

FRIEND OR FOE: EXPLAINING THE DUTERTE ADMINISTRATION'S CHINA POLICY IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA¹

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"I am no American puppet. I am the president of a sovereign country and I am not answerable to anyone except the Filipino people."

-Rodrigo Duterte, September 2016

INTRODUCTION

The nature of the Philippines' foreign policy towards China in the South China Sea is puzzling. In the same year he was sworn into office as the President of the Republic of the Philippines on 30 June 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.³ Departing from his predecessor's more confrontational policy,⁴ he announced the Philippines' military and economic separation from the United States,⁵ and significantly downplayed its diplomatic win at the Permanent Court of

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³ 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>

⁴ 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>

⁵ 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>.

Arbitration by describing the 2016 arbitral ruling on Beijing's claims in the South China Sea as a "piece of trash paper."⁶ 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.⁷

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,"⁸ 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.⁹ 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,¹⁰ Duterte and his spokesperson Harry Roque conceded to Chinese involvement in the shoal so as to prove the fruits of Sino-Philippine friendship.¹¹

How can we make sense of the Philippine's 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 a theoretical framework to assert

com/world/asia/la-fg-philippines-us-20161020-snap-story.html

⁶ Richard J. Heydarian, "Duterte's Game in Beijing, *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*," August 29, 2019, <https://amti.csis.org/dutertes-game-in-beijing/>

⁷ de Castro, "The Duterte Administration's Appeasement," 177.

⁸ Paterno Esmaguél 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>

⁹ 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>

¹⁰ Carmela Fonbuena, "PH Military Encourages Fishermen to Return to Scarborough," *Rappler*, April 25, 2018, <http://www.rappler.com/nation/201069-nolcom-maritime-forum-lingayen>

¹¹ 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>

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.¹² 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.¹³

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 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

¹² "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/>

¹³ "Manila's Pivot to Pragmatism on the South China Sea," <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2017/08/14/manilas-pivot-to-pragmatism-on-the-south-china-sea/>.

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 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.¹⁴ 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 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.¹⁵

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,

¹⁴ 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>

¹⁵ Felix Chang, “Comparative Southeast Asian Military Modernization,” ASAN Forum, October 1, 2014, <http://www.theasanforum.org/comparative-southeast-asian-military-modernization-1/>

the State and War,”¹⁶ scholars in this group have accounted for changes in foreign policy through the lens of the individual, the state, and the international system. 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.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ Trinidad echoes the opinion that domestic factors were crucial in strengthening the Philippines’ strategic partnership with Japan.¹⁹ In this case, shifts in power balances were used as convenient 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.²⁰ 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.²¹ 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

¹⁶ See Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1959).

¹⁷ 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>

¹⁸ 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>

¹⁹ Dennis D. Trinidad, “Domestic Factors and Strategic Partnership: Redefining Philippines-Japan Relations in the 21st Century,” *Asian Politics & Policy* 9.4 (2017): 615, <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12352>

²⁰ 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>

²¹ Castro, “Explaining the Duterte Administration’s Appeasement Policy on China,” 21.

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,²² balancing,²³ accommodation,²⁴ burden-sharing,²⁵ and bandwagoning,²⁶ have acknowledged both the Philippines' reorientation towards China and its enduring alliance with and reliance on the US. However, their works 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.²⁷ The systematic reconceptualization of role

²² Aileen Baviera, "President Duterte's Foreign Policy Challenges," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 38.2 (2016): 205, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24916629>

²³ 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>

²⁴ 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

²⁵ 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>

²⁶ 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>

²⁷ 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

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.²⁸

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.²⁹ 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 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.³⁰

Holsti has further identified seventeen major roles expressed by states on the international stage.³¹ These roles include, but are not limited to, regional leader, active independent, anti-imperialist agent, faithful ally, and independent.³²

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 contextualised 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's role conceptions while the *other* reflects the expectations that other states have with respect to the

(New York, NY: Routledge, 2016): 16. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315623580>

²⁸ Holsti, "National Role Conceptions," 246.

²⁹ Holsti, "National Role Conceptions," 246.

³⁰ Holsti, "National Role Conceptions," 243; *see also* Breuning, "Role Theory Research," 30.

³¹ Holsti, "National Role Conceptions," 260-270.

³² Holsti's complete 17-role typology: 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.

state's foreign policy behavior.³³

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.³⁴ Similarly, Wish provides an arguably more systematic way of characterizing national role conceptions.³⁵ 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.³⁶

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.³⁷ 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.³⁸ Meanwhile, symbolic interactionist approaches justify the ability of individuals to define both their roles and social structures.³⁹

³³ 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.

³⁴ 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>

³⁵ Naomi B. Wish, "Foreign Policy Makers and Their National Role Conceptions," *International Studies Quarterly* 24.4 (1980): 534, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2600291>

³⁶ Wish, "Foreign Policy Makers," 536.

³⁷ 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>

³⁸ 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.

³⁹ Stryker and Statham, "Symbolic Interaction and Role Theory," 313.

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.⁴⁰ They define the study of inter-state conflict to represent "an actor occupying two or more roles simultaneously that have incompatible expectations."⁴¹ In rightly identifying the lack of domestic 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.⁴² 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.⁴³

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.⁴⁴ 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 1952.⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶ Beyond the

⁴⁰ 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>

⁴¹ 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 National Role Conceptions," 279.

⁴² Cantir and Kaarbo, "Unpacking Ego in Role Theory," 6.

⁴³ Cantir and Kaarbo, "Unpacking Ego in Role Theory," 6.

⁴⁴ Brummer and Thies, "The Contested Selection of National Role Conceptions," 274.

⁴⁵ 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.

⁴⁶ Marijke Breuning, "Contesting Belgium's Role in Development Cooperation," in *Domestic Role Contestation, Foreign Policy, and International Relations*, 73.

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.⁴⁷ 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.⁴⁸

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.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, role theory's ability to focus on both agency and structural factors renders it an attractive and organisationally 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,⁵⁰ thereby bridging the gap between agency and structure in the agent-structure divide.⁵¹ 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.⁵²

Second, role theory's value lies in providing new insight into small-state foreign policy making. As literature concerning small-state foreign policy making

⁴⁷ Keiko Hirata, "Role Theory and Japanese Security Policy," in *Domestic Role Contestation, Foreign Policy, and International Relations*, 56.

⁴⁸ 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>

⁴⁹ 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>

⁵⁰ Breuning, "Role Theory Research," 27.

⁵¹ Breuning, "Role Theory Research," 27.

⁵² 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>

have often prioritized structural factors over the perceptions of small states, viewing agents of the state as the reference point for foreign 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.⁵³ 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 Philippine's 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

⁵³ 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>

establishment, where the Philippine Department 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,⁵⁴ and provides the capacity to analyze alternative opinions in the event that foreign policy implementation corresponds with presidential advice.

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 recognised as the “sole organ and authority in external relations and is the country's sole representative with foreign nations.”⁵⁵ 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.⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, the DND's legitimacy lies in its defense against “external and internal threats to territorial integrity and sovereignty,”⁵⁸ so as to “create a secure and stable environment conducive to national development.”⁵⁹ Though the influence of the AFP has waned, as it has remained insulated from partisan politics since the overthrow of Ferdinand Marcos in 1986,⁶⁰ its historical

⁵⁴ 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>

⁵⁵ *Pimentel v. Romulo*, G.R. No. 158088, 501 Phil. 303 (S.C., July 6, 2005), <https://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/1/42912>

⁵⁶ *Pimentel v. Romulo*, G.R. No. 158088, 501 Phil. 303 (S.C., July 6, 2005), <https://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/1/42912>

⁵⁷ 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

⁵⁸ “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

⁵⁹ “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

⁶⁰ Aileen Baviera, “The Influence of Domestic Politics on Philippine Foreign Policy: The Case of

and enduring military relations with the US renders it an important foreign policy actor in this context.

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.⁶¹ 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.⁶² 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.”⁶³ Duterte’s liberty in shaping the composition of the Supreme Court has also resulted in this 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.⁶⁴

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>

⁶¹ 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>

⁶² 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. 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>

⁶³ Santos, “The Philippines Just Became More Authoritarian, Thanks to the People.”

⁶⁴ Edcel J. Ibarra, “Is There Judicial Independence in Duterte’s Philippines?” *Democratic*

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.”⁶⁵ This is the case as the general public is, as Baviera argues, often not perceived to be active or knowledgeable in foreign policy concerns.⁶⁶ Although there are indeed certain organised networks, non-governmental organisations, 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.⁶⁷ Often, scholars have analyzed oral sources, parliamentary debates, and utilized machine-coded content analysis, or resorted to interviews and surveys to identify role conceptions.⁶⁸

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 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

Erosion, December 2, 2019, <https://www.democratic-erosion.com/2019/12/02/is-there-judicial-independence-in-dutertes-philippines/>

⁶⁵ 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>

⁶⁶ Medeiros, Crane, and Heginbotham, *Pacific Currents: The Responses of U.S. Allies and Security Partners in East Asia to China’s Rise*, 98.

⁶⁷ Cantir and Kaarbo, “Unpacking Ego in Role Theory,” 19.

⁶⁸ Cantir and Kaarbo, “Unpacking Ego in Role Theory,” 19.

conceptions can still be obtained through the interpretation of implied roles.⁶⁹

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 instead 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 behavior to explain the tensions within the Philippine’s 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 causal mechanisms through which horizontal 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 various roles played by stakeholders in the Duterte administration.

⁶⁹ Brummer and Thies, “Active Independent or Faithful Ally?” 44.

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. This would likely be an avenue where role contestation would occur.

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.⁷⁰ 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."⁷¹ 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 foreign 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 President Duterte.

This role is clearly reflected in state documents as well as in Duterte's 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

⁷⁰ Holsti, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy," 262.

⁷¹ Holsti, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy," 262.

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.⁷²

In the same speech, he has also expressed 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.”⁷³ 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.⁷⁴

While his 2019 SONA did not reflect this sentiment to the same extent, official statements following his official visits to India and the Russian Federation in October 2019 have been fairly consistent with speeches from earlier years:

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 diversify-

⁷² 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/>

⁷³ 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/>

⁷⁴ 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/>

ing partnerships – rebalancing old ones and strengthening those that have traditionally been on the margins of our diplomacy.⁷⁵

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.⁷⁶

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.⁷⁷ 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 interest."⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ 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/>

⁷⁶ 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/>

⁷⁷ "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>

⁷⁸ "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

⁷⁹ Rodrigo R. Duterte, "Departure Speech of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte," *Official Gazette*

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.⁸⁰ The active choice to broaden the Philippine's 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."⁸¹ 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 the Cold War.⁸² 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

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/>

⁸⁰ 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>

⁸¹ Holsti, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy," 264.

⁸² Holsti, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy," 264.

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.⁸³

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.⁸⁴ 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.⁸⁵

Stronger references to US imperialism can also be found in Duterte's Departure 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

⁸³ 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/>

⁸⁴ Duterte, "Second State of the Nation Address."

⁸⁵ 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/>

have any master, except the Filipino people, nobody but nobody.⁸⁶

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 (which he has often dismissed as "jokes"), and support for changes to Philippine foreign policy,⁸⁷ he has previously acknowledged the Philippines' deep ties with the US and clarified his support for American liberalism as the "best pathway to a just and fair society."⁸⁸

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.⁸⁹ 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.⁹⁰ Along with the formation of alliance relationships, Holsti also stresses the importance of reciprocity,⁹¹ which in the context of the US-Philippine alliance, requires the less powerful state's support of the guarantor state.

In the Philippines, the AFP would most likely play 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 emphasised by the AFP.

⁸⁶ Duterte, "Departure Speech of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte."

⁸⁷ 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>

⁸⁸ 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-advisoriestupdate/24566-speech-of-president-rodrigo-roa-duterte-at-the-plenary-session-of-the-forum-of-the-valdai-international-discussion-club-in-russia>

⁸⁹ Holsti, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy," 267.

⁹⁰ Holsti, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy," 267-268.

⁹¹ Holsti, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy," 267.

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.⁹² 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.⁹³ The relationship was even confirmed by Duterte himself, who during a media interview in Cagayan de Oro City, admitted, “pro-American talaga ang mga sundalo natin [our soldiers are pro-American], that I cannot deny.”⁹⁴ As such, the Americanised 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 Philippines’ “less capable armed forces in the region.”⁹⁵ Lieutenant-General Edgar R. Fallorina also expressed his belief that the US “will always be at the service of [it’s] aspiration to build a vibrant, peaceful and progressive Filipino nation” during the C-130T aircraft acceptance ceremony at Colonel Jesus Villamor Air Base.⁹⁶

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

⁹² “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.

⁹³ Tran, “Personalising the Philippines’ China Policy,” 10.

⁹⁴ 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>

⁹⁵ 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>

⁹⁶ “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>

token number of American servicemen who are confined mainly in Zamboanga City,⁹⁷ and assured the people and allies that “US-Philippine defence relations remain rock solid.”⁹⁸ 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.⁹⁹

Commentaries on joint exercises further reveal the US and AFP’s shared 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.¹⁰⁰ He has further acknowledged that the “friendship and fight continues alongside one another” even in the face of contemporary challenges.¹⁰¹ AFP Chief-of-Staff General Benjamin Madrigal Jr. likewise highlights the camaraderie fostered by the “enduring defense partnership,” where “troops train[ing] together and hurdll[ing] developed scenarios” have “relive[d] the times when Filipinos and American soldiers fought side by side in defense of peace, freedom and

⁹⁷ “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>

⁹⁸ “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>

⁹⁹ 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>

¹⁰⁰ Priam Nepomuceno, “Balikatan 2019, Tribute to PH, US WW2 Veterans,” *Philippine News Agency*, April 4, 2019, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1066461>

¹⁰¹ Priam Nepomuceno, “Balikatan 2019, Tribute to PH, US WW2 Veterans,” <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1066461>

democracy.”¹⁰² 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.¹⁰³ Arevalo and Madrigal’s views were also consistent with that of AFP Chief-of-Staff General Carlito Galvez,¹⁰⁴ Lieutenant-General Emanuel Salamat,¹⁰⁵ and Vice-Commander Major-General Reynaldo M. Aquino,¹⁰⁶ who deem the US-Philippine partnership to be an exceptional opportunity for both parties.

Independent Role Conceptions: Department of National Defense and Foreign Affairs

Statements affirming commitment to making “policy decisions according to the state’s own interests rather than for the objectives of other states” are definitive of an independent role conception.¹⁰⁷ Unlike the active independent role, which requires actors to actively expand relations with other states, independents often stress the element of self-determination.¹⁰⁸ 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.¹⁰⁹ Though both departments have individual bureaucratic interests, both are similar in that, unlike Duterte, they respect time-honoured protocols and are more deliberate and measured in their policies.¹¹⁰

¹⁰² Priam Nepomuceno, “Balikatan’ Highlights Historic PH-US Military Ties,” *Philippine News Agency*, April 1, 2019, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1066156>

¹⁰³ Priam Nepomuceno, “Balikatan’ 2019 to Focus on Territorial Defense, Counter-Terror,” *Philippine News Agency*, April 2, 2019, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1066242>.

¹⁰⁴ 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>

¹⁰⁵ Priam Nepomuceno, “Annual Military Exercises Enhance PH Security,” *Philippine News Agency*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1034523>.

¹⁰⁶ “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>

¹⁰⁷ Holsti, “National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy,” 268.

¹⁰⁸ Holsti, “National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy,” 268.

¹⁰⁹ The DND is represented by Defense Secretary Delfin N. Lorenzana. There have also been four different Foreign Secretary appointments since Duterte’s inauguration: Perfecto Yasay Jr. as an interim, Undersecretary Enrique Manalo as acting secretary, Alan Peter Cayetano and incumbent Teodoro Locsin Jr.

¹¹⁰ Glenda M. Gloria, “Where Does the Military Stand with Duterte?” *Rappler*, April 16, 2017,

The analysis of sources from the DND and DFA suggests some alignment with Duterte's independent foreign policy.¹¹¹ 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."¹¹² 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.¹¹³

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,"¹¹⁴ 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."¹¹⁵ Locsin's independent approach can also be deduced from his

<http://www.rappler.com/thought-leaders/166768-military-stand-duterte-commander-in-chief>

¹¹¹ Priam Nepomuceno, "Balikatan' Evolving through the Years," *Philippine News Agency*, May 7, 2018, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1034398>

¹¹² 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>

¹¹³ 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

¹¹⁴ 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>; Teodoro 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/>

¹¹⁵ "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->

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.¹¹⁶

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 common threats,¹¹⁷ it nonetheless recognizes the value of strengthening long-standing relations with the US.¹¹⁸ 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.”¹¹⁹

fortunate-and-humbled-to-serve-with-the-best-in-the-government

¹¹⁶ Locsin, “Friend to Friends, Enemy to Enemies.”

¹¹⁷ Nepomuceno, “‘Balikatan’ Evolving through the Years.”

¹¹⁸ 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>

¹¹⁹ 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/>

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."¹²⁰ 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."¹²¹ 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.¹²² 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 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 Philippine's China policy in the South China Sea.

TENSIONS IN FOREIGN POLICY: 2019 REED BANK INCIDENT

This section provides an illustration of role theory and horizontal role contestation by mapping the identified role conceptions to Philippine

¹²⁰ Vibar, "Locsin: US remains Philippines' True Friend, Natural Ally."

¹²¹ 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>

¹²² Alan P. Cayetano, "A Conversation with Alan Peter Cayetano," <https://www.cfr.org/event/conversation-alan-peter-cayetano>

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 Reed Bank incident 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.¹²³ Like China, who claimed that it was counterproductive to make assumptions out of the "accidental collision" which would affect the China-Philippines friendship,¹²⁴ 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."¹²⁵ 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.¹²⁶

¹²³ 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-rodriigo-duterte-shrugs-reed-bank-incident-defend-his>

¹²⁴ 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/>

¹²⁵ 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>

¹²⁶ Pia Ranada, "Duterte Skirts PH Sovereign Rights in Recto Bank," <https://www.rappler.com/nation/duterte-skirts-philippines-sovereign-rights-recto-bank>; see also Richard J. Heydarian,

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.”¹²⁷ 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,¹²⁸ and criticized China for its lack of “moral and possibly legal” imperatives and its violation of Article 98 of the UNCLOS.¹²⁹ 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.¹³⁰ 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.”¹³¹

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 was consistent in his support for China and welcomed China’s offer to conduct a joint investigation that could satisfactorily conclude the episode,¹³² Locsin insisted on separate investigations on the basis that

“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-militarisation-south-china-sea-needs-review>

¹²⁷ Jeffrey 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>

¹²⁸ Paterno Esmaguél II, “Locsin Hits ‘Collision’ of Philippine, Chinese Vessels,” *Rappler*, June 12, 2019, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/dfa-reaction-chinese-vessel-sinks-filipino-boat>

¹²⁹ 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>

¹³⁰ 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>

¹³¹ 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>

¹³² 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->

a joint investigation would encroach upon the sovereignty of both countries.¹³³

Different national role conceptions held by Duterte and his administration can be used to explain contractionary 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, 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 oppositionists, independent senators, and even his allies who favoured a tougher Philippine position in the contested waters.¹³⁴

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.¹³⁵ The independent role conception is further accentuated by Locsin's decision to conduct independent investigations, via the joint Philippine Coast Guard-Maritime Industry and the Maritime Safety Committee (2019). Both departments have also refrained from openly supporting US military intervention in the region despite US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and US Ambassador to the Philippines Kim Sung floating the MDT as a viable solution to Chinese aggression.¹³⁶

Even though the AFP's role as a faithful ally was not apparent during the debate, it was heavily featured after the incident took place. As the collision reinforced the threat of Chinese militarisation and provided the Philippines with

investigation-recto-bank-incident

¹³³ 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/teddyboyllocsin/status/1139835369124294658>

¹³⁴ Heydarian, "Duterte Shrugs Off Reed Bank Incident."

¹³⁵ 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>

¹³⁶ 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>

evidence of China's expansionism in contested waters, the crisis strengthened the AFP's support for closer cooperation with the US against China.¹³⁷ This is evidenced by Lieutenant-General Macairog Alberto and the US Army Pacific Command's decision to 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.¹³⁸ 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, from Chinese militia forces,¹³⁹ thus enabling both countries to introduce new operational guidelines that can specifically target emerging threats in the South China Sea.

The Reed Bank incident has therefore demonstrated 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.

¹³⁷ Richard J. Heydarian, "The Reed Bank Crisis: A Call for Upgrading the Philippine-US Alliance," July 10, 2019, <https://amti.csis.org/the-reed-bank-crisis-a-call-for-upgrading-the-philippine-u-s-alliance/>

¹³⁸ 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>

¹³⁹ 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>

CONCLUSION

I have attempted to use role theory, and more specifically, horizontal role contestation, as a theoretical framework to account for the Duterte 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 some insight could be gained from the application of role theory and horizontal role contestation, I am clearly aware of my 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 nonetheless. Given research constraints, the lack of focus on the Philippine legislative and judicial branches, as well as public opinion, 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 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 would reveal even more precise role conceptions within the administration as a whole. Moreover, since defense and foreign affairs representatives may have had former links to the military, the effect of dual role conceptions by an individual on a department's role remains unexplored.

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