[41] *See* Kirchner, Christiansen and Dorussen, "Security Cooperation in EU-China Relations," 1-18.

[42] Xu, "Managing Uncertainties," 17.

[43] Kirchner, Christiansen and Dorussen, "Security Cooperation in EU-China Relations," 17.

[44] *See* Finamore, "Normative Differences in Chinese and European Discourses on Global Security," 159-178; Montesano, "EU-China Security Relations," 139-158; Dossi, "The EU, China and Nontraditional Security," 77-96; Kirchner, Christiansen and Dorussen, "Security Cooperation in EU-China Relations," 17.

[45] *See* Montesano, "EU-China Security Relations," 139-158; Kerr and Xu, "Europe, China and Security Governance," 79-93.

[46] *See* Xu, "Managing Uncertainties," 5-40.

[47] Finamore, "Normative Differences in Chinese and European Discourses on Global Security," 159-178; Daniel W. Drezner, "Globalization and Policy Convergence," *International Studies Review* 3.1 (2011): 53-78, https://doi.org/10.1111/1521-9488.00225

and modernization. According to Kerr, normative rapprochement can be defined as "the tendency of societies to grow more alike, to develop similarities in structures, processes and performance."[48] In order to investigate normative rapprochement between China and the EU, I will utilize a macro-level discursive analysis of official documents and statements to measure convergence or divergence between the two actors' attitudes and approaches. Several authors have demonstrated the importance of studying normative convergence and divergence in relation to international security cooperation.[49] As previously noted, Kirchner et al., for instance, have established a link between normative rapprochement and security cooperation between the EU and China by testing it within ten different security dimensions. They find that there is often a "strong link between the existence of policy conformity and levels of cooperation," despite occasional discrepancies. However, it is worth noting that cooperation can occur independently of normative rapprochement in cases that require the spontaneous cooperation of key actors, such as responses to natural disasters or pandemic diseases.[50] Even though normative rapprochement is not the only factor affecting security cooperation between the EU and China, the correlation between the two factors makes it important to study. [51]

While some scholars in the field of EU-China security cooperation have drawn on such an approach to argue that differences related to issues such as sovereignty, human rights, and democracy between China and the EU have impacted their ability to reach agreements and act jointly, I argue that it is more important to study international actors' ability

[48] Clark Kerr, *The Future of Industrial Societies: Convergence or Continuing Diversity?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983): 3.
[49] Kirchner, Christiansen and Dorussen, "Security Cooperation in EU-China Relations," 78; Montesano, "EU-China Security Relations," 139-158; Finamore, "Normative Differences in Chinese and European Discourses on Global Security," 159-178.
[50] Kirchner, Christiansen and Dorussen, "Security Cooperation in EU-China Relations," 6.
[51] *See* Ai Weining and Song Weiqing, "China and the European Unions' Participation in Conflict Resolution: Norm Dynamics, Convergence and Divergence in Foreign Policy," *Journal of Contemporary China* 28.116 (2019): 277-292, https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2018.1511397

to overcome normative differences in order to understand and promote opportunities for cooperation.[52] For my purposes, I borrow Kirchner et al.'s definition of normative convergence: "the degree of actual security cooperation between the EU and China, whether in the shape of formal agreements or of joint actions involving either material resources or firm commitments to joint standards."[53]

Having defined normative convergence, I will now elaborate on how I intend to measure it. Our categories of analysis are based on recurring themes in the academic literature on EU-China security cooperation, particularly Kirchner et al's, Montesano's, and Finamore's research.[54] Normative convergence will be tested on two main axes: threat perception and policy responses. I will first explore threat perception by both the EU and China, measuring the extent to which they have converged since the formation of their strategic partnership in 2003. To analyze threat perception on the macro-level of normative convergence, I will examine what the EU and China perceive as threats, and how they justify these perceptions. I will then contrast EU and Chinese threat perception together to see if there is an observable normative convergence between the actors. Next, I will examine security norms surrounding Chinese and European policy responses to international security threats and measure the extent of that convergence as well. I will pay special attention to the two powers' respective understandings of key normative concepts, such as sovereignty, interventionism, multilateralism, and multipolarity. These norms have been identified by Finamore as particularly relevant to the EU-China security cooperation relationship.[55] Finally, I will test the self-perceptions of the two powers and their relative perceptions of each other for convergence, as relative framings and self-perception can reveal actors' motivations, ambitions, and strategic

[52] Kirchner, Christiansen and Dorussen, "Security Cooperation in EU-China Relations," 6.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.; Montesano, "EU-China Security Relations," 139-158; Finamore, "Normative Differences in Chinese and European Discourses on Global Security," 159-178.
[55] *See* Finamore, "Normative Differences in Chinese and European Discourses on Global Security," 159-178.

interests. Particular levels of convergence will be evaluated using Kirchner et al's categorization of convergence levels, as listed below:

> *High*: Similar degrees of threat perception and high degree of overlap in relevant domestic response.
>
> *Medium*: Either variation in the degree to which they perceive the level of threat in a particular issue domain or in how their domestic policies respond to these threats.
>
> *Low:* Variation in the way they perceive the threat, and in the extent or degree to which domestic actions have been introduced.[56]

This analysis will be conducted within a framework of qualitative, macro-level discursive analysis. A qualitative content analysis consists of an interpretative form of analysis that is primarily concerned with the examination of text itself to uncover meanings, motives and purposes in textual content.[57] In other words, I will textually and thematically evaluate key European and Chinese documents from 2003 to 2019 that either illuminate each power's stance on global security and international cooperation, European-Chinese relations, or both. This time frame has been chosen since the EU-China strategic partnership was signed in 2003, which initiated China and the EU's shared commitment to increased cooperation on global security issues. Due to the limited number of official sources, our analysis will only include documents up to the year 2019. Afterwards, I will also include a short case study of Chinese and European peacekeeping in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to validate my conclusions in a real-world context.

The EU's Approach to International Security and China

2003 Documents

I begin my analysis with the European Security Strategy (ESS) and a

[56] *See* Kirchner, Christiansen and Dorussen, "Security Cooperation in EU-China Relations," 1-18.

[57] Sandra Halperin and Oliver Heath, *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017): 336.

2003 European Commission policy paper on China, "A Maturing Partnership: Shared Interests and Challenges in EU-China Relations," as these two documents redefined the EU's policies towards China and global security for the following decade. The ESS is primarily oriented towards international policy and aims to reinforce the CFSP and provide a clear guide for the EU's role in global security affairs. The EU-China comprehensive strategic partnership, on the other hand, aimed to expand cooperation on global security issues, thereby moving the EU and China's relationship beyond a purely economic partnership. In terms of threat perception, both documents highlight the rapidly changing nature of international security threats—in sum, arguing that security threats are more diverse, less visible, and predictable. My analysis of both documents identifies five common international security threats: terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure, and organized crime.[58] In terms of policy response, "A Maturing Partnership" has an idealistic and optimistic tone, stressing an ambition to strengthen their relationship through the elaboration of six priorities: shared responsibility in the promotion of global governance, supporting a Chinese transition based on the rule of law and respect for human rights, support for China's economic opening-up, raising the efficiency of inter-party political dialogue, and bettering their joint abilities to address international governance and global security. The paper calls for heightened cooperation to tackle increasingly global and interdependent security issues, and identifies China as a key partner in this goal.

On the other hand, the ESS states the importance of respecting states' sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes, and abiding by key UN principles and commitments.[59] In addition, it clarifies that sovereignty entails responsibility, referring to a

[58] "A Secure Europe in a Better World"; "A Maturing Partnership—Shared Interests and Challenges in EU-China Relations," policy paper, *Commission of the European Communities* (2003), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2003:0533:FIN:EN:PDF

[59] "A Maturing Partnership—Shared Interests and Challenges in EU-China Relations."

global responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. Although the importance of supporting multilateralism—and especially the United Nations—is heavily emphasized in both documents, the ESS particularly emphasizes the importance of multilateral agreements and coordination through international organizations, as well as the importance of forming partnerships with other key players in international affairs. To that end, the ESS includes a section on partnerships for effective multilateralism, which not only identifies the existing network of cooperation between the United States and the EU, but also mentions progress made in strengthening cooperation with China. According to the ESS, the EU is meant to play an active role—in other words, it is Europe that must lead a renewal of the multilateral order.

Moreover, it is of particular importance that both documents introduce China as a strategic partner of the EU, and not a potential threat. This label highlights the EU's ambition for constructive engagement with China and comports with its objective to strengthen cooperation on global security issues. This strategy has led scholars such as Shambaugh to state that the EU and China represent an "emerging axis in world affairs."[60] In sum, within these two documents, the European Union is consistently highlighting its importance as a global security actor and norm-promoter with respect to Chinese partnerships. Clearly, the EU is aiming to influence China to follow its international security model, particularly vis-à-vis its core norm of multilateralism. The 2003 documents thus show a strong normative emphasis directed at transforming Chinese foreign policy and fostering inter-party cooperation.

2016 Documents

In 2016, the European Union promulgated the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), while the European Commission released a policy paper, "Elements for a New EU Strategy on China." Both documents indicate a clear shift in the EU's approach towards international affairs, and in

[60] David Shambaugh, "China and Europe: The Emerging Axis," *Current History* 103.674 (2004): 243-248, https://www.jstor.org/stable/45317958

particular, its relationship with China. The EUGS was introduced to redefine the CFSP in response to a changing global threat environment. In terms of threat perception, it identifies five priorities for the CFSP: (1) the Union's internal security; (2) the Eastern and Southern neighborhood; (3) the development of an integrated approach to conflict and crises; (4) cooperative regional orders; (5) strengthening its multilateral, rule-based system of global governance.[61] While both documents still highlight international threats, the EU's focus has largely shifted towards Europe and its neighboring powers, rather than more distant regions of the world. As a report commissioned by the European Union states, "we will take responsibility foremost in Europe and its surrounding regions, while pursuing targeted engagement further afield."[62] In regard to policy response, the EUGS and the EU's new strategy towards China introduced the concept of "principled pragmatism" as a guide for any future external actions; essentially, that foreign policy "should be principled, practical and pragmatic."[63] This can be interpreted as a rejection of idealism and a consolidation towards realist policy—both when dealing with China and the international community more broadly. However, multilateralism, with the UN at its core, remains the EU's key principle when addressing global security threats.

In the "New EU Strategy on China," an entire section is dedicated to the joint promotion of effective multilateralism, and the need for the EU to seek a broader foreign policy agenda based on encouraging China's constructive and active participation in providing security as a global public good. In line with its support for a multilateral approach, it also calls for co-responsibility and cooperation through partnerships and international organizations. Similar to the EU's 2003 documents on China and international security, sovereignty and interventionism are not dis-

[61] "Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Elements for a New EU Strategy on China," report, *European Commission* (2016), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=celex:52016JC0030

[62] "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe," report, *European Union* (2016), https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3eaae2cf-9ac5-11e6-868c-01aa75ed71a1

[63] Ibid.

cussed in great detail. While respect for sovereignty, independence, and the territorial integrity of all states remains a key principle of EU foreign policy, the 2016 documents also stress the importance of acting as a responsible global stakeholder. In sum, the EUGS demonstrates a higher level of self-interest on the part of the EU, as it is directed towards providing security for the European continent, rather than external projection of its core norms. The 2016 strategy stresses the importance of reciprocity in EU-China relations, but does not abandon normative aspirations towards China. Although the EU is still devoted to promoting its norms while seeking to "marry [its] experience with China's resources," this normative promotion is tempered with pragmatism and caution.[64]

2019 Documents

The final documents that will be analyzed are the EU's recently published strategy document on China, "EU-China: A Strategic Outlook," and the EU's "2019 Report on the Implementation of the EUGS." In terms of threat perception, it is notable that the EU sees China's promotion of "alternative models of governance" as a potential threat. Domestic and regional focus has strengthened, while the growing complexity and interdependence of security issues is still emphasized. As the Report on the EUGS notes, "global trends have not only been confirmed; they have deepened and have become more intertwined."[65] This international complexity is linked to the shift from a unipolar world to an increasingly fragmented multipolar distribution of power, which the report characterizes as not having led "to more cooperation, but rather to growing uncertainty and rivalry."[66] Furthermore, the report highlights how multipolar contestation has not only intensified economic and trade tensions, but also cross-advocacy of different modes of global governance and intervention in regional conflicts and rivalries. In terms of policy

[64] "Joint Communication to the European Parliament and The Council," 11.
[65] "The European Union's Global Strategy Three Years on, Looking Forward," report, *European Union* (2019): 8, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu_global_strategy_2019.pdf
[66] Ibid., 8.

response, both documents re-emphasize the importance of multilateralism to counter global fragmentation. The "Report on the Implementation of the EUGS" highlights the EU's role in supporting and reforming multilateral governance in recent years through increased financial contributions to the UN and preserving the nuclear deal with Iran. The EU identifies multilateral global governance as a strategic priority, and sees it as its responsibility to sustain, defend and promote. It even self-identifies as "the go-to power" and "point of reference" when it comes to multilateralism, asserting that it is "the most advanced multilateral project in history."[67] Sovereignty and interventionism-related statements are completely absent from both documents, which could indicate that the EU has either deprioritized these issues entirely, or that there is no change in EU policy. The EU's new strategy on China reframes their relationship by introducing the term systemic rival—this can be contrasted to the 2003 framing of China as a strategic partner.[68] The re-labelling of their relationship illustrates the EU's increasingly pragmatic approach towards China. In line with the 2016 strategy on China, reciprocity and coordination are also emphasized.[69] The EU's less optimistic approach towards China and the label of systemic rival, however, do not put an end to its engagement with China and its ambition for increased cooperation—the 2019 strategy still identifies China as a "cooperation partner with whom the EU has closely aligned objectives" in several areas.[70]

China's Approach to International Security and the EU

2003-2004 Documents

I will now contrast the EU's approach towards China and international security with China's approach to the same. The first documents that will be analyzed are a 2003 policy paper on the EU and a 2004 white paper, "China's National Defense in 2004." China's 2003 policy paper on

[67] Ibid.
[68] "EU-China: A Strategic Outlook," report, *European Commission* (2019): 10, https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/eu-china-strategic-outlook-commission-contribution-european-council-21-22-march-2019_en
[69] "The European Union's Global Strategy Three Years on, Looking Forward," 1.
[70] Ibid.

the EU is the first of its kind, detailing China's planned approach towards the EU in the following years. Notably, the 2003 policy paper on the EU clearly states that "neither side poses a threat to the other."[71] The white paper on national defense largely introduces China's defense and militarization policy, but also contains a chapter on international security cooperation that is particularly relevant.

In terms of threat perception, the documents recognize the high volatility of international affairs, and seek to highlight the resulting growth in uncertainty, instability, and insecurity.[72] China's 2004 defense strategy sees the current mix between unipolarity and multipolarity as leading to hegemonism, and views struggles for strategic interests and dominance as problematic and counterproductive. China is particularly concerned with global security threats linked to economic globalization and any resulting wage and income gaps. Interestingly, in the document, China is identified as a "developing country." This appears to be a form of strategic hedging against adverse actions by established powers, as the document continually stresses the peaceful and defensive nature of Chinese expansion and growth. In the area of military technology, the documents highlight more specific threats, such as terrorism, the safeguarding of international arms control, disarmament, non-proliferation regimes, and the rise of both local and regional armed conflicts.[73] Finally, the defense strategy draws a regional focus on the Asia-Pacific region, and notes several non-traditional security issues, particularly those linked to the environment.

Although multilateralism is not specifically mentioned in either document, the concept implicitly undergirds the premises of both documents, as they not only emphasize a preference for increased cooperation in response to global threats, but do so in the context of multilateral institutions.[74] For instance, in a chapter on international security, China's defense paper states that "the Chinese government pays great attention to, and actively participates in, international security cooperation and advocates the development of international security cooperation based on the UN Charter."[75] This chapter explicitly details Chinese security cooperation with Russia, the United States, and neighboring countries in the Asia-Pacific. There is, however, no specific reference to EU-China cooperation. However, the 2003 policy paper does indicate a need for increased cooperation with the EU on a wide range of security-related issues, and also calls for stronger EU-China cooperation at the UN.[76] Finally, in contrast to the EU's 2003 policy documents, sovereignty and non-interventionism play a major role in Chinese foreign policy vis-à-vis the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: (1) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, (2) mutual non-aggression, (3) mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, (4) equality and mutual benefit, and (5) peaceful co-existence.[77] As such, we can see that while China is still primarily focused on national policy, it is beginning to assume greater responsibility as a regional and international power.[78] In terms of EU-China relations, China's self-perception as a developing country is complemented by its recognition of the EU's role as a key global actor that "will play an increasingly important role in both regional and international affairs."[79] The 2003 Chinese strategy on the EU thus outlines prospects for closer consultation and broader cooperation with the EU on security issues.

2014-2015 Documents

Next, I will analyze a key policy paper published in 2014, "China's 2014 Policy Paper on the EU: Deepen the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win-Win Cooperation," and

[71] "China's EU Policy Paper," website, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of* China, October 13, 2003, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/ceupp_665916/t27708.shtml
[72] *See* "China's National Defense in 2004," website, *Information Office of the State Council*, December 2004, http://en.people.cn/whitepaper/defense2004/defense2004.html
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] "China's EU Policy Paper (2003)."
[77] Ibid.
[78] "China's National Defense in 2004."
[79] "China's EU Policy Paper (2003)."

President Xi Jinping's 2015 speech at the General Debate of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly. In terms of threat perception, both documents illustrate a deepening of the trend towards multipolarity first identified in the earlier documents. In other words, they articulate less of a focus on national and regional security, and more of a focus on global issues.[80] No specific threats to security are mentioned, but the documents recognize the importance of addressing non-traditional security threats—specifically, the need for sustainable development.[81] In terms of policy response, there is a clear focus on enhanced cooperation through increased contributions to ensure the "peace and prosperity of the world," as well as an on-going commitment to uphold the authority of the UN and support its aim for world peace.[82] In his speech, Xi Jinping highlights China's commitment to multilateralism; its rejection of unilateralism; and the importance of dialogue, consultation, and partnerships in international governance.[83] Moreover, he emphasizes the principle of sovereign and territorial integrity laid out in the UN Charter, and adds that the concept of sovereignty should also extend to social systems and the development paths of countries. Xi thus emphasizes China's promotion of alternative models of governance, as well as its self-identification as a developing country.[84]

On the other hand, China's 2014 policy paper on the EU outlines a more pragmatic way to strengthen the relationship. It devotes a whole section to "expanding defense and security cooperation," and calls for an expansion in "the area and scope of practical cooperation between the two sides."[85]

[80] "China's Policy Paper on the EU: Deepen the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win-Win Cooperation," website, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, April 2, 2014, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/wjzcs/t1143406.shtml; Xi Jinping, "Working Together to Forge a New Partnership of Win-Win Cooperation and Create a Community of Shared Future for Mankind," speech, General Debate of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly (New York, NY), *United Nations*, September 28, 2015, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpdmgjxgsfwbcxlhgcl70znxlfh/t1305051.shtml

[81] Xi, "Working Together to Forge a New Partnership of Win-Win Cooperation and Create a Community of Shared Future for Mankind."

[82] "China's Policy Paper on the EU (2014)."

[83] Xi, "Working Together to Forge a New Partnership of Win-Win Cooperation."

[84] Ibid.

In these two documents, we can see that Chinese self-confidence is growing, despite its purposeful identification as a rising power. By promoting "a new type of international relations" that is based on the principles of "equality, mutual trust, inclusiveness, mutual learning, and win-win cooperation," China is stepping into a new role as norm-maker and norm-promoter.[86] Accordingly, as "the world's most representative emerging economy," China seeks to create a more equal and balanced relationship with the EU—which it terms the world's most representative "group of developed countries."[87] The document thus recognizes the EU as a crucial strategic partner in the pursuit of both peaceful development and a multipolar world, calling for a "deepening of the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win-Win Cooperation."[88]

2018-2019 Documents

The final Chinese documents dealing with the EU and international security that will be analyzed are the 2018 policy paper, "China's Policy Paper on the European Union," and a 2019 white paper, "China's National Defense in the New Era." In terms of threat perception, these documents note a rise of unilateralism linked to international strategic competition, protectionism, and de-globalization. They also mention specific global security threats, including international arms control, terrorism and extremism, and new non-traditional security threats related to outer space, cyber security, bio-security, and piracy.[89] Not only does the 2019 white paper make reference to global issues (such as the Iranian nuclear deal and the Syrian Civil War), it also notes important regional and

[85] "China's Policy Paper on the EU (2014)."

[86] Xi, "Working Together to Forge a New Partnership of Win-Win Cooperation."

[87] "China's Policy Paper on the EU (2014)."

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.; "China's National Defense in the New Era," white paper, *State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China*, 1st ed. (July 2019), http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-07/24/c_138253389.htm

internal challenges, including separatist movements in Taiwan and territorial disputes in the South China Sea. In terms of policy response, it is notable that China has continued to stress its contribution to global governance through the United Nations. In other words, multilateralism is a key norm of Chinese foreign policy—one that is repeatedly emphasized in both documents. In concert, the EU policy paper contains an extensive section detailing ambitions for further cooperation in the fields of politics, security, and defense. Importantly, compared to previous policy papers, this section comes before the sections on trade, development, and social cooperation.[90] Sovereignty and non-interference are not mentioned extensively, besides a restatement of Chinese commitment to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and opposition "to interference in the international affairs of others, abuse of the weak by the strong, and any attempt to impose one's will on other."[91] Finally, both documents follow in the footsteps of the 2014/2015 strategies, and further emphasize China's promotion of a "New-Model" security partnership featuring equality, mutual trust, and "win-win cooperation."

Through these documents, we can see that China is asserting its normative leadership as a rising power, and that it's determined to be perceived as such by its partners—and particularly, the EU. This is particularly apparent in the 2018 policy paper, which demands the EU to "explicitly oppose Taiwan independence" and to honor "its commitment to respect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity."[92] It even goes as far as to state that the EU needs to respect China's core interests in order to assure "the long-term stability and growth of China-EU relations."[93] While this depicts a hardening stance towards the EU, more of the paper seeks to highlight the progress made thus far, as well as outlining how to further strengthen Chinese-European relations, particularly in the security domain.

[90] "China's Policy Paper on the European Union," website, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, December 18, 2018, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t1622890.shtml
[91] "China's National Defense in the New Era."
[92] "China's Policy Paper on the European Union (2018)."
[93] Ibid.

Measuring the Extent of Normative Convergence

Thus far, I have noted the discursive trends and differences between a selection of official policy papers in the EU and China from 2003 to the present. Now, I will thematically compare the two sets of documents across time to identify the extent of normative convergence between the two powers. The first time period, 2003/2004, shows a rather low level of convergence between the powers. There is a marginal convergence in the realm of threat perception, as both actors highlight multipolarity, the changing nature and growing interdependency of security threats, and some common threats, such as terrorism and WMD proliferation. However, the Chinese documents emphasize a greater national and regional focus, while the EU's security strategy is strongly focused on comprehensive external threats. Similar findings exist in the realm of policy response. Although both China and the EU stress the need for increased cooperation to address global security threats, while advocating for a greater role for the UN in global governance, there are significant differences with respect to their relative understandings of key concepts, such as multilateralism and sovereignty. First of all, the EU documents outline an ambitious and detailed approach for dealing with new security threats, whereas the Chinese documents largely gloss over similar practical considerations. Second, while the concepts of national sovereignty and non-interference saturate the Chinese policy documents, they are minimized in the European documents—in fact, the EU documents repeatedly advocate for an expansion of the responsibility to protect doctrine. Finally, while the EU documents emphasize and externalize multilateralism, the Chinese documents implicitly call for increased security cooperation, but do not explicitly refer to multilateralism or multilateral action. Therefore, while there is an observable convergence on security norms between the EU and China in 2003 and 2004, it was minimal at best.

However, a decade later, in 2014-2016, similar documents evince significant changes to both European and Chinese approaches to global security, and a higher level of normative convergence between the two actors. Threat perception converged, as both the EU and China began

to increasingly highlight and respond to similar non-traditional security threats. Moreover, with respect to extra-national influence, China and the EU met halfway (so to speak), as the EU shifted focus to domestic and regional security, while China expanded its global ambitions. In the realm of policy response, both the EU and China adopted a more pragmatic and flexible approach to each other—this is particularly apparent when examining China's more explicit support for multilateralism and lessened focus on non-interference. The documents from 2018 and 2019 show similar trends, as discourses on threat perception and policy responses have continued to converge. Although my analysis of the final and most recent period has depicted a shift towards a more competitive relationship, threat perception and policy response has mostly stayed convergent.

Accordingly, I have identified a gradual normative rapprochement between the EU and China on global threat perception and security norms since 2003. Overall, China remains committed to the importance of multilateralism, and has adopted a more flexible understanding of sovereignty and non-interference, bringing it closer to the EU's approach to international security. Similarly, I have found no significant changes in the EU's approach towards sovereignty and multilateralism, but identified alterations in its general foreign policy strategy such as the downgrading of transformative normative aspirations in favor of a more pragmatic and flexible approach to global security and Chinese-European cooperation.

Case Study: Normative Convergence and Peacekeeping in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Next, I will test the previously identified normative convergence within a specific security domain: peacekeeping missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). We will study both the EU's and China's approach to peacekeeping and apply our analytical framework to assess if normative convergence can serve as evidence of actual cooperation.

The European Union's Approach to Peacekeeping in the DRC

Since the early 2000s, the European Union has developed into an increasingly active crisis management actor. Following the guidance of the ESS, in 2003, it launched its first autonomous military mission abroad, Operation Artemis, formerly known as EUFOR DRC.[94] Artemis was primarily launched in response to a call by the UN Secretary-General for a temporary international support force to aid the UN MONUC (MONUSCO) mission, which had been active in DRC since 1999.[95] Since 2003, the EU has remained active in the DRC, with several active missions, including EUFOR RD Congo, EUPOL Kinshasa, EUSEC RD Congo, and EUPOL RD Congo.[96] In terms of threat perception, the EU has identified regional conflicts and state failure as key global security threats in several of its documents, and particularly, the Great Lakes regional conflict in the DRC. [97] To the EU, regional conflicts—especially in Africa and other regions adjacent to the European continent—do not merely represent a threat to regional stability, but also threaten Europe itself due to global security interdependence. A conflict in Africa could, for example, lead to extremism and terrorism, organized crime, increased demand for weapons of mass destruction, and illegal migration to the EU.[98] Repeated attacks on the UN's mission in the DRC over the last few years have been recognized as a sign of ongoing instability, continued threat, and an amplified need for further action.[99] Therefore, the EU

[94] "Council Decision 2003/432/CFSP on the launching of the European Union military operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo," document, *European Council*, No. 32003D0432 (2003), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32003D0432

[95] MONUSC was renamed to MONUSCO in May 2010. UN Security Council Resolution 1484, "The Situation Concerning the Democratic Public of the Congo," S/RES/1484 (May 2003), http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1484; UN Security Council Resolution 1925, "The Situation Concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo," S/RES/1925 (May 2010), http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1925

[96] UN Security Council Resolution 1671, "The Situation Concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo," S/RES/1671 (April 2006). http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1671; "Military and Civilian Missions and Operations," *European External Action Service*, March 5, 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/military-and-civilian-missions-and-operations/430/military-and-civilian-missions-and-operations_en

[97] "Shared Vision, Common Action."

[98] "A Secure Europe in a Better World."

[99] "Statement by the Spokesperson Regarding the Attack on MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," *European External Action Service*, May 6, 2015,

perceives its investment in African peace and economic development as an investment in its own security and prosperity.[100]

Having discussed the EU's motivations for maintaining peacekeeping efforts in the DRC, I will now analyze the security norms governing its approach towards the issue at hand, with a focus on multilateralism and sovereignty. First, participation in peacekeeping missions reflects the EU's support for effective multilateralism through the United Nations. This strong commitment is illustrated through by the fact that EU operations in the DRC were initially launched in support of the UN, explicitly sought to operate in accordance with UN objectives and values, and were conducted solely under the UNSC mandate.[101] One could argue that the existence of other autonomous EU missions are, to some extent, competing with UN missions and therefore do not necessarily represent cases of effective UN-centered multilateralism on the ground. However, this argument is severely weakened by the EU's recurring statements calling for continued cooperation with the UN in the peacekeeping domain—even as the two powers operate different missions.[102] High Representative Federica Mogherini, for instance, argued in 2019 that the "'European way' towards peace and security is identical to the 'UN way' towards peace and security," making the EU and UN natural partners

https://eeas.europa.eu/election-observation-missions/eom-zambia-2016/3381/statement-by-the-spokesperson-regarding-the-deadly-attack-against-monusco_en; "Statement by the Spokesperson on the Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," *European External Action Service*, January 23, 2018, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/australia/38731/statement-spokesperson-situation-democratic-republic-congo_en

[100] "Shared Vision, Common Action."

[101] Ibid.; "A Secure Europe in a Better World"; Catherine Ashton, "Address at the United Nations Security Council," speech, United Nations Security Council (New York, NY), February 8, 2011, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_11_77; Federica Mogherini, "Address at the United Nations Security Council," speech, United Nations Security Council (New York, NY), March 12, 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/59506/speech-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-united-nations%E2%80%99-security-council_en

[102] "Joint Declaration on UN-EU Cooperation in Crisis Management," *United Nations*, September 24, 2003, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/PRES_03_266

and collaborators.[103] She particularly highlights EU-UN cooperation on conflict resolution in Africa, as well as the recent launch of a trilateral security effort between the EU, UN and African Union (AU).[104]

In terms of sovereignty, my analysis shows that the EU supports a form of pooled or shared sovereignty, as displayed by its support for multilateral intervention in this regional conflict. While the EU declared that the peace process in the DRC is "above all, the responsibility of the Congolese people," it is also a key supporter of AU security operations, as well as the application of international law to address regional security issues in the DRC. More specifically, the EU has supported the AU in its role as a regional security actor through several channels, including the implementation of the African Peace Facility, a financial instrument supporting AU initiatives, and operational support for the African Standby Force.[105]

China's Approach to Peacekeeping in the DRC

In stark contrast to its initial opposition to international peacekeeping when it first joined the United Nations in 1971, the PRC has begun to emerge as a key contributor to UN peacekeeping operations within the last decade. Keeping pace with its increased funding contributions, Chinese personnel contributions have increased from 52 troops in 2000 to 1,868 in 2013, making it one of the main contributors of both peacekeeping troops and funds.[106] In terms of threat perception, intervention in regional conflicts and the need to participate in UN peacekeeping operations were emphasized early on in China's 2004 defense strategy. Although regional conflicts in Africa do not affect China directly, as they

[103] Mogherini, "Address at the United Nations Security Council."

[104] Ibid.; Catherine Ashton, "Declaration by the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on Behalf of the European Union on the Situation in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo," *European Union*, July 10, 2012, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/131682.pdf

[105] "3rd Africa EU-Summit 29/30 November, Tripoli," memorandum, *European Union* (November 2010), https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_10_604

[106] *See* Huotari, Gaspers, and Eder et al., "China's Emergence as a Global Security Actor: Strategies for Europe."

do not occur in its immediate neighborhood, they still represent an economic threat due to the significant levels of Chinese investment in the region. As the Center for Strategic and International Studies notes, "China has significant investments in the DRC, including an 80 percent stake in one of the world's largest copper and cobalt mines."[107] Therefore, regional stability is crucial for Chinese economic interests, and explains China's interest and involvement in the MONUSCO mission.[108] China has condemned recent attacks on MONUSCO personnel and facilities, arguing that they reflect ongoing instability and the need for an continued international response.

China also has a normative interest in maintaining peacekeeping forces in the region. As previously mentioned, the concept of multilateralism has gradually gained importance in Chinese foreign policy. As such, Chinese commitment to peacekeeping missions allows China to publicly demonstrate its commitment to international institutions and multilateral action. For instance, at the UN General Assembly in 2015, Xi Jinping announced several measures to further support UN peacekeeping, including additional troops, the creation of a standby police force, training sessions at new Chinese Peacekeeping Military Training Centers, as well as budgetary support for the AU to build an African Standby Force and an African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis.[109] China has also established an annual China-Africa Defense and Security Forum, and has sought to train African security forces.[110] Counterintuitively, participation in peacekeeping missions also demonstrates Chinese commitment to the principles of sovereignty and non-interference. Respect for sovereign equality and the need for the host country's

[107] "Is China Contributing to the United Nations' Mission?" website, *CSIS ChinaPower Project*, https://chinapower.csis.org/china-un-mission/

[108] John Pomfret, "China Sending Troops as Congo Peacekeepers," *Washington Post*, February 12, 2003, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2003/02/12/china-sending-troops-as-congo-peacekeepers/4690a140-75e8-4b01-ab90-10ceeb0c3e48/

[109] Xi, "Working Together to Forge a New Partnership of Win-Win Cooperation and Create a Community of Shared Future for Mankind."

[110] "China's Second Africa Policy Paper," *China Daily*, December 12, 2015, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/XiattendsParisclimateconference/2015-12/05/content_22632874.htm

consent is stressed in official Chinese discourse—in the DRC, Chinese participation in MONUSCO can be explained by the fact that the Congolese government had willingly agreed to the mission. Of course, it could be argued that China has adapted to the prevalent liberal mode of peacekeeping—and to some extent, has internalized existing approaches to sovereignty and interference. On the other hand, we can also see shifts in the UN's approach to peacekeeping that align more with the Chinese model of sovereignty, equality, and economic development. This can be observed in the UN's Brahimi Report, which symbolized a shift from a traditional peacekeeping approach towards more "robust peacekeeping."[111] This shift was further intensified by the Declaration of Action for Peace, which reaffirmed key peacekeeping principles, including the "consent of the parties, impartiality, and non-use of force, except in self-defense and defense of the mandate."[112]

The Extent of Normative Convergence Within the Peacekeeping Domain

After examining the European Union's and China's respective approaches towards peacekeeping operations in the DRC, we can conclude that our analysis of normative convergence is solid. In terms of threat perception, we have identified some level of convergence—both actors clearly identify regional conflict in the DRC as a security threat. Moreover, both have recently re-emphasized the need to address instability in the DRC following attacks on UN MONUSCO peacekeepers. However, there is some practical divergence between the two actors on the nature of the threat posed by regional instability in the DRC. While the EU is concerned by the potential spill-over effects of instability, China is mainly concerned with threats to its economic interests in the region. With regard to security norms, we have found significant levels of normative convergence between the EU and China—particularly in

[111] "Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations," report, *United Nations*, No. A/55/305-S/2000/809 (2000), https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/brahimi%20report%20peacekeeping.pdf

[112] "Action for Peacekeeping," website, *United Nations Peacekeeping*, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/action-for-peacekeeping-a4p

relation to multilateralism and international intervention. Both powers have strongly advocated for multilateral solutions to regional conflicts, highlighting the importance of regional and international organizations alike.

Some differences can be seen in the two powers' respective treatment of sovereignty—while China has traditionally taken a strict stance on sovereign equality and non-interference, the EU has largely advocated for a concept of shared sovereignty. However, my analysis has demonstrated that China's stance on sovereignty has actually evolved towards a more flexible understanding that has facilitated its participation in peacekeeping missions, indicating a certain internalization of and adaptation to existing security norms. Furthermore, while China's stance on sovereignty has to some extent converged with the existing system, it has also transformed said system by shifting the UN's traditional peacekeeping approach towards a more "robust" and practical approach to peacekeeping missions. We can therefore conclude that our analysis of both threat perception and policy responses in the peacekeeping domain support a moderate level of normative convergence between China and the European Union.

Conclusion

International security cooperation has only grown in importance with the emergence of new security threats and rising national interdependence. In our globalized world, conflict in one country may severely affect not only the stability of neighboring states, but of entire regions and distant states. In recent years, both China and the European Union have gradually increased their engagement in global security, and have emerged as major players in international affairs. While their relationship has often been portrayed in a negative light, I argue that there has been a recent shift of focus towards cooperation and rapprochement. My macro analysis of key EU and Chinese documents has demonstrated a moderate level of discursive rapprochement between the EU and China since 2003. This is particularly due to normative convergence on threat perception and multilateralism, as well as growing flexibility and pragmatism on both sides. Specifically, I have found that China and the

EU share similar perceptions of security threats, both traditional and non-traditional, and that advocacy and support for multilateralism through the UN and other multilateral organizations stand at the center of both powers' approaches to international security. Finally, China, in particular, has become more flexible and less constrained in its understanding of sovereignty and non-interference.

The case study analysis of peacekeeping in the DRC further confirmed my findings in the macro analysis. I note, however, that there is yet insufficient evidence of practical cooperation in the DRC that has resulted from this normative convergence. Further research on practical cooperation between the two actors in the peacekeeping domain should be conducted—perhaps through interviews with Chinese and EU military officials involved in peacekeeping operations within the DRC. Ultimately, this research contributes to a wider debate in the academic literature on EU-China relations, as well as policy circles concerned with the rise of China as a global actor. My findings of increased normative convergence strengthens the argument that a rapprochement exists between the EU and China. This finding is critical, as it not only provides a roadmap for predicting Chinese and European cooperation in the future, but also indicates that—contrary to common belief—competition between rising powers is not inexorable. Further research could attempt to measure normative convergence between other actors, such as Russia and China, or the United States and the EU. The particular security domain of peacekeeping is also of interest to researchers looking to identify normative rapprochement or divergence, as many emerging powers, such as India and Pakistan, have begun to increase contributions towards UN peacekeeping missions. The impact of pragmatism and flexibility on cooperation between global actors could also be an interesting starting point for further research.

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Die-Hard Supporters: Examining Overseas Filipino Workers' Online Grassroots Campaign for Duterte in the 2016 Philippine Elections

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Abstract

The success of the maverick politician Rodrigo Duterte in the 2016 election is cited as a result of the weaponization of social media—whereby professional, tech-savvy strategists mobilized public opinion through a networked system of disinformation.[1] Yet there is evidence of grassroots campaign support that emerged via online platforms. Those who have mobilized include Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), who have used Facebook groups to rally in support of Duterte. This research looks at the activities of two OFW Facebook groups to understand precisely how and why they organized for Duterte. Employing a dual-stage thematic analysis on posts and comments by group members between March 28 – May 9, 2016, three key findings emerged. First, motivations for supporting Duterte varied greatly among users and are far more complex than Duterte's mandate to crack-down on corruption, crime, and drugs. Second, group behavior deviates from top-heavy explanations of online campaign mobilization, as these groups operated autonomously from Duterte's official campaign. Finally, these groups were not amorphous and had, as the most active members and organizers, certain intermediaries. These grassroots intermediaries sought to amplify support for Duterte by organizing events, using diversionary tactics, and helping to propagate fake news. These findings suggest that while these groups

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were operating independently, they were not devoid of influence from Duterte's official social media campaign.

Introduction

While much has been written on the effective *affective* populism that elected the eccentric Rodrigo Duterte, what simultaneously makes the 2016 Philippine presidential elections interesting is the prominence of social media in mobilizing the public. Among the many groups to be represented across these social media platforms, Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) joined various third-party Facebook groups—airing their support as "Duterte die-hard supporters." Considering Facebook's extensive role in the Philippines and as the top social media platform in 2016, it has become the dominant avenue to connect with friends and family particularly for those living abroad.[2] During Duterte's 2016 campaign, OFWs' heavy social media engagement coincided with an Overseas Absentee Voting (OAV) turnout of 31 percent, which has doubled from 2013. It is also the highest turnout recorded since OAV was introduced in 2004. Most overseas voters supported Duterte, acquiring 72 percent of the OAV vote, with Manuel Roxas and Miriam Defensor achieving a meek 10.4 and 9.4 percent, respectively.[3]

Beyond engaging in online political campaigning, various group members opted to organize offline, advocating for Duterte. Events like potlucks, picnics, and small rallies took place in public spaces to spread the word and acquire maximum support for their cause. Photos and videos of these events were publicized across OFW-focused Facebook groups, further engaging group members, other users outside the groups, and increasing page activity. While scholarly and journalistic accounts have emphasized the machinery of Duterte's "army of trolls", gaps remain between third-party and grassroots political promotion that emerged from

[2] Facebook has also logged over 22 million Filipino users engaging in conversation around the 2016 presidential elections. Chrisee D. Paz, "Filipino Facebook Users Most Engaged Voters in Asia-Pacific," *Rappler*, May 9, 2016, https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/filipino-facebook-users-engagement

[3] #PHVote 2016 Overseas Absentee Voting Results," website, *Rappler*, https://ph.rappler.com/elections/2016/results/oav-results-philippines-elections

social media during the 2016 campaign. Looking beyond the paid actors and professional "trolls" involved in this "networked disinformation,"[4] this research analyzes the activities of OFWs on Facebook by grassroots intermediaries and the general public, particularly on *how* they mobilized and *why* they mobilized behind someone like Duterte online. It aims to disentangle the "porous boundaries" between manufactured and legitimate support and look specifically at those citizens who have found an outlet for their thoughts on platforms like Facebook.[5] The paper is situated into the debate on the effects of social media on democracy, either as a conduit to more participatory forms or merely a perpetuation of top-down, spectacle-driven politicking that pervaded even before the digital era. Drawing on Facebook data, I collected 141 documents of posts and comments from two OFW Facebook groups dedicated to Duterte. I conducted a thematic analysis of the data using the qualitative software *NVivo* to look for emergent and pressing themes throughout a six-week capture period, from late March to the election date on May 9, 2016. In addition to exercising patterned coding for six primary themes, the analysis paid careful attention to the online groups' behaviors, particularly on identifying the primary mediators of online discussion and the progression of specific topics.

Analysis of the data raises a few notable findings. First, the rationale behind Duterte's voters do not rely solely on his ambitions to crack down on crime, drugs, and corruption. While six primary themes emerged from the thematic analysis, various sub-themes were identified. Second, fervent online support for Duterte deviates from top-heavy explanations of social media mobilization that emphasize the management and manipulation of the public, as these Facebook groups were more grassroots and independent in their organization. Such findings counter the narrative that Duterte's social media popularity campaign was purely the product of a top-heavy operation conceived of by cunning strategists.

[4] Jonathan C. Ong and Jason V.A. Cabañes, "Architects of Networked Disinformation: Behind the Scenes of Troll Accounts and Fake News Production in the Philippines," report, *Newton Tech4Dev Network* (2018): 13, https://doi.org/10.7275/2cq4-5396

[5] Ibid., 28.

Instead, these Facebook groups operated separately—though not entirely devoid of influence—from Duterte's official campaign. Finally, the existence of autonomous intermediaries in these Facebook groups fueled support for Duterte and withdrew the spotlight from other candidates. These actors facilitated online and offline group behavior, used diversionary tactics, and disseminated fake news. Their activities reveal that these groups, while independent, function similarly to Duterte's political campaign, employing trolls and influencers to exploit the internet for electoral gain. This alignment in agenda and structure with the official campaign speaks more broadly to the success in stimulating voters to *personalize* Duterte's platform. The research does not negate the paid support that Duterte and his campaign team relied upon; however, it demonstrates that the two groups' activism were representative of a multitude of motivations that cultivated Duterte's political persona.

Literature Review

Unlike other populist leaders, Duterte's ascent to power amassed strong support from all strata of the socioeconomic ladder. As Teehankee and Thompson articulated, Duterte's presidential success was not limited to "a revolt of the poor,"—as is commonly associated with populism—as it was also propelled by elites and a successful new middle class that included OFWs.[6] Nevertheless, Duterte's rhetoric has appealed to the poorest of voters—despite his putative "war on the poor"[7] which promised to eradicate drug dealers and addicts. The prevailing scholarly interpretation of Duterte's rise to prominence focuses on the weaknesses of liberal democratic politics in the Philippines. Among the divergent approaches in making sense of Duterte's ascension, his success in agitating the country's elite democracy remains a ubiquitous chord, claiming to eradicate the same evils that his leadership upholds. Thompson

[6] "Thompson and Teehankee—Duterte Victory a Repudiation of Aquino," *Nikkei Asia*, May 12, 2016, https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Thompson-and-Teehankee-Duterte-victory-a-repudiation-of-Aquino

[7] "If You are Poor, You are Killed: Extrajudicial Executions in the Philippines' War on Drugs," report, *Amnesty International* (January 2017): 40, https://www.amnestyusa.org/reports/if-you-are-poor-you-are-killed-extrajudicial-executions-in-the-philippines-war-on-drugs/

provides an account of the failures of *liberal reformism*, typified as a "bourgeois political storyline," that emphasizes "re-establishing democracy, fighting corruption, and improving the efficiency of governance."[8] Simultaneously, liberal reformism neglects conflicts regarding equality, distribution, and class-based appeals.[9] He highlights that the first half of the Benigno Aquino III presidency—marked by steady economic growth and the crackdown of corrupt politicians—starkly contrasted with the second half of his leadership, which, as a result, quickly eroded the notion of liberal reformism's efficacy. High poverty, high unemployment, crumbling infrastructure, and minimal progress in the health and education sectors persisted under Aquino's reformist leadership—all of which Duterte challenged, advocating for a more "effective" alternative of a "bloodied democracy" with extralegal solutions for the maintenance of law and order.[10]

Teehankee posits that Duterte's rejection of the "regime narrative" of reformism—propagated by well-off, English-speaking, Manila elites—constitutes a re-imagination of Philippine nationalism. [11] In this reading, Duterte's anti-liberalism and nationalism traces its historical origins to American colonization. American rule over the Philippine islands imposed a "collective anxiety around questions of freedom and sovereignty." By teaching Filipinos about political freedom and self-government "in the form of the forceful imposition of a direct rule," colonization produced a fertile ground for nationalist challengers striving to represent "the Filipino people," among them, the former head of state (1965-1986) who established an authoritarian regime, Ferdinand Marcos, and more recently, Duterte.[12] While the current Filipino Liberal party—the

[8] Mark R. Thompson, "Bloodied Democracy: Duterte and the Death of Liberal Reformism in the Philippines," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 35.3 (2016): 42, https://doi.org/10.1177/186810341603500303

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 43-44, 50.

[11] Julio C. Teehankee, "Duterte's Resurgent Nationalism in the Philippines: A Discursive Institutionalist Analysis," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 35.3 (2016): 77, 72, https://doi.org/10.1177/186810341603500304

[12] Adele Webb, "Hide the Looking Glass: Duterte and the Legacy of American Imperialism," in *A Duterte Reader: Critical Essays on Rodrigo Duterte's Early Presidency,* ed.

contemporary beacons of postcolonial liberalism—fails to connect with everyday Filipinos' experiences, Duterte's anti-liberal and anti-elite discourse "was a potent formula" for those suffocating "from the hypocrisy of the EDSA discourse."[13]

Another account of Duterte's ascension focuses instead on "the people." Particularly, it examines the sovereignty of the masses and their "activation" by Duterte's "crass" demeanor that "shed light on the citizens'…hopes…and anxieties, exposed powerful institutions' hypocrisies, and provided the vocabulary to capture the public's brewing anger against the unfulfilled promise of elite democracy."[14] Curato argues that Duterte's success is due to his ability to forge a relationship with the public, who employ "moral assessments" when electing to bestow their political support.[15] Contrary to critics of populism who find the public to be prone to political deception, populist supporters make "moral calculations" to determine which candidates they should put their trust in. Kusaka obtains a similar conclusion, highlighting the value of moral politics in the country post-EDSA; varying moral discourses foster a distinction between the "good" and the "evil" that struggle for hegemony.[16] Under this morality-focused arrangement, candidates with inferior organization and funding have the potential to dominate elections, with voters casting their votes based on superior "moral discourses."[17] In 2016, Filipino politics strayed from Aquino's exclusive moral framework of "us-versus-the-corrupt," opting for Duterte's more inclusive "moral we" that support the project of "discipline."[18] Those antagonistic to Duterte's rhetoric—namely corrupt politicians, those against his extra-legal measures, crooks, and criminals—comprise the "immoral" they. Duterte's platform allows individuals, traditionally the poor who are excluded from the "good us" to participate in his political project.

Finally, scholars assess Duterte's success as congruent with times of "communicative abundance,"[19] where his language and crass demeanor have encapsulated the public's frustrations against the failed elite democracy. These approaches do not dismiss Duterte's win as "mediated populism" where "the candidate with the best-told narrative is well placed to win media attention and ultimately voter support."[20] Instead, as Cabañes and Cornelio point out, digital media has allowed public sentiment to be articulated and amplified.[21] Thus, as much as the 2016 elections may have been "personality- and media-driven,"[22] candidates' messages continue to capitalize on existing public desires; for messages to become viral, they have to "speak to the felt experiences of many people that were being neglected in the broader public discourses."[23]

What About Social Media?

Complementary to Duterte's populism, his campaign's grassroots support kindled throughout different sectors of Philippine society.[24] The

Nicole Curato (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017): 131, 136.

[13] Walden Bello, "Hide the Looking Glass: Duterte and the Legacy of American Imperialism," in *A Duterte Reader,* 80.

[14] Nicole Curato, "We Need to Talk About Roddy," in *A Duterte Reader*, 5.

[15] Nicole Curato, "Politics of Anxiety, Politics of Hope: Penal Populism and Duterte's Rise to Power," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 35.3 (2016): 96, https://doi.org/10.1177/186810341603500305

[16] Wataru Kusaka, *Moral Politics in the Philippines: Inequality, Democracy, and the Urban Poor* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2017): 7, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1xz01w7.

[17] Wataru Kusaka, "Bandit Grabbed the State: Duterte's Moral Politics," Philippine Sociological Review 65 (2017): 52-53, https://www.jstor.org/stable/45014309

[18] Ibid., 62-64.

[19] John Keane, *Democracy and Media Decadence* (Cambridge, GBR: Cambridge University Press, 2014): 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107300767

[20] Duncan McCargo, "Duterte's Mediated Populism," Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs 38.2 (2016): 189.

[21] *See* Jason Cabañes and Jayeel Cornelio, "The Rise of Trolls in the Philippines (and What We Can Do About It)," in *A Duterte Reader.*

[22] Ronald D. Holmes, "The Dark Side of Electoralism: Opinion Polls and Voting in the 2016 Philippine Presidential Election," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 35.3 (2016): 17, https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103416035003021 7

[23] Cabañes and Cornelio, "The Rise of Trolls in the Philippines," 5.

[24] *See* Julio C. Teehankee and Mark R. Thompson, "The Vote in the Philippines: Electing a Strongman," *Journal of Democracy* 27.4 (2016): 125–34, https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0068; Cleve V. Arguelles, "'We Are Rodrigo Duterte': Dimensions of the Philippine Populist Publics' Vote," *Asian Politics & Policy* 11.3 (2019): 417–437, https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12472; Nicole Curato, "Flirting with Authoritarian Fantasies? Rodrigo Duterte and the New Terms of Philippine Populism," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47.1 (2017): 142–153, https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2016.1239751

"citizen-led political action that [had disrupted] traditional campaign practices" extended beyond offline campaign practices and manifested online.[25] Duterte's online support from zealous supporters facilitated his electoral success, uplifting their leader and attacking his opponents and their supporters. For many journalists and academics, such impassioned behaviors of "Dutertards" online represents a cautionary tale of the "weaponization" of social media where Duterte sponsored trolling and disinformation take precedence in "shap[ing] public opinion, tear[ing] down reputations, and crippl[ing] traditional media institutions."[26]

Although it is not novel for political candidates to use social media as a facet of their broader campaign strategy, the use of social media to mobilize public opinion via disinformation strategies, targeting mechanisms, and trolling have become concerning for many supporters of democracy in recent years. For Stromer-Galley, the kind of Internet-based democratization envisaged in electoral politics has not yet occured, merely serving to encourage the spectacle-driven campaigning that existed in the pre-digital era.[27] Digital communication technologies (DCTs) do not necessarily promote a kind of two-way communication by opening up new platforms for the public to engage in elections. Rather, it perpetuates the public as being "campaigned at but not campaigned with," as strategists control interactivity with public-minimizing discourse and instead focusing on strategic messaging with a broader "yet more targeted reach."[28] Concerns regarding the (mis)use of social media that originate on the campaign trail often persist after the candidate assumes power.[29] This has proven true under Duterte's presidency where journalists and critics are met with the vitriol of his fans composed of paid and unpaid actors that challenge the ability to hold his administration accountable.[30] In this vein, scholars are thus concerned that civic life has been transformed from "membership to management" as the misuse of DCTs accelerates. [31]

Certainly, the grim intersection of social media and politics is not unique to the Philippines. One comparatively notable case is the United States where foreign provocateurs, social-media bots, fake news, and trolls penetrate the very bone of American democratic politicking.[32] These methods are said to disrupt "established paradigms of how to run for president" and, more broadly, election campaigning.[33] In fact, Cambridge Analytica, the microtargeting firm eerily skilled at shaping public opinion, is suspected of having fiddled with the 2016 Philippine elections.[34] Ong and Cabañes look specifically at the role of social media in the 2016 Philippine elections, investigating the professionalized and institutionalized work structures of paid troll work and how disinformation occurs through a "diverse and loosely interconnected group of hierarchal digital works."[35] As their study suggests, there is a permeable intersection between paid and activist work, as the goal of the "architects of disinformation" is to "ignite support at the grassroots level [...] to take on the work of persuasion in everyday spaces and rhythms of social media."[36] However, the success of igniting grassroots support online

[25] Curato, "Politics of Anxiety, Politics of Hope," 103.
[26] Maria Ressa, "Propaganda War: Weaponizing the Internet," *Rappler*, October 3, 2016, https://rappler.com/nation/propaganda-war-weaponizing-internet
[27] Jennifer Stromer-Galley, *Presidential Campaigning in the Internet Age* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019). https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190694043.001.0001
[28] Ibid., 2-3.
[29] Samantha Bradshaw and Philip Howard, "Troops, Trolls and Troublemakers: A Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation," working paper, *Computational Propaganda Research Project,* Oxford University (2017): 15, https://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/blog/troops-trolls-and-troublemakers-a-global-inventory-of-organized-social-media-manipulation/
[30] Sean Williams, "Rodrigo Duterte's Army of Online Trolls," *New Republic*, January 4, 2017, https://newrepublic.com/article/138952/rodrigo%E2%80%90dutertes%E2%80%90army%E2%80%90online%E2%80%90trolls
[31] Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*, vol. 8 (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013).
[32] Nathaniel Persily, "The 2016 US Election: Can Democracy Survive the Internet?" *Journal of Democracy* 28.2 (2017): 63–76, https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2017.0025; Alessandro Bessi and Emilio Ferrara, "Social Bots Distort the 2016 US Presidential Election Online Discussion," *First Monday* 21.11–7 (2016), https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v21i11.7090
[33] Persily, "The 2016 U.S. Election," 63.
[34] Gutierrez, "Did Cambridge Analytica Use Filipinos' Facebook Data to Help Duterte Win?"
[35] Ong and Cabañes, "Architects of Networked Disinformation," 15.
[36] Ibid., 28.

relies on how much a professional campaign gives voice to the "latent anxieties," needs, and desires of the population.[37] This is quite similar to the process of mobilizing populist publics offline—in short, "management" actually requires careful attention to the desires and activities of the electorate.[38]

Unlike his competitors, Duterte's virtual engagement with his fan base reflects an unresponsive approach. A study conducted by Sinpeng, Gueorguiev, and Arugay, demonstrates that Duterte's campaign is misaligned with the conventional expectations of effective social media campaigning that give primacy to top-down engagement in generating support online—namely the broadcast models that emphasize the role of political candidates and their campaign teams in generating support.[39] Their research shows a less than clear image of the effectiveness of "giving voice" and rallying constituents via social media, for Duterte significantly lagged behind other candidates in engaging with the general public online. Comparatively, Duterte was "inactive, impersonal, and disengaged,"[40] while his opponents endorsed a more personal approach; Grace Poe was far savvier with her memes and hashtags, Jejomar Binay was more active, and Miriam Defensor Santiago was the self-actualizing communicator.[41] Despite the ineptitude of his virtual persona, Duterte possessed committed and "social media-savvy believers as his base," meaning his social media following was more grassroots than assumed.[42]

Nevertheless, it is counterproductive to approach online electorate mobilization as vertical or horizontal. Speaking in the American context of the tech-savvy campaigns of Barack Obama and Howard Dean, Kreiss argues that theorists who see in purely black or white, whether dystopic

[37] *See* Curato, "Politics of Anxiety, Politics of Hope."
[38] Ibid.
[39] Aim Sinpeng, Dimitar Gueorguiev, and Aries A. Arugay, "Strong Fans, Weak Campaigns: Social Media and Duterte in the 2016 Philippine Election," *Journal of East Asian Studies* (2020): 358-360, https://doi.org/10.1017/jea.2020.11
[40] Ibid., 362.
[41] Ibid., 363.
[42] Aim Sinpeng, "How Duterte Won the Election on Facebook," *New Mandala,* May 12, 2016, https://www.newmandala.org/how-duterte-won-the-election-on-facebook/

or optimistic in terms of technology's effects on politics, "miss the hybridity" in the nature of organizing politics with technology.[43] Official social media campaigns aim to mobilize people online, but the unpredictable ways that messaging can be received and later articulated by users shapes official campaigns.[44] As Cabanes and Ong suggest, one distinct strategy in promotional communication is "volatile virality" wherein message amplification takes precedence over "message discipline;" here, the meaning of the message, delivered with popular vernacular, memes, and the like is left up to interpretation of individuals.[45] While it may be easy to place Duterte's success as a part of managing the electorate vis-à-vis DCTs or as emblematic of grassroots models of organizing online, there is more to be derived in the fusion of "management" and "empowerment" in political and online domains. This research asserts that Duterte's fan-base was "strong" in their independent grassroots support and can be understood from the diverse and personalized motivations uttered by the group members online, some of which have also been taken offline.[46] At the same time, the Facebook groups' alignment with Duterte's official social media campaign in agenda, organization, and strategy speaks to his official campaign project's strength.

Methods

Since this article aims to unpack the reasons for how and why OFWs mobilized behind Duterte online, and whether their mobilization was truly grassroots or managed, the starting point for the research was on Facebook—the dominant social media platform in the Philippines in 2016 for online activity during the campaign season. Among the many dedicated Facebook groups for Duterte, I chose the two largest and most active samples: one based in Hong Kong (HK) and the other in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Both locations represent the top destinations for Filipino labor migrants. Given that the information obtained

[43] Daniel Kreiss, *Taking Our Country Back: The Crafting of Networked Politics from Howard Dean to Barack Obama* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012): 194, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199782536.001.0001
[44] Ong and Cabañes, "Architects of Networked Disinformation," 28.
[45] Ibid., 45-60.
[46] Sinpeng, Gueorguiev, and Arugay, "Strong Fans, Weak Campaigns," 6-17.

from Facebook on these two groups is vast, implying they are both very active Facebook groups, I narrowed down my data in two ways. First, I specifically considered group members' activities in these two Facebook groups between March 28 and May 9, when Duterte began to take the lead in social weather stations, thus providing six full weeks of data.[47] I then logged all posts and comments, which I will call engagements, between that timeline that mention the candidates' names, namely "Duterte," "Poe," "Binay," "Roxas," and "Defensor," and all posts that mention "Election(s)," "President," and "2016." I recorded the number of "likes" for all the posts, chronologically ordering all the information based on the date they were posted and documented the gender of the user. I excluded all engagements that were reposted, meaning they were shared with Facebook's "share" feature from another profile, page, or group. Posts that also explicitly said "repost" or "reposted" but mentioned any or a combination of these words were also excluded, because I sought to follow what group members in these two separate groups thought and said themselves.

In this way, I approached sifting through the data like an ethnography, being cognizant of who had made the post, when they posted, and in what context they were making such statements online. While there is much to be learned from the reposted content, like the spread of disinformation or the success of Duterte's official campaign, limitations on Facebook prevented me from tracing the direct origins of these materials along with their reach. Moreover there is also something to be said about reposting versus posting. Reposting can be easier than coming up with an original post and users can also repost without fully reading or comprehending the content of a post.

Data Analysis

Within the six-week capture period, I logged 92 engagements into a spreadsheet for the UAE cohort and 49 for Hong Kong, which comprises a total of 141 documents, written in Tagalog, English, or a mix

[47] "Group members" are users who have added themselves into the group either to follow group posts or engage in posting, sharing, commenting and liking in the group.

of the two. I translated all engagements made in Tagalog. With the data gathered, I conducted a thematic analysis, a method for "systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insights into patterns of meanings (themes) across a data set."[48] By using a thematic analysis, it accounts for a more systematic organization of implicit and explicit ideas generated during coding. Coding is the process involved in allocating a word or short phrase that "symbolically assigns a summative, salient [...] or evocative attribute for a portion of language based or visual data."[49] I went through three stages of coding: two stages for the first cycle to summarize data segments and one stage of coding for the second cycle to group those summaries into smaller categories.[50] I coded three times to ensure I was both familiar with the data and to be as thorough as possible in my inferential codes. As part of the first cycle, the first two rounds of coding were done manually on a spreadsheet, consisting of verbatim coding that captures terms and concepts drawn from the Facebook users' words.[51] The second round of coding I used was concept coding where I looked beyond the text and assigned words or phrases that represent a broader meaning to them.[52] Finally, I generated themes using the qualitative software *NVivo* in the third round of coding, which was part of the second cycle.

For the final round, I merged the data from Hong Kong and UAE, as the first two rounds produced similar results in terms of emergent themes and concepts and were also matching in terms of when themes emerged. Moreover, the group structures were also similar in that certain intermediaries led conversations and initiatives.[53] Although I had initially

[48] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Chapter 4: Thematic Analysis," in *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology: Research Designs: Quantitative, Qualitative, Neuropsychological, and Biological*, vol. 2 (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2012): 57, https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-004.

[49] Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2015): 4.

[50] Ibid., 236.

[51] Ibid., 106.

[52] Ibid., 120.

[53] I use the term *intermediaries* for those individuals who repost more frequently than the average user and get high traffic of likes and shares on their shared content.

planned to analyze the two data sets, I instead compared the six weeks by coding each merged week separately to maintain a comparative point of view. I did a patterned coding, which is more explanatory or inferential and begins to identify emergent themes by pulling together the material from the first two rounds of coding into a more "parsimonious unit of analysis."[54] *NVivo* allowed me to systematically code, order, and track the emergent themes throughout the six-week period and helped visualize and quantify the frequency of themes each week. Besides gathering data to answer the "why" of my research question, I provided some explanatory mechanism of "how" OFW's were mobilizing behind Duterte online and taking their support offline as well. By comparing across the weeks, logging who made the post or comment, and keeping track of the other activities within the Facebook groups, I was able to trace when, why, and how themes emerged.

Findings and Analysis

Thematic Findings: A Mixed Bag of Motivations

With the data gathered from the two Facebook groups, I identified six prominent themes that emerged across the six weeks: democratic deficit, problems of country, relatability, experience and ability, patriotism and, political representation. Under all six themes, there are sub-themes coded as "sub-nodes" on *NVivo* that specify a feature of the theme a particular user has cited. This section discusses these themes and their related sub-themes. It aims to highlight the varied motivations and judgments behind Duterte's support, even for OFWs who reflect the so-called "new" middle class of Philippine society. These motivations and the personal ways users articulated their support for Duterte demonstrate that these groups are truly independent in form; these individuals were not paid actors, nor were they buying into a simplistic campaign program. As the following section on (independent) organizing will also show, these group members were not "bots'' or fake account operators, as they also participated in pro-Duterte in-person events.

They are also usually part of the Facebook group's list of "administrators" who maintain the group.

[54] Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 236.

Democratic Deficit

The prevailing theme to emerge from Facebook documents is "democratic deficit," in which issues and fallbacks concerning democratic institutions were coded. These issues include the influence of traditional political elites, the prevalence of corruption, the need for a transition to federalism, media bias, concern over cheating during elections, and finally clientelism. The most prevalent of these issues concerned the influence of traditional political elites, which, according to my analysis, was often blamed for the other sub-themes in this category. Of course, most of these sub-themes are ultimately tied together, especially given Duterte's vehement disdain against corruption by elite politicians that he promised to rectify as the strict "dictator" against those "forces of evil." This sentiment of a "democratic failure" prevailed as a central grievance throughout the six-week period. For instance, popular discontent with elite corruption is highlighted in the following posts:

> Desperate Trapos will use whatever means within their disposal…to perpetuate themselves in power. That explains the pressure on government employees by the admin candidates. But everything has limits! you can fool the people once or twice or even thrice. But you [cannot] fool them all the time! Sawang-sawa na ang sambayanan sa pangongorakot ng pera ng bayan! [Translation: we are over corruption taking away the money of society!] We want decisive change…only Duterte and his party [can] bring that much needed change in the country. (HK, March 31, 2016)

> And then there is Binay, who pretends to care for the masses only to benefit from them personally—to ensure his own family's political and financial future, and so on. (UAE, April 19, 2016)

These posts exhibit the issues of corruption and the dominance of elite *trapos* in Philippine politics at the demise of "the masses" or "*sambayanan*."[55] Such sentiments are unsurprising given the EDSA system's

[55] *Trapos* is a pejorative term used to refer to traditional politicians; *Sambayanan* refers to "the people" and society.

failures that produced fertile conditions for a populist challenger like Duterte. According to Bello, the EDSA project was destroyed by "the deadly combination of elite monopoly and neoliberal economic policies" that perpetuated "a yawning gap between the EDSA Republic's promise of popular empowerment and wealth redistribution and the reality of massive poverty, scandalous inequality, and pervasive corruption."[56] Moreover, while Aquino's *daang matuwid,* or straight path regime, attempted to eliminate corruption, the legitimacy questions that ensued in the latter half of his tenure did not enrich his protégé Roxas' campaign of *ituloy ang daang matuwid* or "continue the straight path." Similarly, the ways in which group members presented their disdain for the elite is particularly compelling. While many group members were keen to bolster their candidate's platform, they were simultaneously aggressive in spewing incriminating comments against the other candidates and their allies. Take, for example, the following excerpts from different comments,

> Ako po si Mar Roxas, lagging kulelat…ako ay credit grabber, inutil, epal, sinungaling, at palpak sa trabaho lang…Dadaya-in ko ang election gaming ang Hocus PCOS Machines. [Translation: I am Mar Roxas, always weak/last…I am a credit grabber, useless, annoying/stupid, liar, and a failure at work…I am going to cheat the election using the Hocus PCOS Machines.] (HK, March 31, 2016)

> Mar Roxas is the king of disaster and the kingdomless king because he is a shameful insensitive leader. He must be thrown out of this planet. (HK, April 3, 2016)

> Roxas and Binay are banking much with their political machines. Grace, with her secret entities. (UAE, April 14, 2016)

> Look how, the proverbial "coñio" boy, Mar tries so hard to look like the masses, yet fails miserably—awkward & internally directionless. (UAE, April 19, 2016)

This is complementary to the finding that Duterte's supporters were

[56] Walden Bello, "Rodrigo Duterte: A Fascist Original," *Transnational Institute*, January 19, 2017, https://www.tni.org/en/article/rodrigo-duterte-a-fascist-original

heavily active, "armed with convictions and ready to fight for their champion" online despite Duterte's weak engagement with them.[57] Their behaviors reflected the official campaign's methods of using media firms, paying influencers, and utilizing up to two million fake account operators equipped to "troll," propagate disinformation, and shape public opinion.[58] However, these group members did so voluntarily and clearly out of their genuine frustrations over the elites' grip over Filipino politics and their liability for much of the country's democratic failures. Simultaneously, their actions were just as aggressive as the tactics of Duterte's official campaign, suggesting that the activities of these independent users drew inspiration from the official campaign.

Other Problems

The second-most dominant motivation that I identified throughout the analysis concerns other problems of the country, classified as issues beyond democratic processes. The sub-themes that were brought up include: law and order, under which crime and drugs fall; poverty; rebel groups; and failing infrastructure. Duterte's message to eradicate crime and drugs in the country is a recurrent trend in the analysis, where law and order remains the top concern listed under the theme. Furthermore, Duterte is presented as the only candidate able to solve burgeoning problems associated with criminality and drug use. The following post provides an example of this:

> Mayor Duterte needs not the Philippines to become its president, but rather the Philippines needs mayor Duterte because he is the only person who can solve the perennial problem of shabu and other illegal drugs, fearless criminals, and decent corrupt govt. officials!!! (UAE, April 27, 2016)

However, the analysis reveals how crime and drugs were not nearly as frequently cited by group members compared to the sub-themes under democratic deficits like corruption and the influence of the elites in Philippine political life. Surprisingly, the findings are not necessari-

[57] Sinpeng, Gueorguiev, and Arugay, "Strong Fans, Weak Campaigns," 13.
[58] Ong and Cabañes, "Architects of Networked Disinformation," 13.

ly congruent with the common conception that illegal drugs and crime were "the most important" issue concerning voters, particularly for OFWs.[59] This is not to dismiss the importance that the message of law and order played in the 2016 election, as it unraveled and traversed "latent anxieties" people held over crime and the use of drugs.[60] At the same time, democratic issues like corruption might be a more personal and pressing concern for OFWs, who have, after all, left their families and uprooted their lives back in the Philippines to pursue more lucrative work abroad, and who expect a "secure" political environment for their families back home. As Teehankee put it, "the Duterte phenomenon" was a protest of the emerging middle class who "have suffered from lack of public service…and silently witnessed their tax money siphoned by corruption despite promises of improved governance."[61] Because Duterte fashioned corruption and elite monopoly as a detriment of citizens, it is not difficult to envisage why middle-class voters who have not reaped the benefits of economic growth prioritized the issue of democratic deficits.

Relatability

Among the other themes to emerge from the analysis is Duterte's relatability, with varying comments that refer to either his language, action(s), or both. What is most intriguing here is users' perception of Duterte as a "simple" man who has the "rare quality" of being able to solve the country's most pressing issues. He is framed as a man for "the people," as he is "from" the people and wholly separate from those political elites, which is revealed to be one of the two groups' most significant concerns. OFWs on the Facebook groups alluded to his crass and unfiltered language, charisma, humor, and supposed simplicity juxtaposed to other "elitist" candidates. A few examples of these engagements include:

> He is not that sophisticated. He is that rarity – a plainspoken man who wants the world to work for everyone. Therein lies his greatness. He is an ordinary man with ordinary dreams – the dream of a better life. (UAE, March 30, 2016)

> The favourite past time of Mayor Rody Duterte...He loves to sing his favourite songs <3 #VoteDuterteCayetano #JustDuit #Du30 (UAE, April 7, 2016)

> Every time he talks about his country and the change he wants to bring, he is very sincere. Para siyang stand-up comedian bago magstart yung 2nd debate sa TV-5…nakakatawa [Translation: He is like a stand-up comedian before the 2nd debate started on TV05] (UAE, May 7, 2016)

> As things stand now, however the masses appear to have decided to go for this man who talks the language of the poor and who carried the dreams of the neglected. (UAE, April 29, 2016)

As evidenced by the engagements, Duterte is perceived as a kind of "outsider" to politics who talks and acts like any average Filipino—he sings his favorite songs, he is funny, and he "dreams of a better life" like any aspirant OFW. As Duterte espouses such a demeanor, he projects himself as "an ordinary person with extraordinary attributes," able to forge a personal relationship with the people as one not wholly aloof to the realities of those whom politicians should serve.[62] Whether he is seen as a kind of comedic politician or a "social bandit," [63] there is no doubt that his unique charisma easily catches people's attention. Without relegating Duterte's success to merely a performance that deceived his supporters, Duterte as a political figure similarly benefits from a culture wherein entertainment media and politics converge—not unique to the Philippines but comparable to the experiences of the US's Trump or Italy's Berlusconi.[64] In this analogy, Duterte mirrors characters frequently seen in *te-*

[59] Holmes, "The Dark Side of Electoralism," 32.
[60] Curato, "Politics of Anxiety, Politics of Hope," 98-99.
[61] Julio C. Teehankee, "Was Duterte's Rise Inevitable?" in *A Duterte Reader*, 72-73.
[62] Francisco, Panizza, *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy* (New York, NY: Verso, 2005): 21.
[63] Kusaka, "Bandit Grabbed the State," 59.
[64] Anna C. Pertierra, "Celebrity Politics and Televisual Melodrama in the Age of Duterte," in *A Duterte Reader,* 219-227.

leserye soap operas, in being able to win the electorate's feelings. In this respect, Duterte supporters are frequently described by elites as lacking common sense, gullible, and lazy. However, on a greater scale, Duterte's appeal based on his relatability speaks more to the inaccessibility of traditional politicians and institutions for the regular citizen—again symptomatic of the country's elite democracy.

Experience and Ability

Frequently cited by Facebook users, Duterte's experience and ability proves compelling for OFWs; such sub-themes incorporate Davao city, clean track-record, and interestingly, religion. Under this theme, Duterte is revered as someone who has an uncommonly successful record of bringing transformational and positive change compared to the other candidates—exemplified by his campaign promise that "change is coming." Users have frequently cited the "success story" of Davao city as heralding a new wave of progress for the Philippines. Nevertheless, while mentions of Duterte's tight grip over Davao and his consequent successes of the city were common, none of the users referred to the glaring trade-offs that come with Duterte's leadership, which among other things, is notorious for its disregard of the law and human rights. Problematically, Duterte is associated with vigilante killings perpetrated by the elusive Davao Death Squad (DDS). Nonetheless, the UAE Facebook group and other OFWs-for-Duterte groups on social media reference DDS in their group titles as "Duterte Die-Hard Supporters."

Moreover, the image of a peaceful and "world-class" Davao city does not resemble reality. Instead, the rhetoric of "law and order" is a mirage that detracts from a "concealed but amplified state terror," aimed at achieving complete political control.[65] The notion that Duterte maintains a "clean track record" compared to other candidates similarly deviates from the truth. Compared to the electoral violence in other parts of the Philippines that follow a pattern linked to election cycles and tied to the emergence and entrenchment of political dynasties, the same trend does

[65] Sol Iglesias, "The Duterte Playbook," *New Naratif,* September 9, 2017, https://newnaratif.com/research/the-duterte-playbook/

not follow in Davao. Instead, political violence is perpetrated against unaffiliated civilians, largely lacking political or revolutionary ties.[66] As such, Davao strikes one as a safe location, yet state violence targets a disorganized and fragmented urban population, with no possible means to fight back, and enables Duterte to operate as its "boss" with impunity.[67] Thus, it comes as no surprise that none of the Facebook users mentioned anything regarding the repercussions of a Duterte presidency because his project in Davao was, in itself, operating against the people covertly. Take, for example, the following engagement that idealizes his mayorship in Davao:

> I cannot tell you about the personal morality of Mayor Duterte. I can tell you what he has publicly done—he has turned a backwater city into a global benchmark. And if he wanted to steal us blind, he would have left traces by now. (UAE, March 30, 2016)

This engagement highlights the "efficacy" of Duterte's efforts to transform Davao, without scrutinizing the victims of his punitive methods. However, such posts, some of which employed trolling, did recognize and magnify the "more visible" shortcomings of traditional political elites.

Along with his mayorship in Davao, this portion of analysis recognizes the user's perception of Duterte's "divine intervention" that guides and helps Duterte. This perception is at odds with Duterte's unfavorable relationship with the Catholic church and inconsistent with his punitive history. Consider the comment, "I'd rather support this 'sinner' who depends on the grace of God than those religious leaders and self-righteous politicians who depend on themselves" (UAE, May 7, 2016) or the comment, "this is the God Jesus Christ destiny for him and for all our fellow Filipino's and for the Philippine country" (UAE, March 28, 2016). Supporting Duterte, at least for some of the users, is "not just a politi-

[66] Ibid.

[67] John T. Sidel, *Capital, Coercion, and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999): 6.

cal choice but also a religious one."[68] While full of irony, Cornelio and Media point out that some of Duterte's supporters "welcome a higher purpose in Duterte's War on Drugs" as it makes Filipinos "realize their moral depravity."[69]

Patriotism

The theme of patriotism was similarly prevalent among some users, wherein the sub-themes of a shared vision for the country, love of country, and sense of sacrifice were articulated. This patriotism is bi-directional, suggesting that voting for Duterte is a signal of their patriotism, while others mentioned Duterte's patriotism as highly important. Consider the following comments that invoke their love and shared vision for the country:

> I will cast my vote for Duterte…For the nation…for the peace and order…and for the safety of my granddaughter. (HK, April 18, 2016)

> But I would rather have him because I know he will make us love our country more and become again proud of [our] country. (UAE, April, 18, 2016)

These engagements suggest a kind of service and love for their country, pointing that some of Duterte's supporters are in fact "activated" and want to take democracy back in their hands. On the other hand, other engagements reference to Duterte's patriotism:

> Waving and kissing the Philippine flag in his political rallies, he urges all sectors and factions of society to support his agenda for peace and nation building. Surprisingly, the response of the masses is overwhelming. Indeed, another revolution has dawned—a revolution for Radical Change! You can never win the [hearts] of DU30's supporters, why? Because we are die hard true. Our Candidate is a true person and possess a true leadership, concern, bravery and love for our country. (UAE, April 18, 2016)

[68] Jayceel Cornelio and Erron Media, "Duterte's Enduring Popularity Is Not Just a Political Choice—It Is Also Religious," *New Mandala*, September 3, 2018, https://www.newmandala.org/dutertes-enduring-popularity-not-just-political-choice-also-religious/
[69] Ibid.

Political Representation

Finally, the last theme to emerge of the thematic analysis is political representation, under which present two general sub-themes: act of political activity, and OFW interests. Although quite general, this theme references instances where users mention either their feelings of "finally" being represented by an appropriate candidate or instances where they reference feelings of being democratically "activated" by Duterte as "the first presidentiable who sparked desire in every OFW's heart to participate actively in an election" (UAE, April 23, 2016). Considering the grassroots mobilization that occurred offline during Duterte's campaign, the findings online do not deviate from what has been recorded in various ethnographic works, which traced offline engagement with Duterte.[70] What is thought-provoking is the varying sorts of organizing online that took place for organizing offline—such as carpooling arrangements to vote at the consulate or volunteering to canvas and protect the vote at the consulate—which will be discussed further in the next section.

On the other hand, there were those seemingly futile actions that users shared online as a sign of political action. Take, for example, a male user who included a video of himself endorsing Duterte in his security guard outfit in UAE, with the post's caption reading "please [encourage] everyone to post a video for Duterte/Cayetano and consider this as our commitment for them for the sake of our beloved Philippines." The accessibility of social media has allowed OFWs abroad to share their support for Duterte and unite to achieve their varied interests.

Independent Organizing of "Die-Hard" Supporters

One of the primary inspirations for this article were the videos shared on my feed by OFWs of *other* OFWs who were independently congre-

[70] It has also been found that OFWs sent money back home for funding paraphernalia like wristbands for Duterte's campaign. Curato, "Politics of Anxiety, Politics of Hope," 104.

gating in public spaces to show support and solidarity for Duterte's presidential bid. These various "movements" were markedly less formal than typical, Filipino campaign rallies. These in-person events were independently organized, operating freely from the official campaign. Nevertheless, the only caveat is that these groups were influenced by online activist leadership that cohesively tie the group's solidarity to a more robust agenda. Rather than these Facebook groups existing as amorphous or completely horizontal, activists coalesce around the professionalized side of online electoral campaigning, where certain actors dictate the course of the conversation, mobilize the group's members, and create trends and diversions. Finally, of the numerous groups for OFWs that exist on Facebook, these groups were very specific in their causes, that is, to mobilize behind Duterte's campaign.

While the first half of data analyzes the mixed motivations of OFWs, looking beyond the sample engagements reveals that these intermediaries were vital in fuelling support for Duterte at the expense of his opponents. This demonstrates, in part, *how* it was that they mobilized online. These key intermediaries are those who post and repost more frequently than the average user, achieving a high traffic of likes and shares on their content. Generally, they are involved as the Facebook group's list of "administrators" who pick and choose who can remain in these groups, delete comments and posts of other group members, and change the group title. While unlike social media "influencers" with considerable personal popularity, these average individuals retained the same "influence" over the group members. They invigorated mobilization by (1) organizing individuals online to campaign for Duterte offline, and by (2) using diversionary tactics and fake news to mobilize public opinion. In short, they *amplified* support and *inflamed* frustrations of other group members, employing an amalgamation of both appropriate and inappropriate social media strategies.

Terms such as "manipulating" or "management" are not applicable to this situation, as Duterte's official campaign does not sponsor their activities. Nevertheless, this paper recognizes that these intermediaries do not operate in a vacuum and their Facebook activities are unavoidably

linked to the success of the social media efforts of Duterte's official campaign.[71] To alleviate this, I delineate between those paid actors who set out to mobilize public opinion versus grassroots intermediaries who, while taking inspiration from the official campaign, still operated and disseminated information in "unpredictable ways," as acknowledged by Ong and Cabañes' study.[72] Finally, these observations support the notion that Duterte has "strong fans," who do not require their leader's attention and instead draw inspiration from varied personal motivations explained above.

Overseeing Offline Mobilization

By distinguishing between regular group members and mediators, online demographics demonstrate that most users are considered independent and voluntary members, complemented by intermediaries who are the most active in publicizing pro-Duterte content. One of the intermediaries' tactics is encouraging fellow group members to mobilize their support offline. Take the following engagements from the same intermediary from the UAE:

> DDS Dubai supporters, we need volunteers in our Consulate…Poll Watchers daily depends in your day off or your day available who can guide people outside to vote and can secretly campaign for Duterte and party. We ask as well from those volunteers who has a car just to transport some volunteers who want to vote but it is inconvenient to them in going to our Consulate. We ask also for those Volunteers who can provide food, snacks for our Pollwatchers there who stays 12 hrs to watch and protect Duterte's Votes. Please comment here for those who are willing to volunteer for Duterte… Good News for today…DUTERTE now lead in recent SWS survey. (April 11, 2016)

> Here in UAE, Many OFWs flocking to embassy and consulate bringing foods for poll watchers and volunteers. (April 12, 2016)

[71] Pia Ranada, "Over 600,000 OFWs Mobilizing for Duterte Campaign," *Rappler*, January 30, 2016, https://www.rappler.com/nation/propaganda-war-weaponizing-internet
[72] Ong and Cabañes, "Architects of Networked Disinformation," 28.

> We encourage Duterte Supporters with vehicles in Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Ras Al Khaimah to carpool voting. Visit to the Philippine Consulate in Dubai to VOTE! (April 23, 2016)

> We need a DDS Volunteer Driver who can drive the van or coaster from 10 am to 5 pm from Rimal Hotel in Deira to our Philippine Consulate to transport people if ever there are excess voters who line up outside the voting center to avoid stay for long hours on queue under the extreme heat of the sun while waiting to vote. (April 28, 2016)

Compared to the posts of non-intermediaries, these posts by intermediaries accumulated more likes, shares, and comments than any other posts. In the case of UAE, the intermediaries' efforts proved successful. For instance, group members gleefully broadcasted taking part in these arrangements, such as going to the consulate as a group to cast their ballots. Similarly, soliciting volunteers involved ordinary group members demonstrating support in the comment sections, posting their personal cell phone numbers to be contacted for volunteering and proclaiming total support for Duterte's campaign. These events, by solidifying group camaraderie offline among attendees, encourage an online feedback-loop, whereby attendees, who post images and videos of these events, *thrust more momentum* to both Duterte's official and unofficial campaigns. This phenomenon disproves an oversimplified account that limits the work of generating "hype" and excitement to his official campaign. Moreover, while these activities could have occurred without these intermediaries, in the 2016 election, the organizational capacity of attendees was essential for these events, with organizers seeming to work tirelessly, almost as if it were a full-time job, to maintain the campaign's inertia. Besides mobilizing individuals, these agents provided useful instructions for group members regarding proper conduct at the consulate, including not to carry or wear campaign paraphernalia, and how to "protect" their votes.

For the Hong Kong Facebook group, although intermediaries did not mobilize voting drives to consulates, there were posts from similar actors who instructed and informed on various campaigns around the

city. One such post from an intermediary, included information regarding an upcoming Christmas potluck open to all Duterte supporters. This post generated over 450 likes and over 50 comments. The mediator outlined that Duterte would be chiming in on the celebration via phone to bid his greetings to his supporters. While the event's affiliations to Duterte's campaign are unknown, the mediator encouraged members to bring their own food and invite their friends, appearing more "organic" and informal. In both Facebook groups, OFWs were able to mobilize and achieve solidarity in their movements offline via the efforts of these intermediaries. In particular, it challenges the notion that online political campaigns require professional work in order to be engaging and successful. Considering that Duterte's social media campaign did not interact closely with constituents online,[73] the motivations behind independent campaigners on social media could have been enough reason for them to be vigorously involved in group organization.

Future research into both HK and UAE, as well as other OFWs-for-Duterte, will likely analyze (1) whether or not these intermediaries worked together as a coordinated unit within and between different Facebook groups; (2) what the motivations are for these key intermediaries to be doing more work than the average group member; and (3) the nature of group camaraderie generated by these online-offline movements and how that may be a catalyst for some OFW group members to partake in future online-offline activities. Finally, I do not eliminate the possibility that the seemingly organic nature of these campaigns may mask more conniving and covert practices between intermediaries and the official campaign.

Diversionary Tactics and Fake News

Besides offline mobilization, intermediaries played a significant role in cultivating a deeper message of cohesion online by pushing certain subjects through diversionary tactics[74] and circulating fake news. These

[73] Sinpeng, Gueorguiev, and Arugay, "Strong Fans, Weak Campaigns," 10.

[74] Diversionary tactics are typically used by digital influencers that seek to "change the course of a narrative or reframe an issue" when they undermine the branding of a

independent actors worked similarly to Duterte's professional online campaign organizers in the strategies they employed.[75] The thematic analysis reveals that select themes were amplified in the six-week period—congruent to emergent events in Philippine politics. Similarly, it finds that this amplification was perpetuated by intermediaries. For example, when news broke over the rape joke Duterte made during a campaign rally on April 12, 2016, suggesting he "should have been first" in the gang rape that took place in 1989, intermediaries from both the UAE and HK Facebook groups quickly veered the topic away from the controversy. Rather than focusing on the repercussions of his sentiment, which was widely criticized by women and human rights organizations, the group had diverted the subject to the "relatability" of Duterte, particularly in his language. This absolved Duterte of his mistake, painting a picture of him as someone who, just like "the people," does not always think twice about what they say.

Their diversion was so successful that Duterte's relatability, specifically his "language," came up in week 4 (between April 18-24) as a primary theme, which salvaged, if not strengthened, his image. In the words of one group member from UAE, his "flaws make him unique [compared] to the traditional political failures" (April 21, 2016). The issue was instead brushed aside as "a joke that became a big deal only because it [was] election time" (Hong Kong, April 19, 2016). Group mediators fuelled such perceptions at the onset of the issue's emergence with comments that have "framed" the issue as something minimal and indicative of Duterte's greatness. Consider these excerpts from two different intermediaries, the first from UAE garnered 77 likes and the second from HK acquired 366 likes:

> His "rape comment" may have been made in bad taste, but in the Philippines…a "goody-goody" image doesn't translate into real improvement & security (April 19, 2016)

client developed by strategists. Ong and Cabañes, "Architects of Networked Disinformation," 56.

[75] *See* Bradshaw and Howard, "Troops, Trolls and Troublemakers"; Ong and Cabañes, "Architects of Networked Disinformation."

> Blackpropaganda and low class of issue will not bring us (Duterte supporters) down…in fact, we multiply… (April 18, 2019)

The virality of this diversion seeped into week 5 (April 25-May 1) with his supporters fervently defending Duterte, and condemning the media that continued to "deliberately take [his] statements [to] sensationalize them [and] destroy [his] image" (April 25, 2016). In this way, the narrative of relatability successfully detracted negative attention away from the controversy, shifting the negative attention towards the media, which is among the principal critics of Duterte and his supporters. In both HK and UAE groups, media bias remains a pressing concern regarding democratic deficits that has been consistently poised as a symptom of elite control of politics.

Another tactic of grassroots intermediaries in bolstering Duterte is the circulation of fake news, which the other group users believe and circulate. While there are countless examples in the Facebook groups of such occurrences, the alarm over the Precinct Count Optical Scanners (PCOS), machines that read ballots, dominated the analysis. Public alarm regarding the machines reached its peak in Week 6, which spans May 2 – 9, 2016. This concern had already proliferated prior to this week, from intermediaries, personal Facebook accounts, and third-party groups, as early as October 2015. That said, intermediaries encouraged this spread with alarmist instructions such as: "The cheating will be inside the voting machine…I repeat don't leave the precinct if [your] receipt is wrong!!" (UAE, May 4, 2016) or a popular repost from an intermediary in Hong Kong that reads "fight the evil designs of hocus PCOS" (HK, May 1, 2016).[76] The doom-laden messaging was echoed by group users who had bought into the issue and took on the project to broadcast warnings themselves, like, "For Pilipinos OFW who [want] change for the better […] just to inform 20 million ballots are already programmed [for] Mar Roxas and Leni Robredo" (HK, May 7, 2017).

[76] Reposts were not included in the thematic analysis but included here for demonstrative purposes.

Interestingly, this warning was replicated in the UAE as well, demonstrating that group members are either (1) deriving their information from third-party groups and reposting them without giving credit or (2) are accounts operated by fake actors. Simultaneously, it is unclear whether or not these grassroots intermediaries produce fake news or merely disseminate them from other channels. This is consistent with Ong and Cabañes' findings that tracking those responsible for misinformation is difficult, as it can emanate from the professionalized side as well as "real supporters," which in turn makes accountability "perpetually displac[ed]."[77] However, intermediary use of fake news undoubtedly convinces and signals other group members to do the same, as intermediaries carry a form of authoritative weight with their popularity and group status as an administrator.

In unpacking a sliver of the fervent online support for Duterte in the 2016 elections, this research has aimed to show that not all of his supporters online were simply "managed" by tech-savvy campaign strategists—as is perpetuated by public conclusions. Instead, in the case of OFW's rallying behind Duterte, social media provided an avenue for individuals to voice their frustrations and discontents, becoming more involved in the political process. Activities such as ensuring their votes are cast and counted fairly are all promising signs towards more democratic participation. However, this research demonstrates how easily the conversation could be dominated by narratives, true or false, depending on their virality and whoever was making the post. These trends detract from Facebook's initial mission to "make the world more open and connected," and instead reveals the toxicity of an open forum that is factually unverified and adequately moderated by its creators. Problematically, Facebook's algorithm encourages the proliferation of sensationalist posts, based on the counts of likes and comments. In this way, the truth rests not in facts but popularity. As such, while individuals may be more politically engaged and are free to join in on the conversation, there are inevitably architects or intermediaries that shape its course.

[77] Ong and Cabañes, "Architects of Networked Disinformation," 42.

Conclusion

Through a thematic analysis and cognizance of user activities in two third-party Facebook groups dedicated to Duterte's campaign, three findings emerged. First, it identifies that motivations for supporting Duterte are a "mixed-bag" and not as simplistic as his project for "real change" vis-à-vis a focus on corruption, crime, and drugs. Second, these groups were grassroots in form as users joined freely and championed Duterte in individualized ways. Finally, it recognizes that while the groups are grassroots, select independent intermediaries helped to mold group behaviors online and offline via organizing in-person events, using diversionary tactics, and propagating fake news. The third-party groups' organization speaks to the strengths of Duterte's official campaign.

With that said, the research is not without its limitations. In analyzing how OFWs mobilized online, perhaps the best approach would have been to examine similar groups and record every single post since their inception. The current data sample is not indicative of what the other third-party groups for Duterte on Facebook may have been doing (i.e. if they follow similar group structures and tactics). However, looking at the posts in these two Facebook groups provides an avenue from which to begin extrapolating how some of these third-party groups functioned, which has not yet been the focus of any major research project. Thirdly, a large limitation of the research is on the validity of the codes themselves, as I coded all documents alone. I aimed to remedy this by doing the coding three times, to review, replace, or (in)validate initial codes.

The findings of the research, while specific to electoral campaigning in the Philippines, contribute to the growing body of literature on the intersection between digital communication technologies and politics—a field that is ever-expanding and increasing in complexity. It highlights the double-edged sword of DCTs as a complex avenue through which the public can participate beyond the rigid boundaries of liberal democracies yet exacerbate spectacle-driven politics in ways incomprehensible but damaging to most citizens. As a result of online participation, cit-

izens' public information can be seized and weaponized against their own interests unbeknown to them. In the Philippines, while Duterte's online supporters may ultimately deepen political divides, their engagement reveals that the Internet, much like politics, is a site of contest, though one not predicated on the idea that politics *only* lies in the legislature.

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Brexit: A Fluke or the Future of British Conservatism? Analyzing the Post-Brexit Conservative Party's Populist Status Quo

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Abstract

The Brexit vote—the British people's vote to leave the European Union in 2016—represents the outcome of a successful populist movement.[1] More recently, the Conservative Party's staggering 2019 electoral success demonstrated that the populist "Get Brexit Done" message remains popular among both traditional Conservatives and broad swaths of the working class in former Labour Party strongholds. This study aims to explain the Conservative Party's marked change in rhetoric and policy, as well as factional shifts within the halls of Westminster, in response to the ongoing Brexit negotiations. While some scholars look at the supply-side causes of populism (elites and political parties) and others look at the demand-side causes (the voters), this study applies a third school of thought that examines the relationship between supply and demand by analyzing a series of interviews with Conservative Party staff as well as public opinion polling. In doing so, the study concludes that there has

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been a deep, reciprocal, and simultaneous onset of populist Euroscepticism within both the Conservative Party and the working class that has structurally re-aligned the Conservative Party for decades to come, from more 'libertarian' to more 'authoritarian' in nature. A feedback loop between the new Conservative base and the Conservative Party has rendered and reciprocated a new mentality among voters. This research contributes to the existing literature as an example of the aftermath of populist movements when both elites and voters are able to forge cooperative relationships to achieve their goals.

Introduction

Since the 2007-2008 global financial crisis and the Great Recession, nations have persevered by undertaking the difficult process of economic recovery together. The European Union and its member states, through unprecedented unity and communication, created stimulus packages and financial reforms that have since lowered unemployment levels, raised GDP per capita, and reinvigorated European businesses and the financial sector.[2] However, despite these recent gains, this topline analysis does not account for the significant portion of EU citizens who have lost faith in the European unity project that the economic downturn fueled.[3] The strict austerity measures imposed upon European governments were perceived as demeaning and counterproductive to those out of work. Meanwhile, increased immigration from the Middle East and North Africa culminated in the Syrian refugee crisis of 2015 and provoked a wave of nativism.[4] Rising economic anxiety, increasing nationalist sentiments, and Euroscepticism granted savvy populist movements across the continent newfound electoral success in the

[2] "Eurostat Economic Indicators," report, *Eurostat*, European Union, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/economy/desktop/index.html.
[3] Jean-Claude Juncker, "President Juncker Delivers State of the Union Address 2017," *European Commission*, September 13, 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_17_3165; Alina Polyakova and Anton Shekhovtsov, "On The Rise: Europe's Fringe Right," *World Affairs* 179.1 (2016): 70-80, https://doi.org/10.1177/0043820016662746
[4] Ibid., 71.

2014 European Parliament elections.[5] In the same year, representatives of far-right parties, who had not seen significant electoral success since their modern debuts in the 1980s, began entering national parliaments and governments at significantly higher rates.[6] In the United Kingdom, such a movement resulted in the Brexit movement, the successful Leave Campaign, and the country's formal exit from the European Union on December 31st, 2020.

Since the end of World War II, European governments have erected the European Union and implemented increasingly outward-facing foreign policies to foster a cohesive European identity, economic interdependence, and a common supranational policy outlook. Modern European populist movements represent the most pressing challenge to the prevailing system of liberal democracy to date, one which will determine the direction of Europe for decades. The movement's success or failure will define Europe's future policy positions in immigration, the treatment of minorities, and the continued growth of the European Union project. As such, the issue at hand warrants significant scholarly study. Contemporary populist parties appeal to a narrative of "the people" against "European elites," and a need for a "national renaissance" in which domestic policies, and national traditions, reassert themselves over those of Brussels.[7] As such, the brand of European populism that is successful today is partly nationalist and quite Eurosceptic. In response to the current populist wave that has emerged on the political right today, mainstream conservative parties have shifted their policies and rhetoric further towards the far-right to share in this electoral success.[8]

[5] Daphne Halikiopoulou and Sofia Vasilopoulou, "Support for the Far Right in the 2014 European Parliament Elections: A Comparative Perspective," *The Political Quarterly* 85.3 (2014): 285–88, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923x.12102
[6] Matt Golder, "Far Right Parties in Europe," *Annual Review of Political Science* 19.1 (2016): 477–97, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-042814-012441
[7] Yascha Mounk, "Pitchfork Politics: The Populist Threat to Liberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* 93.5 (2014): 29-31, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24483300
[8] Slawomir Sierakowski. "In Europe, the Only Choice Is Right or Far-Right," *Foreign Policy Magazine*, May 21, 2018, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/21/in-europe-the-only-choice-is-right-or-far-right/

Across Europe, the post-industrial transition of manufacturing economies to service economies has threatened the traditional industrial base of working-class laborers and their traditional ways of life. This is especially true in Northern England, a formerly vibrant industrial manufacturing hub that currently faces job scarcity and stagnant incomes as a result of the channeling of wealth toward major cities at the cost of traditional, rural ways of life.[9] While left-wing political parties such as the British Labour Party had traditionally received high electoral support from working class demographics, their demand-side interests remained unfulfilled and disillusioned voters have begun to turn elsewhere, to far-right parties like the UK Independence Party (UKIP). The resulting wave of populism, nationalism, and anti-institutionalism has manifested as Euroscepticism. To address this topic, I analyzed Brexit, the British case of withdrawal from the United Kingdom, and its impact on the political party that supported it—the Conservative Party.

This modern far-right populism found its footing quite recently and has grown at an explosive rate. Additionally, due to the recency of the Brexit vote and the ongoing nature of the post-Brexit years, scholarship has not fully explored the evolution of this case. Analysis of European populist political parties has not fully accounted for Europe's present-day supranationalism and interdependence. The literature on modern European populism and nationalism discusses supply-side[10] and demand-side[11] factors contributing to the promotion and adoption of populism, with an emerging scholarly consensus that demand-side factors are more impactful.[12] However, this consensus ought to be, and has already been,

[9] Italo Colantone and Piero Stanig, "The Surge of Economic Nationalism in Western Europe," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 33.4 (2019): 128–51, https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.33.4.128

[10] According to Halikiopoulou et al., supply-side factors are "the ways in which parties use nationalism strategically in an attempt to broaden their appeal by presenting themselves as legitimate to large sections of the population."

[11] According to Halikiopoulou et al., demand-side factors are the grievances and social cleavages that create demand for far-right parties.

[12] Daphne Halikiopoulou and Tim Vlandas, "What Is New and What Is Nationalist about Europe's New Nationalism? Explaining the Rise of the Far Right in Europe," *Nations and Nationalism* 25.2 (2019): 409–34, https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12515

questioned: a focus on just the supply-side or the demand-side does not account for the "inherent interaction between supply and demand" that determines far-right parties' electoral and political success.[13] As a result, scholars have begun to develop a new school of thought, which I call the "Third Way" school of thought. Using the "Third Way" framework, scholars seek to examine the relationship between supply and demand in order to investigate not just populism's antecedents, but also how those antecedents play out in the dynamics of populism. This paper applies the "Third Way" framework to the Brexit case, exploring the way that the British Conservative Party has been impacted by the populism that it has both supplied to the public and absorbed from public demands.

So why has the Conservative Party changed so markedly in the years following the Brexit referendum, and what explains the Party's rhetorical and general policy changes as well as its factional shifts? Through interviews with affiliates of the Conservative Party, I find evidence of a set of conditions that came together in a perfect storm for a political realignment of their Party: emergent populism within the Conservative Party apparatus, and a newfound expanded voter base that has come to include more of the English working class in the conflict-ridden post-Brexit years. Since the onset of the Brexit referendum campaigns, a political and electoral realignment has been propelled by a feedback loop of ideas between the Party, which co-opted populist rhetoric from the UK Independence Party and its newly expanded base, which demanded small-c conservative, non-elite candidates that could "Get Brexit Done" and counter London-centric politics. As such, the composition of the British center-right has fundamentally shifted. Furthermore, with the support of an expanded majority that demands that the Party reject elite politics, the newly-elected Members of Parliament and the Conservative Party's current leadership are upending the party's long-standing libertarian tradition by embracing stricter immigration and tough-on-crime law enforcement policies, while governing with a mandate from voters who demand paternalistic and "Britain-first" economic reforms.

[13] Golder, "Far Right Parties in Europe," 490.

The United Kingdom Today: From Early Euroscepticism to Boris Johnson

Populism is especially pervasive in the United Kingdom, where the victory of the Leave campaign in the Brexit referendum (known officially as the "United Kingdom European Union membership referendum") has upset British politics. According to one of this study's interviewees, the Brexit movement contains many nationalist elements that appealed to British voters who are "naturally small-c conservative," but who may not have historically voted for the Conservative Party, and those who prefer a strong military, no overreach of external forces, and controlled immigration.[14] This is not unique to the UK, nor the British Conservative Party—the ability of a movement to alter a state's politics on this scale using similar rhetoric, politics, and policy is absolutely possible and demonstrably occurring across the world.[15] However, the Brexit movement is an especially salient example of far-right populism because of its success: the Brexit referendum occurred and triggered the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union. As this paper will discuss, the Conservative Party's response to far-right populism has been to embrace Euroscepticism in Parliamentary affairs. Under Prime Minister Boris Johnson's leadership, the Party has signaled that it plans to prioritize national interests and return the United Kingdom to the period of lost glory in the decades immediately following World War II, a time prior to the country's "mistaken experiment" with supranationalism. As such, this case demonstrates a broad shift in the supply- and demand-side factors of nationalism, the way in which populism has affected British politics; is more consequential than in any other country in Europe today. The underlying Eurosceptic sentiments, anti-immigrant attitudes, and economic woes that propelled the Leave campaign have not subsided. Rather, they have become a dominant wing of the mainstream Conservative Party. David Cameron's promise to reform Britain's relationship

[14] According to interviewees, a "small-c conservative" refers to someone who adheres to a conservative political ideology. This is distinct from a "Conservative." someone who is a member, politician, or dedicated voter of the British Conservative Party.

[15] See the cases of the Republican Party in the United States, the Canadian Conservative Party, Italian Five Star Movement.

with the EU, regardless of the outcome of the referendum, marked his party's shift towards a mainstream pro-Brexit position.[16] That said, Britain's Euroscepticism had emerged long before Cameron's premiership.

British Euroscepticism has had a place in both the Labour and Conservative Parties since the 1970s, during which the United Kingdom joined the European Community (EC). The Labour Party was initially the more Eurosceptic of the two; its leadership and membership alike saw the European Communities as increasingly neoliberal and unable to address working class challenges.[17] In 1975, future Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn voted with the majority of the Labour Party in its bid to challenge the processes of European integration. His own Euroscepticism persisted throughout his role as party leader up to the 2016 Brexit referendum campaign.[18] For its part, the Conservative Party had its own Eurosceptic elements. Though she supported the European project for much of her career, Margaret Thatcher eventually became wary of European integration.[19] In her 1988 Bruges speech, she warned against forming a "European super-state," and in 1990 she proclaimed "no, no, no" in the House of Commons regarding the creation of the European Union.[20] In the wake of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty—the founding treaty of the European Union—the Conservative Party formed organizations such as the European Research Group, which sought to provide an intellectual and ideological critique of the European Project. At the same time,

[16] Tim Oliver, "Goodbye Britannia? The International Implications Of Britain's Vote To Leave The EU," *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations* 8.2 (2016): 214–15, https://doi.org/10.22381/GHIR82201610

[17] Nicholas Startin, "Have We Reached a Tipping Point? The Mainstreaming of Euroscepticism in the UK," *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique* 36.3 (2015): 313, https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512115574126

[18] "How Long Can Labour's Eurosceptic Leader Keep Europhile Members Happy?" *The Economist*, January 10, 2019. https://www.economist.com/britain/2019/01/10/how-long-can-labours-eurosceptic-leader-keep-europhile-members-happy

[19] "Thatcher and Her Tussles with Europe," *BBC News*, April 8, 2013, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-11598879

[20] Margaret Thatcher, "Speech to the College of Europe ('The Bruges Speech')," September 20, 1988; "Euro Moments: Thatcher Says 'No, No, No' to Europe," *BBC News*, May 14, 2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-politics-27053536

the UK Independence Party (UKIP) emerged as a leading advocate for Britain's exit from the European Union. It was slow to gain traction, but eventually found electoral success in the European Parliament due to the parliamentary use of proportional representation and the far-right populist rhetoric of its leader, Nigel Farage. After the onset of the Great Recession and the Labour Party's signing of the Lisbon Treaty, UKIP amassed right-wing support under Farage in the 2009 European Parliamentary elections, raising Conservative Party concerns that UKIP might siphon off voters in future national elections.[21]

Since these first instances of Euroscepticism, the U.K. has mirrored other twenty-first century powers in converting to a largely urban, service-based economy—especially centered in London.[22] On the other hand, the manufacturing economies of English Midlands, the North of England, and Wales have been left struggling behind the rest of the country.[23] As such, it is no coincidence that populists were able to unite far-right nationalist voices, right-wing Conservative voices, and populist/far-left Labour voices into a coalition against globalization and the perceived 'others' integrating from other EU countries. As the populist Eurosceptic movement lost the support of the Labour Party prior to the Brexit referendum, it turned its attention entirely towards the right.[24] Many savvy politicians who represented the Conservative Party, both locally and nationally, noticed how this turn resonated with rural voters from across the political spectrum. Ideals such as providing for one's own poor (rather than relying on the European Development Fund), "writing one's own laws," and "controlling one's own borders" pervaded the discourse of both the Conservative Party's voter base and its Party Parliamentary Group in greater numbers, and in a louder volume, than before. Since the referendum, the underlying trends of populism have continued to sweep through the Conservative Party and its voters.

[21] Roland Flamini, "The UK Independence Party: Euroskeptics Rattle Cameron," *World Affairs* 176.2 (2013): 37, https://www.jstor.org/stable/43554778
[22] "The Great Divide," *The Economist*, September 15, 2012, https://www.economist.com/britain/2012/09/15/the-great-divide
[23] Ibid.
[24] Flamini, "The UK Independence Party: Euroskeptics Rattle Cameron," 37-38.

On December 12th, 2019, Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative Party won its largest government majority since the 1980s as a result of former Labour voters abandoning the Labour Party in its traditional stronghold districts, such as in the English Midlands. On February 1st, 2020, the United Kingdom formally withdrew from the European Union, entering a transition period for the UK and EU to arrange departure agreements before the withdrawal took effect on January 1st, 2021.

Literature Review

The resurgence of the modern European far-right populist movement over the last decade has generated a new scholarship on the topic, but many questions remain regarding how these political movements interact with their respective voter bases and affect mainstream political parties and politics at-large. To analyze this issue, scholars tend to divide populism and nationalism on two fronts. First, scholars in what this paper refers to as the "Demand Influences Supply" (DIS) school of thought study the demand-side factors of far-right nationalism: how voters overtly demand populism from their elected officials in response to real or perceived economic or social grievances.[25] Second, scholars in the what this paper refers to as the "Supply Influences Demand" (SID) school of thought focus on the supply-side factors, which are "the ways in which parties use [populism and/or nationalism] strategically in an attempt to broaden their appeal by presenting themselves as legitimate to large sections of the population."[26] Scholars within each of these schools of thought consider how their respective side drives the other, as well as how supply-side and demand-side factors function in isolation. However, the interaction between the two different factors has been under-studied.[27] In recent years, some have proposed what I term a "Third Way" approach. Scholars from this school of thought contend that there is a two-way interaction between supply- and demand-side

[25] Halikiopoulou and Vlandas, "What Is New and What Is Nationalist about Europe's New Nationalism?" 411.
[26] Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou, "Support for the Far Right in the 2014 European Parliament Elections: A Comparative Perspective," 286.
[27] Golder, "Far Right Parties in Europe, " 490.

factors.[28] Crucially, they also assert that supply-side and demand-side factors must both be maximized to facilitate populist party success; neither is seen as inherently more important than the other. This literature review examines the "Demand Influences Supply" and "Supply Influences Demand" schools, then proceeds to discuss the new "Third Way" school of thought.

The "Demand Influences Supply" Approach

Scholars in the "Demand Influences Supply" school consider demand-side characteristics to be the drivers of the present rise in European far-right nationalist parties and consider supplied nationalism to be a secondary response. This historically dominant school of thought dates back to Scheuch and Klingemann's 1967 treatise, which outlines the "normal pathology thesis" of the far-right.[29] The theory asserts that far-right values are at odds with liberal democracy, but that there is always a risk of a far-right party rising in all democracies. Scheuch and Klingemann argue that far-right parties spread through situational demands by the public.[30] Typically, scholars study one of three key demand-side grievances—economic insecurity, cultural change, and reduced trust in elites—that lend themselves to populist party success.

The first approach examines the economic threats that lead to popular grievances and populist action. Globalization and the Great Recession have contributed to economic insecurity in many Western democracies as a result of the offshoring of jobs and automation of low-skill labor, which both contract wages. This labor market precarity manifests for workers as "a deep personal conflict at the interface of sociopolitical context and individual identity."[31] As Post asserts in his extreme leader-follower behavior framework, these individuals are the first to demand a strong leader to provide "an answer to a pervasive, and at the extreme, pathological feeling of ineffectiveness in life."[32] Austerity measures imposed by the European Union were unpopular due to their cuts to social programs, and many voters thought that their nation's economic status was under threat.[33] European nationalism is characterized by many voters who are nostalgic for their nation's 'better past,' and hope for national economic recovery.[34] According to de Búrca, five economic factors are visible in both the British and American contexts: "(i) a reaction against immigration, (ii) concern about economic insecurity, (iii) a rejection of internationalism and transnationalism, (iv) a return to inward-looking (economic) nationalism and (v) a rise in authoritarian and illiberal sentiment."[35]

The second approach views populism through the lens of cultural change. In his identity crisis theory, Mounk observes that short-term fluctuations in the economy alone do not fully explain the rise of the far-right. Rather, they must be accompanied by long-term cultural changes,[36] such as the perceived 'threat' to national identity by immigrants and supranational organizations and the perceived decline in intergenerational living standards.[37] European countries have undergone cultural integration after 1991, with the fall of the Soviet Union and the free movement of labor between European Union member states. They have

[28] Cas Mudde, "The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy," *West European Politics* 33.6 (2010): 1177, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2010.508901

[29] Erwin K. Scheuch and Hans D. Klingemann, "Theorie des Rechtsradikalismus in westlichen Industriegesellschaften," *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Wirtschafts und Gesellschaftspolitik*, 12 (1967): 11-29. Cited in Mudde, "The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy," 1170.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Karl Umbrasas, "Psychopolitics of the Current Nationalism," *Journal of Strategic Security* 10.4 (2017): 30, http://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.10.4.1616

[32] Jerrold Post, *Leaders and Their Followers in a Dangerous World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 195; Umbrasas, "Psychopolitics of the Current Nationalism," 31.

[33] Dani Rodrik, "Populism and the Economics of Globalization," *Journal of International Business Policy*, 2018, https://doi.org/10.1057/s42214-018-0001-4

[34] Hidde Bekhuis, Roza Meuleman, and Marcel Lubbers, "Globalization and Support for National Cultural Protectionism from a Cross-National Perspective," *European Sociological Review* 29.5 (2013): 1042, https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcs080

[35] Gráinne de Búrca, "How British Was the Brexit Vote?" in *Brexit and Beyond: Rethinking the Futures of Europe*, ed. Benjamin Martill and Uta Staiger (London, GBR: University College London Press, 2018): 47, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt20krxf8.10

[36] Mounk, "Pitchfork Politics: The Populist Threat to Liberal Democracy," 29.

[37] Ibid., 30.

also undergone cultural diversification since the 2015 influx of predominantly Muslim refugees.[38] Many workers who have seen their country's traditions and culture "change" wish to avoid this culture shock. Because establishment European political parties typically possess a pro-European Union orientation, discontented voters saw nationalism as the only viable alternative to express their Euroscepticism.[39] Vasilopoulos et al. find that emotions resulting from cultural grievances play a role in demand for the far-right,[40] as "angrier" voters are more likely to vote for far-right parties while more fearful voters are more likely to vote for mainstream parties.[41]

The final approach views popular trust in elites and institutions as instrumental for the rise of populism. In recent years, trust in elites has significantly diminished due to both economic and cultural upheaval.[42] Mukand and Rodrik theorize cleavages between three separate societal groups: elites, the majority group, and the minority group(s).[43] Though cleavages between majority and minority groups can be based along any line of identity, including ethnicity and religion, cleavages between either of these groups and elites will always be visible on the basis of class.[44] Moreover, voters will come to perceive the upper class as protectors of the status quo and extremist candidates as agitators of the status quo.[45]

[38] Polyakova and Shekhovtsov, "On the Rise: Europe's Fringe Right," 71.
[39] Hamid A. Ünver, "Corrective Parties and Conveyor Coalitions: Explaining the Rise of Third Parties in European Politics," *Perceptions* 21.2 (2016): 16, https://search.proquest.com/docview/1892979630/abstract/973196B434C6423BPQ/1
[40] *See* Pavlos Vasilopoulos et al., "Fear, Anger, and Voting for the Far Right: Evidence From the November 13, 2015 Paris Terror Attacks," *Political Psychology* 40.4 (2019): 679–704, https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12513
[41] Ibid., 686-690.
[42] Mudde, "The Populist Radical Right," 1167-1186.
[43] Sharun Mukand and Dani Rodrik, "The Political Economy of Liberal Democracy," *CESifo Working Paper Series* 6433 (2017): https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2973082
[44] Ibid., 7.
[45] Leyla D. Karakas and Devashish Mitra, "Inequality, Redistribution and the Rise of Outsider Candidates," *Games and Economic Behavior* 124 (2020): 1-16, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geb.2020.07.012

The "Supply Influences Demand" Approach

Another rapidly growing, though by no means new, set of scholars reject the classic consensus that voter demand is the primary driver of far-right populist success today. Instead, they argue that a generalized demand-side focus cannot explain inter- and intra-country variation in support for populist movements. They seek to explain why nationalism takes root in only a fraction of the locations where demand-side factors are present. Mudde argues that although demand-side factors do condition the success of far-right nationalist parties in Europe today, it is supply-side factors, such as party strength, party ideology, and party rhetoric, that truly determine whether or not these parties will be successful.[46] He asserts that far-right populist parties do not differ in function from other parties—they are the result of normal democratic operations that have "gone too far" and have created a political pathology. As such, Scheuch and Klingemann's "normal pathology thesis" ought to be known as the "pathological normalcy thesis."[47] These scholars view far-right parties as "make or break" agenda-setters that influence voter demands, just like any other party.

"Supply Influences Demand" scholars also focus on party strength and ideology. Party strength is typically measured by analyzing media presence, legislative participation, and grassroots support. Mair notes that populist parties find the most success when voters perceive a degradation of the conception of 'the people' as the core component of democracy. He asserts that in response to this perceived degradation, far-right parties often leverage conceptions of the "lost nation" to gain voter support.[48] Furthermore, van Spanje finds that mainstream parties are less likely to ostracize a far-right party if it appears strong in just one or a few regional elections within a country.[49] As I will study in my

[46] Mudde, "The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy," 1168.
[47] Ibid., 1178.
[48] Peter Mair, "Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy," *New Left Review* 42 (2006): 25-51, http://hdl.handle.net/1814/6418
[49] Joost van Spanje, "Parties Beyond the Pale: Why Some Political Parties Are Ostracized by Their Competitors While Others Are Not," *Comparative European Politics* 8.3 (September 2010): 354–83, http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/cep.2009.2

case, scholars also identify party rhetoric as a crucial supply-side factor in determining the success of today's far-right. As such, they conduct content and discourse analyses and find historical or symbolic references within far-right politicians' speeches. As an extension of classic social exclusion theories, far-right nationalist parties today organize social exclusion based on nativist and xenophobic rhetoric pertaining to cultural differences rather than overt arguments of biological superiority. Mondon refers to this rhetoric as "neo-racism, cultural racism, or cultural differentialism" because it subtly implies to voters that European liberal democracy can only flourish in countries consisting of 'traditionally' European races.[50] Polyakova and Shekhovtsov argue that today's far-right political parties have significantly toned down the rhetoric of overt biological racism and authoritarianism to avoid association with fascism.[51] They demonstrate that today's most electorally successful far-right parties are ones that have been able to moderate their rhetoric to gain "electoral respectability" during election seasons.[52]

A "Third Way" Forward to Bridge the Gap?

This literature review has delineated the sharp divide between the "Demand Influences Supply" and "Supply Influences Demand" schools. The driving direction of the supply-demand interaction remains a highly contested question in the literature on modern populism. However, limited research has begun to pursue a third path forward, which exists as a separate school of thought. As Golder argues in his study, this school of thought theorizes that supplied and demanded contemporary nationalism can only grow together, and will only produce far-right successes when both are maximized.[53] Lubbers and Scheepers have pioneered this practical model by quantitatively measuring the growth of demand-side factors together with ideological markers within France's

[50] Aurelien Mondon, "Populism, the 'People' and the Illusion of Democracy: The Front National and UKIP in a Comparative Context," *French Politics* 13.2 (June 2015): 144, http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/fp.2015.6

[51] Polyakova and Shekhovtsov, "On the Rise: Europe's Fringe Right," 73.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Golder, "Far Right Parties in Europe," 490.

National Rally party.[54] Instead of focusing on the contentious direction of the party-voter interaction, they compare correlative analyses of the French electorate and National Rally ideological rhetoric to data from other Western European countries.[55] Though promising, their comparative study and others like it have been regarded as incomplete because they overly condense different qualitative demand- and supply-side factors across many countries' scenarios into a framework of quantitative variables in a manner that does not wholly represent the social interactions within far-right nationalism.[56]

Vines and Marsh also grapple with the need to move past supply- and demand- in isolation, instead arguing that we need to "move beyond explanations of the problem that [place] 'blame'" on either the suppliers or demanders of populism.[57] They build on the concept of "anti-politics," which is political action and rhetoric that is perceived to be "outside" of a country's politics and that leads to developments such as "the decline in voting participation, party membership, and other forms of traditional political participation."[58] While Mete argues that anti-politics can be either passive (from below), with "activists questioning the existing political order," or active (from above), with "citizens being particularly attracted to populist leaders/parties," Vines and Marsh go a step further.[59] Rather than acknowledging the possibility that both supply and demand can influence populist rhetoric in different cases, they assert that "anti-politics is a relational concept…[revolving] around the relationship between political authorities and citizens, which is interactive and iterative."[60] Their proposition of interactive and iterative relation-

[54] Marcel Lubbers and Peer Scheepers, "French Front National Voting: A Micro and Macro Perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 120-149, https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870120112085.

[55] Ibid., 137-140.

[56] Golder, "Far Right Parties in Europe," 490.

[57] Emma Vines and David Marsh, "Anti-Politics: Beyond Supply-Side versus Demand-Side Explanations," *British Politics* 13, no. 4 (December 1, 2018): 433–53, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41293-017-0053-9.

[58] Ibid., 436.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Vittorio Mete, "Four Types of Anti-Politics: Insights from the Italian Case," *Mod-*

ality warrants greater analysis in order to understand the true relationship between the voters and politicians—a relationship that Vines and Marsh argue has become frayed and "decoupl[ed]," and is the real cause of anti-political populism.[61] Given the deadlock in this body of academic literature, a unifying approach is needed to add to the scholarly understanding of how populism functions in Europe today. This research contributes to a more dynamic approach to the scholarly conversation by applying the "Third Way" school of thought and shedding light on how demand- and supply-side factors of populism interact in the British case.

Methods

My data collection and analysis employed an interpretivist epistemological approach. The nature and effects of populism in the British political system must be understood in its social context. The goal of my research has been to qualitatively explore sociopolitical interaction. My interpretivist approach has permitted me to communicate directly with British voters and political actors to understand their thoughts, opinions, and experiences. I allowed my interviewees to guide the conversation about what they saw as the most important aspects of the new Conservative Party and of the new British political landscape. To answer my research question within the British case, I observed the ways in which the ideology, rhetoric, and composition of the Conservative Party has changed since the Brexit referendum and onset of widespread British Euroscepticism. To do so, I organized and conducted semi-structured interviews with fifteen party actors within the Conservative Party, all from either England or Wales. These party actors included parliamentary assistants and office staffers, senior parliamentary staffers and communications officers, local Councilors, Young Conservative members, parliamentary office managers, and one Member of Parliament.[62]

ern Italy 15.1 (2010): 37–61, https://doi.org/10.1080/13532940903477872

[61] Vines and Marsh, "Anti-Politics: Beyond Supply-Side versus Demand-Side Explanations," 450.

[62] Of my 15 interviewees, 13 were Parliamentary staffers or assistants at various levels of seniority, 2 were local councilors, 2 were members of the Young Conservatives, and 1 was a MP. In total, 5 voted to remain, 9 voted to leave, and 1 did not disclose their vote.

These interviewees both steer change in the Conservative Party and are influenced by those changes. The views of party actors have not been deeply explored since the 2016 Brexit referendum, nor the landslide victory of the Conservative Party in the 2019 general election. I first asked questions related to their understanding of the history of populism, nationalism, and Euroscepticism in the UK, before turning to the history of the Brexit movement and post-referendum withdrawal. Next, I explored their perceptions pertaining to change within the Conservative Party. For example, I asked how or if they perceived the Party to have shifted across the Cameron, May, and Johnson premierships, and whether or not they perceived ideology or policy objectives to have changed in recent years. I also asked them to comment on any trends of continuity and change with respect to elite maneuvering, party rhetoric, and policy objectives from a supply perspective. Additionally, I sought to observe changes in voter demand by asking them about their perceptions as private citizens. Where relevant, I utilized my semi-structured format to follow up on common themes, such as the internal Conservative Party divide between 'libertarianism and 'authoritarianism,' the role of immigration in the Brexit referendum, or their thoughts on the direction of the Conservative Party.

To garner the widest variety of perspectives available to me, I conducted Zoom interviews with as many people who were affiliated with the Conservative Party as possible. I reached out to Conservative Party offices, Parliamentary offices, Youth Conservative organizations, and local Councilor groups as possible interviewees. In addition to these interviews, I was also informed by a variety of public opinion data from the British Polling Council, which identifies how British politics have changed at historical points of transition throughout the twentieth century. I also consulted other twentieth century studies, news media, and all UK and EU parliamentary election results.

Data Analysis Process

I analyzed my data in accordance with the "Third Way" school, focusing on the interaction between supply-side and demand-side factors of nationalism. The purpose of my interviews with party actors was to bet-

ter understand changes in the supply-side factors of nationalism, and to determine the demand-side factors of nationalism in the wake of the December 12th, 2019 parliamentary elections and the January 31st, 2020 exit from the European Union.

I conducted a thematic analysis of my fifteen interviews. First, each interview was recorded and transcribed for direct quotes. I also took copious notes on everything that each interviewee said. Then, all recurring pertinent statements and all statements that provided a novel viewpoint were sorted by theme. A view was considered pertinent and assigned a theme if it: (a) related to interactions between the Conservative Party and voters, (b) related to changes within either the Conservative Party or the public, (c) discussed a personal view that was not a broad reflection of public opinion, or (d) discussed or referenced populism and/or nationalism (or referenced a sub-category of these ideas such as economic anxiety, globalization, or Euroscepticism). For a full list of coded themes and their frequency amongst all interviews, see Appendix B.

My analysis examined how voters remember the Brexit campaign, what it meant to them, and how their views of British politics and British political parties have shifted over time. Moreover, by asking party actors about changes in legislative affairs and strategy (as it relates to rhetoric and electoral politics), my analysis identified where party actors and voters converge and differ to ascertain the role populism played in each group's conceptualizations of, and interactions with, each other.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

I reckoned with important ethical considerations while conducting my interviews. With respect to conducting interviews with Conservative Party actors, risk to participants may come in the form of job security considerations. For this reason, all data was anonymized and responses were obfuscated to ensure that responses would not indicate an interviewee's identity, specific career, or affiliation. A participant consent form discussed the inherent confidentiality risks posed by participating in interviews and provided a full overview of this study's purpose and scope. All interview recordings were stored offline using encryption software—pending deletion and pursuant to the consent form. This study faced two limitations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. First, the virus made in-person interviews impossible. Conducting interviews virtually increased risks to confidentiality and could have theoretically precluded full honesty from participants despite precautions. Second, the pandemic also drastically (and understandably) increased the workload of all Conservative Party actors, from every Councilor to parliamentary staffer to Member of Parliament. As such, some sampled individuals declined to be interviewed due to other pressing priorities and lack of availability, which limited this study's interview pool.

Findings and Discussion: The Core Issues of British Populism

This section will describe several of the key themes occupying the Conservative Party and its voters before, during, and after the Brexit referendum. These key concerns were cited by interviewees as crucial to both the types of changes that have taken place within the Conservative Party, as well as the social mechanisms of action.

Euroscepticism and Sovereignty

The issue of sovereignty has been deeply rooted within the "vox pop"—the "snippets of public opinion from people 'on the street'…of the British public," which raise "common concerns" such as "out of control immigration" and "tak[ing] back control of laws."[63] Both of these concerns were discussed by interviewees, who saw the Brexit movement as primarily stemming from the United Kingdom's unique position off the coast of the mainland continent. Both Remainers and Leavers referred to the British people's long-standing reluctance towards the European Union and skepticism of bureaucracy.[64] Euroscepticism, they said, had emerged in the Conservative Party during the Thatcher era. Those who

[63] Jonathan Hearn, "Vox Populi: Nationalism, Globalization And The Balance Of Power In The Making Of Brexit," in *Brexit: Sociological Responses*, ed. William Outhwaite (London, GBR: Anthem Press, 2017) 19, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1kft8cd.5

[64] "Remainer" interviewees were those who had disclosed that they had voted to 'Remain' in the European Union in the 2016 Brexit referendum; "Leaver" interviewees had voted to 'Leave'.

wanted a less unified European Union, such as Bill Cash, made their ideas well-known to the public and to their party during the process of the ratification of the Treaty of Maastricht. Though they were able to negotiate decreased British contributions to the EU, many in the party infrastructure "privately wanted the European Union to remain a useful club and nothing more" and were not supportive of the European project. Most interviewees credited the large-scale shift in public sentiment to Tony Blair's signing of the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, which prompted UKIP's meteoric rise to third place in national polling. Most interviewees shared that UKIP's ability to push David Cameron's support of a referendum in 2015 was critical in instigating the Conservative Party's embrace of populism. Though Euroscepticism had begun to grow within the European Research Group since the 1993 Maastricht Treaty ratification, it was the Lisbon Treaty that increased its prevalence and increased concerns within the Conservative Party in Parliament's whips. Interviewees identified the signing of the treaty of Lisbon as the period in which the British government appeared to be "superseded" by Conservatives' outcry against the Labour Party and the solidified Eurosceptic sentiment.

Another issue that was crucial to changes in the Conservative Party was David Cameron's recession-era austerity policies, such as social service cutting, the imposition of tuition at universities, and business tax cuts, which signaled to the recently unemployed that Cameron was adhering to European Union policy rather than looking out for the British public. Nationalism had already surfaced from economic tensions related to globalism, offshoring, and migration,[65] but "the degree to which individuals were adversely affected by the crisis and their discontent with the EU's handling of the crisis are major factors in explaining defection from mainstream pro-European to Eurosceptic parties in these elections."[66] Some interviewees said that "Little Englanders" in the North

[65] Colantone and Stanig, "The Surge of Economic Nationalism in Western Europe," 129.

[66] Sara B. Hobolt and Catherine de Vries, "Turning against the Union? The Impact of the Crisis on the Eurosceptic Vote in the 2014 European Parliament Elections," *Electoral Studies* 44 (2016): 504, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2016.05.006

were frustrated by the "London-centric and Brussels-centric narrative" that had advocated austerity, and the lack of democracy at the supranational level had left some feeling discounted and disdainful towards bureaucrats. Conservatives were shocked that UKIP had come in third place in the polls leading up to the 2015 election, and there seemed to be an opportunity for populism to sweep up these Eurosceptic narratives, both within and outside of the Conservative Party. Populism in the wake of the Brexit referendum would reshape the landscape of the Conservative Party. Several interviewees argued in some way that the Brexit movement, at its core, "relied on the idea of Britain as a global superpower," as one interviewee described it. There was a sentiment amongst many interviewees that a large number of the Conservative Party's membership "yearned for past glory" and saw it as "shameful" that a country with such "economic and global clout" is unable able to steer the welfare of its people and its businesses "on its own."

To a large extent, this sentiment of exceptionalism carried into the 2019 elections, where interviewees identified the "Get Brexit Done" slogan as a sign of an ascendant Britain. Indeed, the 2019 elections exemplified "the differences between the Conservatives and Labour parties." Boris Johnson's electoral campaign highlighted the strength of a fully independent Britain, while traditional Northern working class voters interpreted Labour's mixed Brexit message as evidence that the "Labour Party did not view Britain as a superpower" and that it "still wanted to rely on the European Union." Many interviewees identified the Johnson administration's coronavirus-era spending increases not just as an effort to head off a recession, but as an attempt to show the public that Britain can independently handle such a crisis without supranationalism. The government seems "acutely aware" of how Cameron's unpopular austerity policies had helped the Leave campaign succeed,[67] and now seems ideologically determined to increase the government's role in the domestic economy and prove that "Britain can go it alone."

[67] Thiemo Fetzer, "Did Austerity Cause Brexit?," *American Economic Review* 109.11 (2019): 3849–86, https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20181164

Immigration

Interviewees said that there is "no doubt" that anti-immigration rhetoric from UKIP and Nigel Farage during the Brexit referendum campaign "made it acceptable to talk about people 'flooding in' to the United Kingdom." Every interviewee that I spoke with was disdainful of this type of rhetoric, possibly due to a common socioeconomic background that has exposed them to metropolitan multiculturalism. Most were quick to observe that neither the Remain or Leave campaign sought to center immigration in their campaigns—only Nigel Farage's UKIP and other far-right groups "made it an issue."[68] I was also told that while the Leave campaign was able to make its economic arguments by "outsourcing harsh, simple, and emotional rhetoric" to Farage, the Remain campaign had to fight on two fronts: economic and immigration-based.

Those who discussed immigration always identified Northern England as an area where negative attitudes towards immigration are more common. After the Treaty of Maastricht established free movement of people, there was a movement of nationals from Eastern European countries into the United Kingdom. Despite the fact that these immigrants typically lived closer to London, interviewees described a broad English sentiment that these immigrants were taking jobs or were being favored by "Etonian elites" over building up the "forgotten North." It is notable that anti-immigration voters tend to call for, and latch onto, political voices protestingthe free movement of people, such as UKIP's Nigel Farage.[69] Amongst interviewees, views on immigration tended to correlate heavily with their preference for either Remaining or Leaving in the European Union. All described Priti Patel, current Secretary of State for the Home Department, as a pivotal Johnson government appointee who has signaled to those who supported Brexit that hardline immigration was on the agenda. One pro-Brexit interviewee described Priti Patel as "the heartthrob of all small-c conservative young men who want to see restricted immigration." Indeed, Boris Johnson's post-2019

[68] "EU Referendum: Nigel Farage Tells Leave Campaigners to Focus on Migration," *BBC News*, April 29, 2016, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-11598879
[69] Ibid.

government has moved towards the ideological right on immigration by moving to implement a points-based immigration system, hiring more police officers and border enforcers, and publicly denouncing illegal migration.[70]

A Feedback Loop: The Working Class and the Conservative Mainstream Merge

In addition to nation-wide concerns over immigration, the issue of Brexit has fundamentally reshaped the views of the English working class. As the 2019 election shows, the Labour Party's traditional working class strongholds in the North of England—known aptly as the "Red Wall"—overwhelmingly turned, constituency by constituency, in favor of the Conservative Party.[71] The Conservative landslide, and large resultant majority, demonstrates that a political realignment has occurred in the United Kingdom: the Labour Party is now much more urban, while the Conservative Party has grown its majority by forging deep local ties in rural working class constituencies. These ties, forged through rhetoric pertaining to sovereignty and immigration, created a right-wing wave of populism that pulled the working class into the Conservative Party. One dejected staffer told me that the Conservatives have "expanded their base remarkably by cutting out people" like him—that is to say, he felt that Cameronites like himself no longer saw their beliefs represented in the Party's rhetoric or policies.

While some of this shift surely came from a desire to see Brexit through, interviews revealed a populism that changed both the electorate and the Conservative Party. Between the Brexit referendum campaign and the present day, both the voters and politicians have created a feedback loop that has reinforced this political realignment: the working class and the Conservative Party mutually reckoned each others' grievances, established alignment, and both drifted from the status quo libertarian ideol-

[70] Jessica Elgot, "Boris Johnson Vows Push on Immigration Points System," *The Guardian*, June 26, 2019, http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/jun/27/boris-johnson-vows-push-on-immigration-points-system
[71] "General Election 2019: How Labour's 'Red Wall' Turned Blue," *BBC News*, December 13, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/election-2019-50771014

ogy and most city-based small-c conservatives. Oesch provides a robust framework with which to understand this political realignment. As he argues, "the working class has become the core clientele of right-wing populist parties in Western Europe" not just as a result of economic and welfare woes, but more importantly because of political discontent and the ideology of "cultural protectionism."[72] When the working class simultaneously becomes disaffected with a country's democratic elites and fearful of the loss of an "exclusive form of community" to outsiders, they will turn towards right-wing populist parties.[73] This paper considers this to be the core mechanism of the feedback loop.

This theory seems to hold especially true in the British case. Conservative interviewees used words such as "Etonian," "Oxbridge," and "London-centric" to describe not just the make-up of British politics, but also the make-up of their own Party in Parliament. Whether originally Remainers or Leavers, all expressed dissatisfaction with the degree to which the Conservative Party had, for a long time, appeared not to represent the country's working class. In this way, a politician like David Cameron failed to appeal to the working class, who were most exposed to 2010 fiscal cuts and disaffected with elites, and therefore more likely to support the Leave campaign.[74] Instead, the Conservative Party lost votes to UKIP, the third largest party in the 2015 general election. According to interviewees, UKIP possessed a broadly right-wing populist agenda that was attractive to voters on both of Oesch's metrics: it positioned itself as an "alternative to elites" and as a "protector of the Englishman." In response, the Conservative Party co-opted these demand-side calls for populism and called for the Brexit referendum.[75] My interviewees

[72] Daniel Oesch, "Explaining Workers' Support for Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe: Evidence from Austria, Belgium, France, Norway, and Switzerland," *International Political Science Review* 29.3 (2008): 349, https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512107088390

[73] Oesch, "Explaining Workers' Support for Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe: Evidence from Austria, Belgium, France, Norway, and Switzerland," 369.

[74] Colantone and Piero Stanig, "The Surge of Economic Nationalism in Western Europe," 142.

[75] Sara B. Hobolt, "The Brexit Vote: A Divided Nation, a Divided Continent," *Journal of European Public Policy* 23, no. 9 (October 20, 2016): 1259–77, https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2016.1225785.

attributed this populism to Theresa May's failure in the 2017 general election. They said that, to voters, Theresa May represented "more of the same": traditional Etonian power in Parliament that would "embrace immigration and Europe" in spite of the referendum. However, Boris Johnson had a "clever" understanding of voter demand and was able to use his power as an influential agenda-setter to spread his own brand of nationalism and lead the party into the 2019 general elections with the slogan "Get Brexit Done."

The New Conservative Party and the Libertarian-Authoritarian Dichotomy

The 2019 Election Sparked a Political Realignment

Interviewees were careful to note that, under Theresa May, many Conservative MPs saw the process of leaving the EU as a "damage limitation exercise"; the goal of these individuals was to ensure as "soft" a Brexit as possible. After the three failures of Parliament to pass Theresa May's EU Withdrawal Agreements, the increasing frustration on the Conservative right, in the tabloids, and among the electorate, led these political figures to be labeled "Remoaners"—a term referring to all MPs, but especially Conservatives who voted to remain and were "obstructing Brexit" in the House of Commons. Conservative Remoaners were described as "working with Labour" and going against their own party. According to interviewees, the Remoaner label was fueled by exhaustion with the Brexit proceedings. Politicians and voters alike simply wanted Brexit to be out of their news cycle and viewed attempts to "water down Brexit" as the undemocratic actions of Etonian elites who "thought they knew better than the majority of voters." When none of these grievances were resolved on their own under Boris Johnson's leadership, he stripped the twenty-one Conservative MPs of the whip as punishment for betraying the new party line.[76] Those who did not have their whip restored were essentially forced out of their seats by new candidates who created a "much more pro-Brexit Conservative Party in Parliament."

[76] "Brexit Showdown: Who Were Tory Rebels Who Defied Boris Johnson?," *BBC News*, September 5, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-49563357

While Johnson withheld his stance on policy issues throughout the 2019 campaign to "play his cards close to his chest so that no one could know what he believed," he made an "end to the Remoaners" a priority through his "Get Brexit Done" slogan. The slogan was quite popular within swing constituencies in the North, whose Labour voters had warmed to the idea of Brexit or had become frustrated with the Labour Party's "lack of message" on Brexit.[77] Moreover, Johnson's Conservative associations in these constituencies were sure to nominate "local people who understood" both the Brexit message and the struggles of the working class. These new local representatives were "small-c conservatives" and highly pro-Brexit. The interviewees described Labour candidates as "rudderless" on the issue of Brexit; Labour leaders promised a return to traditional values that "the Labour Party could not provide because they were enamored with the cities and cosmopolitan-minded voters."

This new Conservative bloc that entered the House of Commons in the wake of the 2019 election, along with the small-c conservative Members of Parliament who were already there, dominated the Conservative Party in Parliament. This new intake knew, and knows, that its electoral prospects are contingent upon its ability to deliver both Brexit as well as prosperity for the working class. As such, the ideological makeup of Conservative MPs was pulled away from the socially liberal, yet economically austere, wing of the party that had dominated the Party in Parliament for so long. In its place stands a set of Conservative MPs that is more socially traditional, but that has sought to recapture the pre-Thatcher concept of paternalistic "One-Nation Conservatism" supporting expanded government programs to bolster citizens' well-being.

Libertarians Versus Authoritarians

This ideological shift in the Conservative Party was exemplified by a changing of the guard, so to speak, within the party's leadership. Figures

[77] Heather Stewart, "Johnson's 'Get Brexit Done' Strategy Resonates with Marginal Focus Groups," December 6, 2019, *The Guardian,* http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/dec/06/johnsons-get-brexit-done-strategy-resonates-with-marginal-focus-groups.

like David Cameron and Dominic Grieve—socially liberal, fiscal conservatives who supported Remain—were replaced by people like Dominic Cumming and Priti Patel—more "traditionalist" voices who want Britain to "rediscover itself as a nation that provides for its own people." This replacement was noted by every single interviewee from every single background. Without passing a moral judgment, most described this divide using these exact terms: "libertarianism" versus "authoritarianism" within the Conservative Party. I was told that, while these two factions have existed in some shape or form for decades, if not centuries (dating back to the divide between Whigs and Tories), the authoritarians have prevailed in today's Conservative Party since Brexit. By "libertarian," interviewees referred to an increasingly small role for the British state in markets alongside an increasingly socially liberal support for higher immigration, the LGBTQ+ community, and racial justice. By "authoritarian," they were referring to an increasing willingness to intervene in the economy as well as to support more socially conservative policies that limit libertarian causes, such as increasing the number of police officers, implementing a points-based immigration system, and "making transgender issues an ideological fault line." These words should not be construed as morally loaded; only as indicating the proclivity for Conservative Party politicians and voters to support a larger authority role for the state in economic or social affairs.

In this "Libertarian-Authoritarian dichotomy," interviewees identified the Conservative Party's libertarian wing as a "longstanding" ideological establishment since Margaret Thatcher realigned British politics along neoliberal lines. Placing new limitations on the welfare state and lowering taxes became accepted as necessary steps to "allow the private sector and the individual to thrive." While Euroscepticism did exist—including, to a small extent, from Thatcher herself—it was mostly cast to the sides of the political mainstream by the influence of the Tory Reform Group (TRG) and the Conservative Group for Europe (CGE), which were described to me by interviewees as "instrumental in promoting pro-European Union views and social progress." The TRG was described to me as particularly influential, and as being crucial to the maintenance and preservation of the National Health Service as well

as to social policy victories for British progressives, such as the Conservative Party-led legalization of gay marriage. Indeed, most Conservative Party Leaders in the post-Thatcher years—John Major, Michael Howard, David Cameron, and Theresa May—have either been directly affiliated with the TRG or have actively praised its brand of socially liberal, one-nation conservatism.[78] On the other hand, the ascendant authoritarian branch of the Conservative Party sought to "reclaim traditional values" and legitimize itself as the coalition of the working class that could deliver one-nation conservatism. Proponents of this type of conservatism heavily emphasize "sovereignty as a reason for a strong government role in the economy." One interviewee shared that "[t]he United Kingdom now has something to prove, which is that the national government can provide for its own people better than Brussels could." This sentiment was shared by the other interviewees who were supportive of Leaving the European Union. For instance, while Cameron had spoken about the Conservative Party's "Northern Powerhouse" policies that would reignite the economies of the North of England, these working class constituencies felt that change had not come and that Cameron's government had instead "focused on the cosmopolitan interests of London and Brussels."

Interviewees also found that the Johnson administration's message of "Leveling Up the North" has already been successful in instituting a points-based immigration system, ending free movement from Europe, and passing economic stimulus in the face of the coronavirus pandemic (rather than austerity). Immigration, of course, was at the top of voters' minds ahead of the referendum.[79] Interviewees often cited the European Research Group (ERG) as an organization that pushed these ideological values within the party apparatus. Political figures and Leave Campaigners such as Priti Patel, Michael Gove, and Steve Baker had described the pre-Johnson Conservative administration's push for globalization and European integration as a failure to protect the "core people of England." Implicit in the 2019 election was the idea that these "Remoaners," who claimed to espouse the ideals of one-nation conservatism, had actually forgotten about the people that the government was meant to serve. To the interviewees, a bipartisan Major/Blair/Cameron policy consensus had emerged in the cities, and austerity and European integration had "hung the North of England out to dry." In this way, this authoritarian branch was able to claim one-nation conservatism for themselves by grouping libertarian Conservatives and the Labour Party as one and the same: serving establishment, Etonian, cosmopolitan elites at the expense of "the silent majority."

At the same time, social issues such as increasing police funding have become priorities within the Conservative Party. As such, the left-right spectrum that the Conservative Party had traditionally possessed has been supplanted. Rather than Conservative divisions along social or economic issues, the Party's political spectrum is now defined by the degree to which one supports policies that ostensibly "protect" the cultural traditions or economic power of the nation. This authoritarian wing of the party has created a disaffected center/center-right group of Conservative libertarians who "tend to be middle class cosmopolitans" falling into one of two camps: They have either begrudgingly accepted what the right/far-right touts as the "democratic argument" in favor of honoring what the new Conservative constituency wants, or "they have left the party." Those who do not agree with the new majority's decisions—such as Boris Johnson's EU Withdrawal Bill which unites Northern Ireland and Britain customs across the Irish Sea and undermines the "traditionally Unionist nature of the Conservative Party"—have now "lost a place in mainstream British politics" and have been replaced by "a much larger, much noisier electorate that is less middle class and more working class."

[78] "About Us," website, *Tory Reform Group,* https://www.trg.org.uk/about-us/#-patrons;"Letter from Theresa May to the TRG Membership," *Tory Reform Group*, https://www.trg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/TRG-and-the-Leadership-of-our-Party.pdf; "2019 Feb. 20 Statement from the Tory Reform Group," *Tory Reform Group*, February 20th, 2019, https://www.trg.org.uk/statement-from-the-tory-reform-group/

[79] Scott Blinder and William Allen, "UK Public Opinion Toward Immigration: Overall Attitudes and Level Of Concern," report, *Migration Observatory*, University of Oxford (2016), https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Briefing-Public_Opinion_Immigration_Attitudes_Concern.pdf

View of the Labour Party Today

Interviewees also shared their views on the Labour Party in the wake of the 2019 elections, and their differing views based on their self-identification as either libertarian or authoritarian. Those who considered themselves to be more pro-Remain or more libertarian tended to see the appointment of Keir Starmer as a positive step for the Labour Party "so that it can be a party that holds Conservatives to account." These interviewees saw a robust opposition that the public could support as "crucial to British democracy." They also viewed the Labour Party as a more legitimate contender in future elections due to "more competent leadership that can win back the North by the end of the 2020s if Boris Johnson falters." Those who tended to be more pro-Leave, or who belonged to the office of an MP that had been newly elected from the North in 2019, saw things much differently. To these interviewees, Starmer represented a "far-left Corbyn lieutenant" who "tried to overturn democracy with a second referendum." Dismayed, they told me that Labour was "opposed to absolutely everything," though they did note that the Labour Party had broadly supported the Johnson government on policies to mitigate the coronavirus pandemic. They said that, in the North, voters view the Labour Party as far-left and "anti-British," asserting that Labour had become "too city-based" and "no longer [had] a love of country, and hate traditions." The stark difference in interviewees' opinions about Labour opposition between those who subscribed to the libertarian versus authoritarian branches of the Conservative Party was indicative of the party's changing nature. They saw "culture issues in the United States" as having arrived on British soil and pushing Labour and "professional, white-collar Conservatives towards extremes." "When America sneezes," one senior staffer from a freshman MP's office told me, "Britain catches a cold." Only these new Conservatives, several believed, could "reject the status quo and restore Britain" without being hampered by globalization or by the European Union.

A "Do What It Takes to Win" Mentality

Regardless of whether or not an interviewee had personally been pro-Remain or pro-Leave, virtually all of them repeated some version

of the following line: "The Conservative Party will do whatever it can to win, and that is why it is the most successful political party [at winning elections] in the world." As such, in the face of fracture during the defeats of Theresa May's Government, the Conservative Party leaned on what it had learned in the 2019 election: that "Get Brexit Done" appeared to be a winning slogan, that the Labour Party could be portrayed as weak and as lacking a decisive message, and that libertarian "Remoaners" who were not on board with any aspect of the Johnson Government's agenda could be criticized as stemming the tides of democracy. This "do what it takes to win" mentality appears to be a mechanism of rapid change within the Conservative Party. Interviewees and mass media depicted Boris Johnson as the embodiment of this "do what it takes to win" approach. It was abundantly clear to both Remainers and Leavers that, in 2016, "Johnson sniffed the chance to become prime minister, and—in Union jargon—decided at the last minute to back the [Brexit] motion."[80]

Despite "personally being a libertarian who represented social liberal ideas as the Mayor of London," Boris Johnson has reinvented himself entirely around the issue of Brexit. As Prime Minister, he has promised to "take the European Union to task" in his Withdrawal deal, and has forwarded a No-Deal Brexit as an alternative choice that "Britain is strong enough to get behind if it must." He has become an advocate for expanded governmental involvement in welfare and in local economies, and has been "the first Conservative Prime Minister in a long time to veto local Councilors" ordinances." Additionally, he has embraced his party's willingness to intervene on social issues: He has named Priti Patel his Home Secretary, who is reshaping immigration by imposing points-based limits that favor high-skilled labor from Commonwealth member-states in place of free movement of labor to and from Europe. Similarly, the Government is now hiring new immigration and police officers and has promised the British people that the United Kingdom is strong enough to grow on its own without any trade deal with the

[80] Simon Kuper, "How Oxford University Shaped Brexit—and Britain's Next Prime Minister," *Financial Times*, September 18, 2019, https://www.ft.com/content/85fc694c-9222-11e9-b7ea-60e35ef678d2

European Union. This approach appears to have been successful for the Johnson Government. Even though "some of the voters in the center have been left without a party," the new Conservative "voters who granted UKIP the third-largest vote share in the 2015 elections" re-emerged to "[deliver] the Conservative Party an unquestionable right-wing mandate." As such, voters who had "[fled the center]" as Hobolt and Tilley say happened across Europe in the wake of the Great Recession due to fears over "EU integration, austerity, and immigration" have fully realigned the Conservative electorate away from the libertarian wing of the party through their support of UKIP, and then of Boris Johnson.[81]

Conclusion and Future Research

Contemporary populism and nationalism have never been more salient than they are today, both within scholarship and society at-large. Within the European context, no populist movement has seen greater or more consequential success than the Brexit movement, which has successfully shepherded the United Kingdom out of the European Union. These populist ideas have co-opted the mainstream British Conservative Party in a way that has pushed its policy and rhetoric further to the political right.

In this study, I sought to understand Brexit within the context of this surge of far-right populism, which continues to persist in the United Kingdom and Europe at-large. To learn both why the Conservative Party has changed so markedly in response to the ongoing Brexit negotiations as well as what realities explain the Party's rhetorical and general policy changes and factional shifts, I conducted interviews with Conservative Party actors. I then analyzed these interviews according to the "Third Way" school of thought, which has been especially well-articulated by Vines and Marsh, who argue for a recognition of the relationship between politicians and citizens rather than a focus on either of these

[81] Sara B. Hobolt, and James Tilley, "Fleeing the Centre: The Rise of Challenger Parties in the Aftermath of the Euro Crisis," *West European Politics* 39, no. 5 (September 2, 2016): 971, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2016.1181871.

groups.[82] Overall, this study found the key themes of contemporary British populism to be Euroscepticism, sovereignty, and immigration. It also found three mechanisms mobilizing populist discourse within the Conservative Party and the voters: a feedback loop between the English working class and the Party apparatus, an active dispute between libertarians and authoritarians in the Party, and a Parliamentary "do what it takes to win" mentality allowed the Conservative Party to re-establish party unity around the new ideological consensus.

There has been a "decoupling of political authorities and citizens" leading up to Brexit, a decoupling that continued between Conservative Party political authorities and its voters until the 2019 election.[83] Local activism for the Brexit vote by UKIP and the Leave Campaign promised an interactive democracy that could do what the status quo could not.[84] Reciprocally, the Conservative Party has been realigned by these voters, as they elected locally-raised Parliamentary candidates to "deliver Brexit themselves" and succeed where the libertarians had failed.[85] This decoupling of huge swaths of voters from their typical political loyalties, such as the Labour Party in the North or a more "politically moderate" sect of the Conservative Party, is the result of a feedback loop between the working class ("demanders" of populism) and Conservative politicians ("suppliers" of populism) from the authoritarian wing of the party.[86] Each propelled ideas that major parties in the United Kingdom had rejected for decades into the political mainstream: an isolationist, "go-it-alone" approach towards Europe, a shift towards pre-Thatcherite economics, and a desire to "look inward, rather than outward."

A perfect storm of events sparked by the British referendum contrib-

[82] Vines and Marsh, "Anti-Politics: Beyond Supply-Side versus Demand-Side Explanations," 446-447.
[83] Ibid., 438.
[84] Henrik P. Bang, "Yes We Can': Identity Politics and Project Politics for a Late-Modern World," *Urban Research & Practice* 2.2 (2009): 117, https://doi.org/10.1080/17535060902979022
[85] Ibid., 117.
[86] Vines and Marsh, "Anti-Politics: Beyond Supply-Side versus Demand-Side Explanations," 450.

uted to this political realignment: The Great Recession, agenda-setting by UKIP and Nigel Farage, the Eurozone crisis, austerity policies, and the systemic move towards policies that support the British middle- and upper-classes by the Conservative and Labour Parties for decades. This realignment cannot be attributed to supplied populism or demanded populism, but rather must be attributed to a highly "interactive and iterative" process of communication between the Conservative Party and a shifting, restless base of disaffected voters.[87] As such, while scholars such as Mete, de Búrca, and Mondon provide valuable contributions to the study of either supplied or demanded populism, the British case of populism indicates that we should view supplied and demanded populism as a "duality," not a "dualism."[88]

The supply-demand conversation regarding populism began in the wake of the 2015 elections, during which the UKIP established itself as a major power by tapping into latent disaffection and anti-political ideas and formally proposed a Brexit referendum. Next, the 2016 Brexit referendum itself demonstrated voter demand for populism. Another inflection point after the referendum was the failure of the libertarian wing of the Conservative Party to "win the day in the Commons," after which voters became more disaffected with traditional politics. Finally, the 2019 elections solidified the political realignment and crystallized disdain for "Remoaners," austerity, globalization, and cosmopolitanism. This disdain now exists both within the Conservative Party in Parliament and within the party's base. This has been clearly communicated by the deselection of libertarian members who were labeled as "disloyal Remoaners," and by the new intake of Northern English MPs who are more authoritarian in their policy outlook and are "not Etonians, and represent the people who elected them." Today, this shift means that voters expect their Conservative Party to be more socially right wing (on issues such as immigration, policing, and gender identity) and more economically

[87] Ibid., 436.

[88] Ibid., 450; *see also* Mete, "Four Types of Anti-Politics: Insights from the Italian Case"; de Búrca, "How British Was the Brexit Vote?"; Mondon, "Populism, the 'People' and the Illusion of Democracy."

paternalist (to be more "sovereign/independent" and "powerful/capable of providing"). So far, the Johnson government seems to be delivering these new types of policies, as is exemplified by heavy government spending in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.[89]

Future researchers can expand on these findings in four main ways. First, researchers should continue to analyze the state of British populism in the years post-Withdrawal and post-COVID-19. The degree to which the Northern working class stays with the Conservative Party, as well as the degree to which libertarian-leaning Conservative MPs return to the cabinet in a post-deal cabinet shake-up, will determine how strong the bonds are between the new Conservative electorate and the Johnson government's appeal to the right. Second, future papers can employ the "Third Way" approach to other cross-national examples, such as to the French National Rally, populism across the political spectrum in Germany, or the rise of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and his continued grip on populist support. Many scholars have studied changes within political parties, especially of those in the United States, in terms of party shifts, populism, and ideology. Conducting similar interpretivist studies in countries other than the UK—for example, the post-Donald Trump Republican Party—may yield interesting results, patterns, and perspectives on mechanisms of action for intraparty changes.

Third, scholars should examine the Conservative Party's "libertarian-authoritarian" dichotomy described by this paper"s interviewees, both with respect to the Conservative Party and with respect to other political parties around the world. For instance, future studies might ask whether this dichotomy is useful in understanding contemporary or historical political realignments, with or without respect to populism. Finally, this paper holds that disaffected voters and politicians will quickly establish a feedback loop that advocates against globalization, supranational unions, and socioeconomic elites in the education system.

[89] Deborah Mattinson, "Red Wall Voters Are Sticking with Boris Johnson (For Now)," September 6, 2020, *The Guardian*, http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/sep/06/red-wall-voters-are-sticking-with-boris-johnson-for-now

As such, a fourth area that both policymakers and researchers should continue to explore is the impact of increasing income inequality and urban economic prosperity as a result of globalism. Policymakers and scholars should pay special attention to the impact of supranationalism on the collective identity and psyche of rural populations. For instance, scholars should test whether or not successful government measures to redistribute the earnings of globalization's "winners" to globalization's "losers" are successful at breaking this anti-political feedback loop and restoring the honor and self-image within rural communities facing stagnant wages, high unemployment, and underdeveloped infrastructure. Researchers should also examine the effect of mainstream parties' austerity policies on third-party populist rhetoric.

APPENDIX A: CODED THEMES AND CATEGORIES

Populism	*corruption; ***economic anxiety; ***globalization; **England/Wales; *English Midlands; ***Etonianism/Oxbridge; ***Euroscepticism; **Federal Europe; ***feedback loop; ***immigration; **nationalism; **Northern England; ***sovereignty; ***working-class
Brexit	**Chequers plan; **European Research Group; ***foreign labor; ***healthcare/NHS; **Irish backstop; ***Labour Party (and failures of); ***Leavers; **nasty/messy politics; ***Nigel Farage/UKIP; **protectionism; ***Remainers; **Tory Reform Group; **withdrawal agreement(s); *young vs. old Leavers
Conservative Party	***2019 election; ***authoritarians/Whigs; ***Boris Johnson; ***David Cameron; ***"do what it takes to win"; *John Major; ***libertarians/Tories; **Margaret Thatcher; **messaging; ***new composition; ***new electorate; ***new intake; **one-nation conservatism; **Red Wall; **Theresa May
Other	*British Commonwealth; **devolution; **Dominic Cummings; *Dominic Grieve; **Jeremy Corbyn; **John Bercow; *Keir Starmer; **Northern Ireland; ***Priti Patel; **Scottish independence; **social media; *Tony Blair

*Rarely Mentioned

**Commonly Mentioned

***Almost Always Mentioned

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