



THESIS - Vol. 9, No. 1, Spring 2020

International Research Journal

 Kolegji AAB
CILËSI. LIDERSHIP. SUKSESI

ISSN: 1848-4298 (Print)

ISSN: 2623-8381(Online)

Leader-driven Change from Aquino to Duterte: Towards a Redirection or Restructuring in Philippine Foreign Policy?

Andrea Chloe Wong

How to cite this article:

Wong, A. Ch. (2020). Leader-driven Change from Aquino to Duterte: Towards a Redirection or Restructuring in Philippine Foreign Policy? *Thesis*. Vol. 9, No. 1. (109-136).



Published online: June 30, 2020



Article received on the 23rd of March, 2020.

Article accepted on the 26th of May, 2020.



Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interests.

***Leader-driven Change from Aquino to Duterte:
Towards a Redirection or Restructuring in
Philippine Foreign Policy?***

Andrea Chloe Wong
University of Canterbury, New Zealand
achloew@gmail.com

Abstract

The global perceptions of leaders have significant influence in a state's foreign policy. In the Philippines' case, the striking contrast between Presidents Benigno Aquino III, who possesses a moralist and liberalist views, and Duterte, who holds a legalist and realist global perceptions, led to significant changes in their foreign policies. These are evident in their conflicting stance on two cases involving the death penalty of a Filipino worker in Indonesia in 2013; and the country's maritime arbitration case with China filed in 2013 and eventually won in 2016. Their divergence caused important leader-driven changes, which may result in either a redirection or a restructuring in the country's foreign policy.

Keywords: *leaders, global perceptions, foreign policy, Philippine Foreign Policy.*

Article received on the 23rd of March, 2020.

Article accepted on the 26th of May, 2020.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Introduction

Abraham Lincoln once told his cabinet: "Gentlemen, the vote is 11 to 1 and the 1 has it."

Such statement reveals the significant power and influence of leaders in making decisions concerning the nation. Snyder et al (1962, p. 65) asserts that: "It is one of our basic methodological choices to define the state as its official decision makers – those whose authoritative acts are, to all intents and purposes, the acts of the state."

Generally, a leader acting in behalf of his/her country influences state policies and actions. In matters related to the nation's foreign policy, such individual "shapes history because it is their choices and decisions that drive the course of events" (Breuning 2007, p. 11). When a single individual has the power to make choices concerning how a state is going to respond to a foreign policy problem, he/she becomes the "predominant leader" acting as the critical decision unit. Hermann et. al (2001, p. 84) describes such leader as the one person that has "the ability to commit the resources of the society and the power to make a decision that cannot be readily reversed."

This "predominance" of state leadership is highlighted in this study, emphasizing the individual level of analysis in determining the extent of its influence in a state's foreign policy. It underscores Herman's (1976, p. 328) contention that "the more authority (or personal control) heads of state have over foreign policy, the more likely their personal characteristics are to affect foreign policy behavior." Culling from studies of political psychology and cognitive theory, Alden and Aran (2012, p. 19) argues that it is important to "focus on the mind of the decision maker, its powerful effect on the framing of particular foreign policy issues, and the

consequent impact on the formulation and selection of policy options.”

Specifically, this study examines the global perceptions of state leaders that guide their foreign policies and consequently affect state actions. How a leader views the world provides the general notion of his/her predisposition towards international affairs. In effect, a leader’s global perceptions influence how he/she will define the situation when confronted with an international or bilateral issue, and consequently influence the approach or strategy the government will adopt in its foreign policy.

And with the examination of the global perceptions of individual leaders, there is a high probability of encountering differences between them that may result in changes in the state’s foreign policy. This is especially apparent when examining successive leaderships with divergent perspectives and approaches in foreign policy issues. However, this study acknowledges Gustavsson’s (1999) contention that leaders are seen as only one factor among many that may influence policy change. In fact, it also recognizes the valid assertions of scholars such as Foyle (1999) and Greenstein (1969) who have previously warned not to assume that leaders “always” matter (given the existence of other political, structural, and institutional constraints influencing policy). Yet for the purpose of this study, it emphasizes the importance of these individuals and their own unique global perceptions, which provide powerful explanations in the modification of a state’s foreign policy.

Specifically, this study subscribes to Hermann’s (1990) theory of “leader-driven change.” Such change is the result of “the determined efforts of an authoritative policy maker, frequently the head of government, who imposes his own vision of the basic redirection necessary in foreign policy (p.11).” In particular, the leader-driven change in this study

examines one head of state to another. This is in contrast to “self-correcting” leader-driven change, which occurs when the head of the existing government elect to move in a different policy direction or change course in his/her foreign policy (Hermann 1990, p. 5). Either way, both types of leader-driven change reinforce Gustavsson’s (1999) argument that at the individual level of analysis, the state decision-maker is at the core of the foreign policy change.

The focus on leader-driven change and its impact on the state’s foreign policy raises the following questions: Since leaders have the responsibility of making decisions in behalf of the state, how do their global perceptions shape a country’s foreign policy in dealing with international issues or problems? And in examining leaders individually, how do their different global perceptions affect changes on how the state pursues its external affairs? To what extent do their diverse perspectives and the consequent changes affect the shift in the country’s foreign policy?

To address these questions, this study provides an assessment on the global perceptions of Philippine Presidents Benigno Aquino III (2010-2016) and Rodrigo Duterte (2016-2022) and their impact in the country’s foreign policy. Aquino holds a moralist and liberalist views, while Duterte possesses legalist and realist global perceptions in addressing external issues. Their differences are evident in how they addressed the two cases examined in this study. The first focuses on Mary Jane Veloso, an overseas Filipino worker who was sentenced to death in Indonesia for drug trafficking in 2013. The second case discusses the Philippines’ arbitration case against China on the West Philippine Sea, which it filed in 2013 and eventually won in 2016.

Both cases bring to light their differences in global perceptions, resulting in significant changes that correspond to

a particular shift in the country's foreign policy. This study then distinguishes two types of change and its consequent foreign policy shift--- changes in problem/goal result in the 'redirection' of the state's foreign policy, while a change in international orientation cause a 'restructuring' in its foreign policy.

This study argues that the divergent global perceptions between leaders resulted in changes in the state's policy goals. These are manifested in policy statements or actions of Duterte that departs from or rejects Aquino's initial problem stipulations or prior goals on both cases. But despite the striking contrast between their global perceptions, this does not translate into the transformation of the country's international orientation, which requires a pattern of changes in its external activities and partnerships. Thus, this study contends that the Philippines experiences a redirection and not a restructuring of its foreign policy, and consequently reflected a "weakened" stance for the country and inconsistencies in its actions.

This evaluation of global perceptions of leaders and foreign policy change aims to further add to the literature on leader-driven change affecting a state's approach on international issues. Though there are several studies (Hermann 1990, Holsti 1982, and Breuning 2007 among others) examining the influence of leaders, there are only a few (such as Doerer 2013) which discussed the degree in which they impact the shift in foreign policy. This is considered relevant because examining the peculiarities of successive state leaderships can provide scholars, policy makers, and observers an informed understanding on the policy changes they may initiate and their possible impact on the country.

Moreover, an analysis on the Philippines may be an interesting reference for other countries that are highly influenced by leader-driven changes in its foreign policy. This is

particularly relevant for states with similar personality-based political culture and underdeveloped political institutions. By examining the global perceptions of leaders, this study therefore seeks to provide observers a cautionary indication of a country's policies and actions, and to make sense of its possible alterations as reflected in the case of the Philippines. At the conclusion of this study, it then recommends future analysis of the global perceptions of successive leaders to identify their differences and their subsequent policy changes. This should determine the prospects of whether the country will undergo a restructuring or a redirection in its foreign policy.

Global Perceptions of Leaders

This study's focus on leader-driven change takes its reference on previous literature on American presidents and their foreign policies. In Neustadt's work on *Presidential Power* (1990), he focused on the "personal" rather than "institutional" presidency, which emphasizes on the importance of leadership style. Although he initially puts each American president in an institutional context that constrain their actions, Neustadt's description of presidential power emphasized the fundamental importance of their personal characteristics. He also discussed the ability of presidents to obtain the kind of "personal influence of an effective sort on governmental action," which he defined as presidential power. Such emphasis on the "personal" presidency is especially relevant in the Philippines' case with a less developed foreign policy organization in political institutions. As claimed by Hermann (1976, p. 328) in her earlier work, "the personal characteristics of the predominant leaders will more likely impact its foreign policy in underdeveloped states."

Another important literature is Barber's (1972) book entitled *The Presidential Character*, which examines the 'personal' in the presidency. It employs psychobiography to explain the character, worldview, and style of modern presidents. He explains that 'style' reflects the habitual way a president performs his political role; 'character' seen as the way in which a president orients toward life and his own merits; and 'worldview' involves the leader's primary and politically relevant beliefs (1972, p. 6). Barber notes that these components of the presidential character fit together in a dynamic package understandable in psychological terms.

While presidential style and character are important, this study emphasizes on the worldview that has significant implications on the global perceptions of Philippine presidents. How situations are assessed will be based on a leader's observations of reality that seeks to simplify and organize the external environment. Departing from 'strict rationality,' these perceptions provide insights into why a state behaves the way it does from the way its decision makers identify their situation (Snyder et al 1962, p. 65). According to their 'definition of the situation,' the perceptions of leaders influence their decisions and the implementation of their state's foreign policy. It also introduces distortions in how leaders perceive reality based on three associated elements:

'Belief' refers to a leader's fundamental assumptions about the world affects a leader's interpretation of his environment and consequently the strategies that the leader employs; 'Ideology' involves a set of values and principles that determine and guide his/her behaviour; 'Images' affect how a leader views international events as well as other countries and leaders. Such images are rooted in a leader's stereotypes, biases, and other subjective sources (Boulding 1959).

The examination of a leader's belief, images, and ideology provides the basis of his/her general orientation or predisposition in international affairs. These interrelated factors of the leader's global perceptions tend to shape the content or substance of the state's foreign policy. Through its assessment, one is able to comprehend his/her predispositions and approaches in dealing with a foreign policy problem---"how he will define the situation and the style of behavior he will likely emphasize" (Hermann 1980, p. 12-13). Having knowledge of how a leader views the world provides important indications into a country's policy stance and actions on international issues.

Changes in Foreign Policy: Towards Redirection or Restructuring?

In the assessment of the leaders' global perceptions, their differences manifest shifts in the state's foreign policy in varying degrees. This study thus deviates from Eidenfalk's (2009) assumption that "the process of policy change begins with a change in the environment, and not with the individual decision-maker," though this is a common probability. Instead, it argues that policy adjustments can begin with individuals, who have certain global perspectives that can contribute to the particular characteristics of the change in policy.

This is particularly evident when examining two successive leaders with different global perceptions that result in changes in a country's foreign policy adjustments. In fact, the degree of divergence in the global perceptions of leaders determine the level of change in a state's foreign policy. Thus, this study contends that the lesser the differences in perception, the less drastic the changes in the state's foreign policy. Whereas the wider the differences in the leader's global

perception, the more radical the changes in the state's foreign policy.

Such modifications can be subjected to four graduated levels of change. To identify these levels, the definition of 'foreign policy' is initially established. According to Hermann (1990, p.5), it is a "program (plan) designed by authoritative policy makers to address problem or pursue goals that entails action toward foreign entities. This program presumably specifies the conditions and instruments of statecraft." Based on this definition, he enumerates the levels of policy changes as follows:

(1) Adjustment Changes. Changes occur in the level of effort (greater or lesser) and/or in the scope of recipients (such as refinement in the class of targets). What is done, how it is done, and the purposes for which it is done remain unchanged.

(2) Program Changes. Changes are made in the methods or means by which the goal or problem is addressed. It involves new instruments of statecraft (such as the pursuit of a goal through diplomatic negotiation rather than military force). What is done and how it is done changes, but the purposes for which it is done remain unchanged.

(3) Problem/Goal Changes. The initial problem or goal that the policy addresses is replaced or simply forfeited. In this foreign policy change, the purposes themselves are modified.

(4) International Orientation Changes. This entails a basic shift in the state's international role and activities. Not one policy but many are more or less simultaneously changed.

With emphasis on the last two levels of change, this study argues that they correspond to a characterization of the state's foreign policy shift: changes in problem/goal results in the 'redirection' of the state's foreign policy, while changes in international orientation causes a 'restructuring' of its foreign policy.

This argument builds on Hermann's (1990) discussion on changes in a state's foreign policy. According to him, "the last three forms of change--- change in means (program), ends (goal), or overall orientation indicate a foreign policy redirection" (p.6). But this study deviates from Hermann's (1990) definition and contends that problem/goal changes (which commonly starts with adjustments and program changes in a state's foreign policy) can already be characterized as a foreign policy 'redirection.' Such change involves policy statements or actions that are incompatible, if not open rejection, of previous goals. This study then detaches the change in international orientation from Hermann's (1990) definition of foreign policy redirection, and instead separately labels it as foreign policy 'restructuring.'

Such transformation in the state's international orientation has graver implications than problem/goal changes in its foreign policy. Holsti (1982, p. 20) defines international orientation as the "general attitudes and commitments toward the external environment, and is rarely revealed in any one decision, but results from a series of cumulative decisions to adjust state's objectives, values, and interests with conditions and characteristics of the external environments." And according to Hermann (1990, p. 5-6), "in contrast to lesser forms of change in terms of the state's approach to a single issue, an orientation change involves dramatic shifts in both words and deeds in multiple issue areas with respect to the state's international role and activities as well as its relationship with

external entities.” In particular, such change usually occurs “both in the pattern of partnerships (trade shifts from US to China) and in the type of activity (a country withdraws from an international organization).” This study then characterizes such change in international orientation as foreign policy restructuring because of the gravity of its effect and its prolonged impact on the state.

Examining the Predominance of Philippine Presidents in Foreign Policy

The case of the Philippines highlights the leaders’ important role in crafting and implementing its foreign policy. Philippine presidents are considered “predominant leaders” who have the power and authority to make critical decisions on the country’s external affairs. With constitutional authority, the president’s power has wide political latitude to make quicker and more decisive actions concerning the country’s external affairs. Often referred to as the chief architect of foreign policy, a Philippine president “can redefine priorities, dictate the tone and posture in the international community, and even personally manage diplomacy with selected countries if he/she so wishes, subject to some structural constraints” (Baviera 2015). As Preston (2010, p.3) describes, this type of leader can “authoritatively allocate resources and personally make policy decisions for the state, in which case an analytical focus upon the leaders themselves tells us a great deal about their likely foreign policies.”

This study therefore seeks to focus on the ‘predominance’ of Philippine presidents as a major entity in the country’s foreign policy, though it also recognizes other relevant factors. It acknowledges the significance of Preston’s (2010) proposition to take a more nuanced approach that requires “examining his/her given situational contexts in order to determine how

much the environment will allow restructuring, and how much these constrain their behaviors (p. 3-4).” However, such assessment involving institutional or political restrictions have limited constraints in how Philippine presidents make or implement policies. And because of its personality-based political culture, the Philippine presidency possesses much leeway to put his/her personal stamp on the nation’s foreign policy. In fact, an assessment of the Philippines’ international affairs and external relations is generally based on an evaluation of presidential administrations such as the Marcos foreign policy (1965-1986), the Ramos (1992-1998) foreign policy, or the Arroyo foreign policy (2001-2010).

To examine Philippine foreign policy, it is important to initially acknowledge the challenging task in assessing the global perceptions of Aquino and Duterte. Such task requires getting ‘inside’ the minds of leaders to understand their attitudes and beliefs with respect to a particular issue (Arnold Wolfers 1962). This is the reason why Wilkenfeld et al. (1980, p.42) concludes that this “psychological domain is the most elusive and least amenable to systematic empirical analysis.”

Yet despite the difficulties of direct observation, it is still possible to obtain data and make some fairly accurate judgments on the global perceptions of Aquino and Duterte. Indirect means are utilized in this study, which include analyzing speeches and public statements, drawing insights from public interviews or biographies, making inferences about traits and motivations from behavior, evaluating their public reputations, or relating previous foreign policy decisions and actions to suggest a particular inclination. This indirect approach is inspired by Margaret Hermann (1976; 1980) who developed a rigorous leader assessment-at-a-distance technique from a huge collection of path-breaking research that explored how leaders shape and affect foreign policy

Global Perceptions of Benigno Aquino III

Aquino was born on 8 February 1960 in Manila, Philippines. His father was Benigno Aquino Jr., who was regarded as a national hero after his assassination for his unrelenting pursuit to reinstitute democracy in the Philippines during the dictatorial regime of Ferdinand Marcos. His mother was Corazon Cojuangco Aquino, the most prominent figure of the 1986 People Power Revolution that toppled Marcos and led to her installation as the first female president of the country.

With his political pedigree, Aquino also established his career in politics. A fourth-generation politician, he started his political life as a member of the House of Representatives for nine years, and subsequently served as a senator for three years. Aquino eventually became the 15th President of the Philippines after winning the 2010 national elections. Never considering himself as the nation's "saviour," Aquino pledged to "set the example" himself to be an ethical and honest public servant.

Aquino's perceptions about the world is largely shaped by his morals beliefs and liberal ideology. Because of the political legacies of his parents, Aquino continued to espouse democratic values in his governance platform. Often regarded as an 'accidental president,' he is also regarded as a "unique conception of political ambition based on a moralistic fulfilment of a larger obligation to the collective" (Heydarian 2013).

Aquino is also influenced by the images he holds about the world. Though he perceives the anarchic world as unfair and corrupt, Aquino believes that through democratic institutions and good governance, it can be better. It is a paradigm that "assumes the application of reason in paving a way for a more orderly, just and cooperative world, restraining disorder that can be policed by institutional reforms" (Dizon and Cabalza 2016).

Global Perceptions of Rodrigo Duterte

Rodrigo Duterte was born on March 28, 1945 in Leyte, Philippines. His father served as a local mayor and governor, while his mother was a public school teacher. He became Davao City mayor in 1988, re-elected six times, and occupied the position for more than twenty years before becoming the country's president. Duterte succeeded Aquino as the 16th president of the Philippines after winning the 2016 national elections.

Duterte won the presidency as an anti-elite politician with a tough-talking attitude. According to Tanyag (2018), Duterte was skilled in harnessing public emotions as a "constitutive element of governance such as the propagation of oppositional thinking of 'us versus them.'" Based on his promise of overnight salvation, he has effectively tapped into the public's frustrations over government inefficiencies led by the corrupt and insensitive political elites.

Duterte's perception about the world is shaped by his personal beliefs and ideology. He believes in the principle behind 'consequentialism' in which the end justifies the means (that are presumably wrong) to achieve a supposed (and often uncertain) outcome. This is reflected in his autocratic tendencies that promote the methodical use of the state's coercive power in order to achieve prompt implementation of policies. An example of such autocratic tendency is his administration's brutal 'war on drugs' that allegedly involved extra-judicial killings of mere drug suspects without due process.

A novice in international relations, Duterte is also influenced by the images he holds about the world. He views the anarchic world in "black and white, with hardly any shades of grey in between" (Misalucha-Willoughby 2016). This resonates with his own philosophy that emphasizes less on morality, which he regards as irrelevant in determining

whether the state's action is good or bad, as long as it paves the way for the pursuit of his version of national interest or political goals. To survive in the anarchic world, he believes that the state should exercise its relative power to safeguard its interests.

Case Analysis

To assess the impact of Aquino and Duterte's contrasting global perceptions, this study presents cases that reveal the consequent differences in the country's foreign policy and approach.

The Philippines' Petition to Save the Life of Filipino Worker in Indonesia

Mary Jane Veloso, a Filipino worker, was arrested in Yogyakarta International Airport in April 2010 for carrying heroin in her luggage. Throughout her trial, she maintained her innocence, claiming that she was duped by an international criminal syndicate and unknowingly brought drugs on her way to work as a maid in Indonesia. Yet Veloso was eventually sentenced to death for drug trafficking and she was scheduled to be executed by firing squad on 29 April 2015. President JokoWidodo earlier rejected appeals for clemency, maintaining that countries with nationals facing death sentences in Indonesia should respect the 'supremacy' of its laws.

With mounting pressures from the Filipino public, the Aquino administration made numerous appeals to save Veloso. It filed several requests for judicial review on Veloso's case and pleaded to commute her sentence to life imprisonment. It also cited the ASEAN Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT), an important treaty that aims to fight transnational crimes in the region.

At the eleventh hour before Veloso's scheduled execution, Aquino made a phone call and talked directly to the Foreign Minister of Indonesia. This was considered a breach in normal diplomatic protocol when state leaders are supposed to directly talk with their counterparts. In that last-minute phone call, Aquino invoked the ASEAN treaty and notified Indonesia that it had custody over Veloso's recruiters who were allegedly involved in human trafficking and drug smuggling. He then requested the Indonesian Foreign Minister to spare Veloso so she can testify as a witness in these illegal activities.

After Aquino's phone call and hours before Veloso's scheduled execution, the Indonesian government granted her a temporary reprieve. It announced that the deferment of Veloso's execution was for her to testify against members of the criminal syndicate who victimized her. While it continued with the execution of other foreign nationals convicted of drug trafficking, the Indonesian government explained that its decision to delay the execution of Veloso was to fully ascertain if she was just a mule, and not a drug dealer.

Case Status:

President Widodo insisted that Veloso's death sentence was "not a cancellation but a postponement." He maintained that her fate would depend on prevailing laws in Indonesia and how the Philippine court would rule on the case against her recruiters.

In contrast to Aquino's vigorous efforts, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte meanwhile admitted that he felt awkward about "begging" President Widodo to spare Veloso's life. Because of his hard-line stance against illegal drugs, Duterte announced that he would be ready to accept Indonesia's decision about the case and "we will respect the judgement of its courts. We will honor what the laws are in

their country. We will not impose. We will not demand. Nothing. (Kabiling 2016)."

In January 2018, the Philippine court barred efforts to secure Veloso's testimony in Indonesia, stating that this would violate the constitutional rights of the accused. Such right entitles her alleged recruiters to confront Veloso in person. However, the Indonesian government does not allow foreign convicts to temporarily leave the country even for the purpose of providing testimonies, and also prohibits deposition via online video-conferencing. In the end, Indonesia may eventually revoke Veloso's temporary reprieve from death row, and proceed with her execution if there will be no significant developments in her case.

Aquino's 'Moralist' vs. Duterte's 'Legalist' Global Perception

Aquino's utmost consideration for the sanctity of human rights and the preservation of life reflect his moralist global perception. This brought about his profound keenness to fight for Veloso's survival, which is manifested in his strong commitment and proactive stance to save her.

As a result, the Philippines under his administration made various efforts to spare her from the death penalty. This included requesting for judicial review, invoking a regional treaty, and making a national appeal to President Widodo. Instead of conceding her fate to the death penalty, the country was able to convince Indonesia to make her a state witness that eventually kept her alive (albeit temporarily pending her ongoing case). The decision of the Indonesian government to grant Veloso a last-minute suspension of her execution is considered a temporary victory for the Philippines.

In contrast to Aquino, Duterte subscribes to a more legalist perspective that focus less on morality in determining or judging state actions. He stresses more on the respect for

other countries' sovereignty and rule of law. He believes that anyone involved in illegal drugs should be punished. And with his own anti-narcotics campaign, Duterte exhibits lack of concern over Veloso's death penalty case in Indonesia.

His global perception resulted in the Philippines' indifferent policy stance on Veloso's case--- bequeathing her fate into the hands of Indonesia's prevailing laws, minus the moral considerations. The country's "hands-off" attitude under the Duterte led to its diminished resolve to save Veloso without any drive to find alternatives to address the legal impediments in her ongoing case in Indonesia's court.

The Philippines' Arbitration Case against China

In April 2012, the Philippine Navy deployed its military vessel to arrest the Chinese fishermen illegally poaching in the Scarborough Shoal. China quickly dispatched maritime vessels to prevent the Philippine Navy from capturing its fishermen. With both countries' vessels squaring off at the shoal, the Philippines and China found themselves locked in a "face-to-face test of sovereignty" (Ratner 2013, 1). However, the Chinese government scored a tactical victory when the Philippines "conceded a dramatic ten-week standoff by withdrawing its maritime vessels, under the facing-saving auspices of an oncoming typhoon" in June 2012 (Ratner 2013, 2). Since then, China has retained its maritime vessels at the shoal, effectively seizing it and exercising control of the area.

Since the 2012 Scarborough Shoal standoff, the Philippines under the Aquino administration had to employ diplomatic and legal approaches to counterbalance China's illegal activities and aggressive intrusions. Its reaction on the escalating maritime tensions has been 'sustained defiance.' According to Baviera (2016, 125): "These incidents helped build

its resolve to do exactly what China asks it not to do---internationalize the South China Sea disputes and invite a greater role for the US in the resolution of the disputes.” And most importantly, his administration raised the stakes by filing a case against China before an Arbitral Tribunal under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in January 2013.

Following the three-year proceedings, the PCA finally issued its decision in July 2016 in favor of the Philippines. The Chinese government rejected the arbitral tribunal’s decision. But for the Philippines, the arbitral proceedings were intended to achieve a peaceful and durable solution to the maritime dispute.

Arbitration Award Status:

After Duterte assumed the presidency in 2016, his administration focused on reviving bilateral ties that have been effectively frozen during the Aquino administration. Thus when the PCA delivered its ruling on the Philippines’ case against China merely two weeks into his presidency, Duterte chose to downplay the country’s legal victory. In his state visit to China in October 2016, he regarded the tribunal’s ruling as “a piece of paper with four corners,” and that the case would “take the back seat” in his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Further, Duterte stated: “The arbitral award gives us the right. China has the historical right. And they’re insisting. In this situation, do we argue, or do we just talk? I would say, let us put it [off] to some other day (Zhen 2016).” His policy statement caused a diminished international pressure on China to comply with the award that is favorable to the Philippines. His administration’s effort to bilaterally engage China marks a reversal in Philippine foreign policy since he took office in June 2016.

Aquino's 'Liberalist' vs. Duterte's 'Realist' Global Perceptions

Aquino's liberal perspectives are reflected in diplomatic approaches that sought to avoid military confrontations with China. This included the Aquino administration's signing of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) with the US in 2014, which was perceived as a strategic move to counterbalance China's heavy-handed behaviour over the South China Sea. The agreement allowed American forces to have strategic rotational presence in the Philippines and granted extensive access to the country's military facilities. EDCA is expected to be the Philippines' deterrent against any military confrontation with China.

In addition, Aquino's liberal perspective is manifested in his emphasis on regional institutions to address maritime issues with China. He lobbied his ASEAN colleagues to unify as a bloc and to seek a central position among claimant states in the region. He also renewed calls for the immediate adoption of the implementing guidelines and a more binding code of conduct in response to Chinese maritime intrusions.

Most importantly, Aquino's liberal perspective is demonstrated in his adherence to international legal institutions. Through the arbitration case, he deems that a sovereign state such as the Philippines can gain an equal footing in the court of law despite the apparent power asymmetry with China. Aquino's idealist convictions and liberal principles asserts that "right is might" rather than "might makes right."

Such legal effort revealed the Philippines' strong commitment to defend its maritime interests and its refusal to concede to China's more superior military power in the South China Sea. The historic legal case against the Chinese was a bold move by the Aquino administration that no country, much less a small state, dared to do. But when the Philippines filed

and eventually won its case, it temporarily lost whatever diplomatic goodwill it had with China during Aquino's term.

Meanwhile, Duterte holds a realist perspective that focuses on relative power that influences his policy on China. Because of the power asymmetry between the two countries, he believes that the Philippines cannot win control over its territories, even if the country achieved victory in its arbitration case. According to Duterte's spokesman, while the administration never shelved the arbitral ruling, "it only remains unenforceable because no foreign force seems persuaded to help us enforce it. Neither do we have the capability of enforcing it alone by force (Romero 2019)."

Moreover, Duterte's global perception exhibits a clear-cut 'either-or' approach in managing the Philippines' relations with China. His verbal insinuations suggest that if he pushes the country's arbitral award, the Philippines will have to face military confrontations. According to Duterte: "I cannot afford at this time to go to war. I cannot go to a battle which I cannot win and would only result in the destruction and probably a lot of losses for our Armed Forces (Ranada 2016)."

In his desire to renew ties with China, Duterte toned down his government's actions regarding the country's maritime interests that may be deemed hostile by the Chinese. For one, he disregarded the Philippines' defense alliance with the US declaring that: "If America cared, it would have sent its aircraft carriers and missile frigates the moment China started reclaiming land in contested territory, but no such thing happened" (Lacorte 2015). His administration also ceased lobbying for regional support against China's maritime aggression in the South China Sea. This was evident during the country's ASEAN chairmanship in 2017, when it released its chairman's statement avoiding any reference to China's ongoing reclamation activities in the area. There was also no

mention of the Hague ruling, which declared that China has no legal basis to claim historic rights over the South China Sea.

Rather than confronting China to respect the tribunal ruling, Duterte opted to renew relations with China. Specifically, he aims to gain as much economic concessions from China as possible, such as financial assistance and direct investments that the Chinese are willing to provide. Thus in his state visit to China in 2016, Duterte brought home USD 24 billion in investments, credit and loan pledges from the Chinese government aimed at funding the Philippines' infrastructure projects. These economic pledges reveal Duterte's notion that the Philippines is better off not to be trapped in a political deadlock by flaunting its arbitral award that is hard to enforce.

Goal Changes Towards a Redirection in Philippine Foreign Policy

The differences in the global perceptions between Aquino and Duterte generally exposes their keenness and interest (or lack thereof) in both cases. Aquino displayed a determined keenness to initiate proactive efforts to save Veloso in Indonesia and to defend the country's maritime interests through its arbitration case against China. But Duterte overturned Aquino's previous efforts in both cases. He exhibited a lack of interest in saving Veloso and expressed disinterest in pushing for its arbitration victory to promote its maritime rights. This dramatic turnaround manifest a significant leader-driven change in the Philippines' foreign policy goals.

In the first case analysis, the prior goal of keeping Veloso alive under Aquino's term is ignored by the Duterte administration. Aquino's moralist views and adherence to human rights is manifested in his government's proactive and concerted efforts to save her. But because of Duterte's legalist

perspectives and respect for the rule of law and other country's sovereignty, he passively left her fate to Indonesia's justice system. In effect, the change in the Philippines' foreign policy goal diminished its resolve to conclusively spare Veloso from Indonesia's death penalty.

In the second case, the initial goal of Aquino to counterbalance Chinese aggression through the Philippines' arbitration case is set aside by Duterte. Aquino's liberalist perspective motivated the filing of the case to push for the country's maritime rights, which are constantly threatened by China's military might. But Duterte's realist perspective downplayed the Philippines' arbitration victory believing that it is unenforceable given China's superior military capabilities. Whereas Aquino's goal focused on the defense of the country's maritime rights, Duterte's goal opted to concentrate on gaining economic concessions from the Chinese and renew bilateral ties. Since power asymmetry with China is evident, the Philippines under the Duterte administration instead seeks to benefit from it. As a result of such goal change, the Philippines' displayed conflicting policies towards China.

Conclusion

These leader-driven changes in the country's policy goals essentially reflect a redirection in its foreign policy. They are manifested in the policy statements or actions of the Duterte administration that reject or conflict with Aquino's initial goals. This consequently caused a "weakened" stance and inconsistencies in the country's policies and actions on both cases. In the long term, the frequent changes in policy goals may tend to result in the lack of continuity in the country's foreign policy especially on ongoing issues with other countries.

But such leader-driven change does not yet represent a shift in the country's international orientation. This refutes the general notion that changes in the leaders' global perceptions result in changes in the country's international orientation. Hence, both cases do not lead to a restructuring in its foreign policy, which carries graver consequences and long-standing implications. For a change in the country's international orientation to occur requires a pattern of changes in its external policies and partnerships. This may involve consistently overlooking death row cases of overseas Filipinos or continuously downplaying the country's arbitral award in bilateral dealings with the Chinese government or in regional or international forums. It may also include focusing on the country's ties with China and discounting other traditional relations with US, Japan, or Australia. But it remains to be seen whether or not such pattern will occur that will cause a transformation in the country's international orientation and consequently lead to its foreign policy restructuring.

This study therefore recommends future studies regarding leader-driven change to discern the extent of foreign policy shifts the country will further undergo. In particular, an analysis on the global perceptions of succeeding leaders after Duterte can determine the consequent changes in Philippine foreign policy. If the next Philippine president holds a divergent global perception relative to Duterte, he/she may enact changes in policy goals that may result in another foreign policy redirection for the Philippines. But if the successor possesses similar global perception, then he/she will likely continue the policy goals of Duterte highlighting a pattern that may eventually change the country's international orientation and subsequently cause a restructuring of Philippine foreign policy.

Leader-driven Change from Aquino to Duterte: Towards a Redirection or Restructuring in Philippine Foreign Policy?

The Philippines typically experience modifications in its foreign policy and its approach towards other countries each time it undergoes transitions in presidential administrations with their own idiosyncrasies. The extent of the differences between its leaders has implications on the level of change and the magnitude of the country's foreign policy shifts. Thus it is worthwhile to examine its state leaderships to be able to estimate the kind of foreign policy it will pursue especially on prevailing issues that require constancy in strategic attention. Generally, such analysis on the Philippines may also serve as an interesting reference for other countries that are highly influenced by leader-driven changes in its foreign policy.

References

- Alden, C. & A. Aran (2012). *Foreign Policy Analysis: New Approaches*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Barber, J. (1972). *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Baviera, A. (2012). The Influence of Domestic Politics on Philippine Foreign Policy: The Case of Philippines-China relations since 2004. *RSIS Working Paper*, June, 241, 1-36.
- Baviera, A. (2016). The Philippines and the South China Sea Dispute: Security Interests and Perspectives In Storey, I. & C.Y. Lin. *The South China Sea Dispute: Navigating Diplomatic and Strategic Tensions* In Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Boulding, K. (1959). *Conflict and Defense: A General Theory*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Breuning, M. (2007). *Foreign Policy Analysis: A Comparative Introduction*. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Doeser, F. (2011). Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy Change in Small States: The Fall of the Danish 'Footnote Policy.' *Cooperation and Conflict*. 46(2): 222-241.
- Dizon, N. & C. Cabalza. (2016). From Noy to Rody, Nation in Between. *Inquirer.net*, June 26, <http://opinion.inquirer.net/95360/from-noy-to-rody-nation-in-between>.
- Eidenfalk, J. (2009). A Window of Opportunity? Australian Foreign Policy Change towards East Timor 1998-1999 and Solomon Islands 2003. PHD Thesis, *Wollongong University*, Australia.
- Foyle, Douglas. (1999). *Counting the Public In*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Greenstein, F. (1969). *Personality and Politics: Problems of Evidence, Inference, and Conceptualization*. Chicago: Markham.
- Gustavsson, J. (1999). How Should We Study Foreign Policy Change? *Cooperation and Conflict*. 34(1): 73-95.
- Hermann, C. (1990). Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy. *International Studies Quarterly*, March. 34(1), 3-21.
- Hermann, M. (1976). "When Leader Personality Will Affect Foreign Policy: Some Propositions," In Rosenau, J. *Search of Global Patterns*. New York: Free Press, 326-33.
- Hermann, M. (1980). Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior Using the Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders. *International Studies Quarterly*, March. 24(1), 7-46.
- Hermann, M. (1978). Effects of Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders on Foreign Policy in East, M. Salmore, S. & C. Hermann. *Why Nations Act: Theoretical Perspectives for Comparative Foreign Policy Studies*. California: Sage Publications.
- Heydarian, R. (2013). Why Is President Aquino so Popular? Effective Leadership and Enigmatic Charisma. *Huff Post*,

Leader-driven Change from Aquino to Duterte: Towards a Redirection or Restructuring in Philippine Foreign Policy?

September 26, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/richardjavad-heydarian/why-is-president-aquino-popular_b_3991117.html.

- Holsti, K. (1982). *Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World*. Winchester MA: Allen & Unwin.
- Kabiling, G. (2016). "Veloso Case: Duterte to Respect Indonesia's Laws, Manila Bulletin, April 28, <https://news.mb.com.ph/2017/04/28/veloso-case-duterte-to-respectindonesias-laws>.
- Misalucha-Willoughby, C. (2016). What should be on Duterte's Foreign Policy Agenda? *East Asia Forum*, June 21, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2016/06/21/what-shouldbe-on-dutertes-foreign-policy-agenda>.
- Neustadt, R. (1990). *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership From Roosevelt to Reagan*. New York: Free Press.
- Preston, T. (2010). *Leadership and Foreign Policy Analysis. International Studies*. USA: Oxford University Press.
- Ranada, Pia. (2016). What Duterte accomplished in China. *Rappler*. November 1, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/150049-duterte-accomplishments-china-visit>.
- Ratner, E. (2013). Learning the Lessons of Scarborough Reef, *The National Interest*, November 21, <https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/learning-the-lessons-scarborough-reef9442>.
- Romero, A. (2019). Palace: Hague Ruling not Shelved but Unenforceable, *The Philippine Star*, April 15, <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2019/04/15/1910131/palace-hague-rulingnot-shelved-unenforceable>.
- Snyder, R. et.al. (1962). *Foreign Policy Decision-Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics*. New York: Free Press.

- Tanyag, M. (2018). Duterte, Hypermasculinity, and the Key to Populism. *Australian Institute of International Affairs*, <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/duterte-governinghypermasculinity-philippines/>.
- Wilkenfeld, J. et.al (1980). *Foreign Policy Behaviour: The Interstate Behaviour Analysis Model*, California: Sage Publications.
- Wolfers, A. (1962). *Discord and Collaboration*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Zhen, L. (2016). South China Sea dispute to 'take back seat' in talks with Xi, Duterte says. *South China Morning Post*, October 19, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacydefence/article/2038383/south-china-sea-dispute-take-back-seat-talks-xi-duterte>.