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Duterte and Alliance Behavior of the Philippines

Taylor A. Rodier

Seton Hall University School of Diplomacy and International Relations
taylor.rodier@student.shu.edu

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Many have defined the Philippines' dominant alliance behavior to be hedging; that is, an alignment choice adapted to address the security challenges often faced by small and middle powers in relation to major powers. Hedging should be understood as a strategy to manage the security risks that small and middle powers face, whereas balancing and bandwagoning are security strategies created in response to security threats. This paper argues that before President Duterte's election in 2016, it could be argued that the Philippines was engaging in hedging or low intensity balancing between the U.S. and China. However, Philippine foreign policy underwent a swift about-face as a result of Duterte's objectives, and as a result the country began bandwagoning with China.

Keywords: Duterte, the Philippines, the United States, China, balancing, bandwagoning, hedging

Introduction

Few states have changed their alliance policies as intensely and quickly as the Philippines. A former U.S. colony turned treaty ally since 1951, the Philippines has enjoyed a vital security partnership with the U.S. amid ever-changing strategic contexts in Southeast Asia, particularly in terms of China's rise. The 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty established collective self-defense obligations as well as emphasized a commitment to peacefully resolve disputes, separately or jointly developing capacity to resist attack, and the need for consultation when the security of the U.S. or the Philippines is under threat in the Pacific (Albert, 2016). Tensions have often arisen due to the United States' more conservative interpretations of security agreements, particularly the failure of the U.S. to state whether or not disputed territories fall under the provisions of the defense treaty (Albert, 2016). Despite friction, many Filipinos remain supportive of the security alliance and the benefits it incurs; for example, defense against insurgent groups,

humanitarian and natural disaster response, and a legitimate counterweight against China (Albert, 2016).

President Rodrigo Duterte began shifting the Philippines' stance on the U.S. and China almost immediately when he came into office. During a four-day visit to Beijing in October 2016, Duterte announced a military and economic separation from the United States, adding that the Philippines would be dependent on China for all time (Hiebert, 2020, p. 468). For several years, political ties warmed and exchange between Beijing and Manila increased dramatically as a result of Duterte's pro-China tilt (Hiebert, 2020, p. 468). However, China's consistent rejection of Duterte's calls to rethink its behavior in the South China Sea and remaining strong anti-China sentiment among Philippine voters make it difficult to determine whether or not Duterte's pivot represents a long-term policy trend (Hiebert, 2020, p. 469). In fact, in recent months Manila has moved to fully reinstate security ties and trust with Washington (Grossman, 2021).

The back-and-forth nature of Philippine alliance activity begs several questions. Is the Philippines engaging in strategic hedging, balancing, bandwagoning, or all three at different times and in different contexts? What are the conditions under which the Philippines chooses to hedge, balance, or bandwagon? Were the Philippines' most recent policy changes the result of the whims of Duterte as an individual actor, or is this a longstanding pattern of alliance behavior? These are the questions I will be grappling with in this paper.

Alliance Strategies

Before proceeding, it is necessary to discuss the various strategies of balancing, bandwagoning, and hedging from a small-sized state perspective, as well as the strategic context of Southeast Asia with regard to a rising China before discussing the Philippines specifically. The question of whether states tend to balance or bandwagon against rising or threatening powers is a fundamental issue in foreign policy, and one that provides important insight into the alliance activities of the Philippines (Walt, 1988, p. 275). Balancing can be defined as alignment against a threatening power to deter it from attacking or to defeat it if it does, while

bandwagoning refers to alignment with the dominant power, either to appease it or to profit from its eventual victory over other powers (Walt, 1988, p. 278). States generally balance in two ways; internally and externally. Internal balancing is the process of an individual state mobilizing its national resources to match those of an adversary. External balancing is the establishment of alliances directed against the rising state (Johnston, Ross, & Schweller, 2010, p. 7). Balancing can involve different levels of intensity. In instances of low intensity balancing, the balancing state attempts to maintain a constructive relationship with the rising power, whereas in high intensity balancing, the relationship between the balancer and the rising power is more adversarial (Roy, 2005, p. 306).

Some scholars consider bandwagoning to be the riskier choice as it requires trusting the dominant power to be benevolent (Roy, 2005, p. 279). In the same vein, balancing is considered to be more pragmatic due to the anarchic nature of the international system; balancing ensures that a hegemon capable of threatening the sovereignty of all does not emerge (Walt, 1988, p. 279). However, Schweller argues that states often bandwagon for profit because rising powers offer incentives to smaller states in exchange for alignment with them (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 169). Balancing has its own costs that some states, particularly small states, may not want to engage in. Bandwagoning is inherently less costly and may even entail some sort of gain (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 169). In short, Schweller suggests that a state's decision to balance or bandwagon depends on if they view a rising power in terms of the challenges they pose or the opportunities they create (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 169). Extremely weak states may be more inclined to bandwagon when allies are unavailable and if they perceive themselves as having very little deterrent capabilities or defensive strength (Walt, 1988, p. 279). Historically, the strongest and most revolutionary of the rising powers have been the ones that attracted the greatest number of bandwagoners (Johnston, Ross, & Schweller, 2010, p. 10).

The policy choices available to small and medium-sized states facing a rising power go beyond just balancing and bandwagoning (Roy, 2005, p. 306). Schweller explores four additional strategies; preventative war, binding, engagement, and distancing or buckpassing (Johnston, Ross, & Schweller, 2010, p. 7). Preventative wars are waged when war is viewed as inevitable, threats are long-term, and the dominant perception among statesmen is that it is better to fight now than later (Johnston, Ross, & Schweller, 2010, p. 8). The historical record shows that risk-acceptant leaders of rising dissatisfied powers have been the makers of preventative war most often, rather than declining great powers (Johnston, Ross, & Schweller, 2010, p. 8). Binding occurs when states forgo the opportunity to balance against a threatening state, and instead ally with it for the purpose of managing the threat by way of a pact of restraint and in hopes that it will be able to exert some measure of control over the threatening state's policy (Johnston, Ross, & Schweller, 2010, p. 13). Engagement is the policy of utilizing non-coercive means to ameliorate the non-status quo elements of the rising power's behavior to ensure that its increasing power is used in ways that are consistent with peaceful change in the regional and global order (Johnston, Ross, & Schweller, 2010, p. 14). The most common engagement strategy is appeasement (Johnston, Ross, & Schweller, 2010, p. 15). Buckpassing refers to a state's attempt to freeride on the balancing efforts of others, while distancing occurs when less directly threatened states distance themselves from more directly threatened states by refusing to coordinate their diplomatic and military strategies with the latter (Johnston, Ross, & Schweller, 2010, p. 16). When presented with a threat, small and medium-sized states often choose a mix of these strategies according to their perception of the situation.

One such mixed approach that small and medium-sized states may pursue is hedging. Hedging is a relatively recent term in the literature, and one that is admittedly difficult to define. There are a few broad conceptualizations of the term. Most compelling for the purposes of this paper are the concepts that hedging is an alignment choice adopted to address security challenges, such as those experienced by small and middle powers in relation to major powers; and that hedging is a specific type of alignment strategy designed to optimize the risks and

rewards of security cooperation with a major power (Haacke, 2019, p. 390). Haacke argues that hedging should be understood as a strategy to manage security risks, whereas balancing and bandwagoning are security strategies created in response to security threats (Haacke, 2019, p. 393). The difference between threats and risks is therefore crucial to distinguish. Security risks are probabilistic and assessed in terms of their likelihood and potential magnitude, whereas threats can be defined as a function of capability and intent (Haacke, 2019, p. 394). As such, risk management behavior is anticipatory and proactive and managing threats tends to be more reactive (Haacke, 2019, p. 394). Indicators of hedging include military strengthening in the absence of a declared adversary, increased participation in bilateral and multilateral cooperation, the absence of firm balancing or bandwagoning, and the simultaneous improvement in relations with the two greatest regional powers (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 169).

Preferences of Secondary States

Secondary states tend to prefer an external environment in which a rough balance between great powers exists. When this is the case, small states can reap the benefits of good relations with all major states (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 167). Conversely, secondary states fear power transitions like the one facing Southeast Asia today (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 167). Power transitions upset the equilibrium in the international system and often trigger conflict, particularly if the rising power is viewed as revisionist (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 168). Non-alignment or neutrality is the most desirable stance for secondary states, as it enables them to avoid dependence on others and permits the greatest freedom of maneuver between competitive great powers (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 168).

The prospect of choosing sides is not an attractive one to the small and medium-sized states of Southeast Asia. Due to non-alignment preferences, hedging is often an attractive policy option for secondary states. Hedging represents the lack of alignment assurances with great powers in the international system; once countries send clear alignment signals to great powers, they lose their flexibility in conducting foreign policy (Wu, 2019, p. 560). This is particularly concerning for Southeast Asian states as the principal foreign policy objective in the region tends to be preserving autonomy and sovereignty (Roy, 2005, p. 306). Many Southeast Asian states, including the Philippines, have made the desire to retain their independence explicit in constitutions, strategic doctrines, and bedrock principles (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 173). This desire is further enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, of which the Philippines is a member. The Charter states in Article 2 Point 2(f), “ASEAN and its member states shall... respect the right of every member state to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion, and coercion” (ASEAN, 2007).

It becomes difficult to maintain non-alignment in the strategic environment of a power transition, which is another reason why secondary states prefer a rough balance between great powers. As such, engagement becomes a key aspect of any hedging strategy. Engagement is defined as the use of non-coercive means to ameliorate the non-status quo elements of a rising power’s behavior (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 170). Engagement is considered successful if the rising power becomes a stakeholder in the international system (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 170). Southeast Asian states use ASEAN as a tool to engage both China and the United States.

The Southeast Asian Context

Southeast Asia has had to adapt to its emergence as a region of increased interest and strategic importance on the part of extra-regional powers. There are several

extra-regional powers with significant interests in Southeast Asia, including Australia, China, the United States, Japan, and India (Weatherbee, 2015, p. 39). The foreign policies of each of these powers greatly influence the economic and political parameters for Southeast Asia's autonomy (Weatherbee, 2015, p. 39). However, the central strategic issue that Southeast Asia is currently faced with is coping with the China's rise and U.S. reactions to this phenomenon (Weatherbee, 2015, p. 56). The worst-case scenario is that China is engaging the United States in a zero-sum competition for power and influence in the region to ultimately exclude the United States from the regional economic and security context (Weatherbee, 2015, p. 56). Increasingly, Southeast Asian states are being placed in a position where they are expected to choose between alignment with either the United States or China.

Southeast Asia is crucially linked to China, but many Southeast Asian leaders remain concerned about China's political, military, and territorial ambitions in the region, particularly in the South China Sea (Weatherbee, 2015, p. 53). These leaders must take several, often conflicting, strategic contexts into account when attempting to adopt policies toward China.

First, China's assertiveness in the South China Sea produces disequilibrium in the regional and international system and directly threatens the national interests several states, including the Philippines (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 172). The publication of China's nine-dash line map, which claimed most of the South China Sea, encroached on the exclusive economic zones of four different states, and impacted freedom of navigation agreements, elicited the response of not only regional powers but also the United States (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 172). This map was characterized by the U.S. as a revisionist action, prompting a rebalance policy and public opposition that increased the existing level of great power rivalry in the region (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 172). This runs counter to Southeast Asia's preferences for equilibrium and balance.

At the same time, China has been offering numerous economic incentives to Southeast Asian states. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Belt and Road Initiative, and foreign direct investments from Chinese state-owned enterprises offer significant economic aid and financing (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 172). In the Philippines' case, China pledged \$24 billion in investment and loan pledges, including for infrastructure projects during a visit from Duterte in October 2016 (Hiebert, 2020, p. 466). These kinds of economic pledges are seen as beneficial to the development goals of Southeast Asian states and are therefore attractive to their leaders, although there is a significant risk of becoming overly dependent on China (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 172).

The United States produces its own incentives for Southeast Asian states. On one hand, the Obama Administration's "pivot to Asia" in 2011 demonstrated the intentions of the U.S. to defend the status quo in the region (Weatherbee, 2015, p. 7). The pivot further enshrined Southeast Asia's status as the new centerpiece of great power competition, a designation that is unwelcome. However, the pivot strategy had security, economic, and institutional components that many welcomed wholeheartedly. As part of the security component of the pivot, the U.S. promised to shift 60 percent of its naval assets to Asia and promised to strengthen its alliances and partnerships in Southeast Asia (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 172). The major economic component was the TPP, and the institutional component included Obama's commitment to ASEAN-led multilateral institutions such as the East Asia Summit (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 172).

On the other hand, well-founded doubts exist in Southeast Asia regarding Washington's commitment to the region. This is exemplified in the shift from Obama's pivot to Trump's Southeast Asian policy. Despite many positive inducements for Southeast Asian cooperation with the United States, the Trump

administration injected uncertainty into the relationship with its withdrawal from the TPP (Murphy, *Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages*, 2017, p. 173). This withdrawal was a huge blow to economic reformers hoping to diversify their trading partners, such as those in Malaysia and Vietnam (Murphy, et al., 2021, p. 68). Trump's trade war with China was unwelcome both because it disrupted supply chains and because it added to perceptions that the great powers expected regional countries to choose alliances with either the U.S. or China (Stromseth, 2019). Now, Southeast Asia is experiencing the Biden Administration's policy, which maintains the competitive stance against China that Trump exhibited while exerting that the Indo-Pacific is the most consequential region for America's future (Murphy, et al., 2021, p. 68).

Strategic Context of the Philippines

President Rodrigo Duterte performed a volte-face for Philippine foreign policy (Heydarian, *Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy*, 2017, p. 220). In May 2016, he declared a new foreign policy course in which the Philippines would no longer be dependent on the United States, choosing instead to re-align with China. In October 2016, Duterte chose Beijing as his first major state visit instead of Washington or Tokyo, which have traditionally been Filipino leaders' first overseas trips (Heydarian, *Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy*, 2017, p. 221). During his visit to Beijing, Duterte vowed strategic separation from the United States, despite The United States' stance as the Philippines' sole treaty ally (Heydarian, *Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy*, 2017, p. 221). He also declared that he would set aside the UNCLOS arbitration ruling which determined that China's claims in the South China Sea had no legal basis (Hiebert, 2020, p. 466). In this section, I will explore the calculations behind this reorientation, as well as attempt to define the Philippines' recent alignment activity.

President Duterte is constitutionally granted the responsibility of acting as the Philippines' chief diplomatic architect, meaning that the country's foreign policy is more aligned around his personal preferences (Heydarian, *Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy*, 2017, p. 221). This is a common phenomenon in developing nations; according to Wetherbee, foreign policy decision making is less institutionalized, more personalistic, and largely reactive to the behavior of great powers in secondary states (Weatherbee, 2015). Another element to the Philippines' foreign policy shifts is the nexus between domestic politics and state behavior in the international system (Heydarian, *Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy*, 2017, p. 221). Putnam suggests that foreign policy takes place at both the national and international level, creating a two-level game in which the national leader sits at both boards (Putnam, 1988, p. 434). In this view, Philippine foreign policy can be conceptualized as a function of changes in both the domestic political calculations of the ruling elite and changes in the regional security environment (Heydarian, *Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy*, 2017, p. 221).

The Philippines has a winner-takes-all electoral system, weak political parties, and a democracy in which a massive amount of power is concentrated in the executive (Timberman, 2019). However, there is also a group of political and economic elites in Manila that exercise a powerful influence over elections, legislation, policymaking, and distribution of government resources, among other things (Timberman, 2019). These elites have made it difficult for several successive governments to adopt and implement socioeconomic policies that address the needs of the poor and middle class (Timberman, 2019). Duterte embraced anti-establishment populism as a cornerstone of his campaign, winning a landslide victory over four other well-funded candidates (Heydarian, *Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy*, 2017, p. 230). The overarching theme of his campaign was that his strong leadership would produce rapid change (Timberman, 2019). He found support based on the unevenness of economic growth in the country, his wholesale

rejection of the political elite, and his vow to undertake a nationwide assault on illegal drugs and criminality (Heydarian, *Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy*, 2017, p. 230). He also capitalized on growing questions regarding the United States' commitment to the Philippines' national defense and to its role as the underwriter of freedom of navigation in the region (Heydarian, *Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy*, 2017, p. 231).

In these domestic contexts, Duterte was able to build a broad political base. The regional security environment was also at a crossroads when Duterte took office. Despite Obama's pivot strategy, there was a decline in military aid to the Philippines from the United States between 2010 and 2015 (Heydarian, *Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy*, 2017, p. 231). Furthermore, the United States' constant equivocation on whether or not the Mutual Defense Treaty covers territorial disputes has been a source of contention, particularly as China continued to make advances in the South China Sea (Murphy, 2017, p. 175). Another source of uncertainty has its origins in the fact that Washington did not enforce the 2012 agreement for mutual withdrawal by China and the Philippines in the Scarborough Shoal, ultimately enabling China to establish control of the feature within the Philippine EEZ (Heydarian, *Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy*, 2017, p. 231). The U.S. also showed little to no support during the Philippines UNCLOS arbitration case against China (Heydarian, *Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy*, 2017, p. 231). The Philippines depended on the United States to play its role as the regional hegemon, upholding rule of law and preventing the encroachment of China on the sovereign territory of Southeast Asian states (Heydarian, *Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy*, 2017, p. 231). In the eyes of about fifty percent of surveyed Filipinos in 2016, the United States was not doing so (Heydarian, *Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy*, 2017, p. 231). The final straw for Duterte was Obama's criticism of his controversial war on drugs, which took on a scorched-

earth approach and claimed the lives of thousands of people during Duterte's first year in office (Heydarian, *Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy*, 2017, p. 231).

Amid strained U.S.-Philippine relations, China began offering Duterte carrots and sticks. After shunning Duterte's predecessor, Beijing invited Duterte to visit China in October 2016 (Hiebert, 2020, p. 466). That visit culminated in \$24 billion in investment and loan pledges from China to the Philippines (Hiebert, 2020, p. 466). Trade with China increased substantially upon Duterte's rise to power, as has the number of Chinese tourists in the Philippines (Hiebert, 2020, p. 466). Duterte's ruling party has signed an agreement with the Chinese Communist Party to step up exchanges and training for Philippine officials in Fujian, and the two countries have agreed to hold a bilateral strategic dialogue every six months (Hiebert, 2020, p. 475). The Chinese government looks the other way as the Philippine online gambling industry generates massive amounts of revenue by targeting Chinese customers, despite the ban on gambling in China (Hiebert, 2020, p. 490). Chinese investment in Philippine real estate rose to over \$190 million in 2018 as compared to only \$13 million in 2017 (Hiebert, 2020, p. 491). China has also consistently supported Duterte's war on drugs, offering to help with logistics, equipment, investigations, and rehabilitation (Heydarian, *Duterte's Art of the Deal*, 2017). China has made it clear that they are willing to provide maritime and economic concessions in exchange for Manila's capitulation on the UNCLOS arbitration issue and decreased ties with America (Heydarian, *Duterte's Art of the Deal*, 2017). Chinese officials forced Manila to consider whether or not the Philippines could forgo important investment opportunities and risk continued military confrontation in the South China Sea (Hiebert, 2020, p. 474).

In this regional security environment, Duterte calculated that a recalibration was needed; the Philippines could not risk a direct confrontation with China without explicit strategic assurance from the United States, which had not been provided (Heydarian, 2017, p. 231). Duterte's calculus left him with the perception that support from traditional allies such as the United States and from regional bodies like ASEAN was lacking, and that appeasing China was a better

strategy in these conditions than risking a conflict with them in the future without adequate support.

Defining Philippine Alliance Activity

Does Duterte's about-face regarding China and U.S. policy represent balancing, bandwagoning, hedging, or something else? Prior to Duterte's election in 2016, the Philippines enjoyed an extensive and longstanding security partnership with the United States. This did not prevent the Philippines from maintaining an economically cooperative relationship with China, but it was clear that the Philippines was aligned more significantly with the U.S (Roy, 2005, p. 314). Roy defines this low intensity balancing with the United States against China, as the alliance activity was triggered in part by Manila's perception of an external security threat in growing Chinese power (Roy, 2005, p. 314). Duterte swiftly abandoned this balancing policy. In order to be labeled hedging, the Philippines would have to maintain some ambiguity about alignment assurances in order to maintain flexibility when conducting foreign policy, particularly with great powers (Wu, 2019, p. 560). Beijing clearly laid out the costs and risks should Manila continue to pressure China on the international stage as well as continue to facilitate the U.S. military pivot to Asia (Murphy, 2017, p. 175). Duterte responded with open calls to downgrade the U.S. alliance while simultaneously taking steps to improve ties with China (Heydarian, 2017, p. 231). This signals that the Philippines engaged in bandwagoning with China, rather than hedging between the United States and China.

Recall that states can bandwagon for two reasons; either to appease a rising power or to profit from its eventual victory (Walt, 1988, p. 278). It appears that the logic for bandwagoning in the Philippines contained elements of both. Duterte recognized that his options for defending the Philippines' territory militarily against China were slim, stating at one point, "What do you want me to do? Declare war against China? I can't. We will lose all our military and our policemen tomorrow and we [will be] a destroyed nation" (Agence France-Presse, 2017). Doubts regarding the U.S. commitment to defending the Philippines against China likely left Duterte with the perception that it would be better to

concede to China than be destroyed by them. He also assumed that bandwagoning with China would bring in significant profits to the Philippines, leveraging the Belt and Road initiative and other Chinese investments to support his own domestic infrastructure plans (Grossman, 2021).

Now, Duterte and the Philippines more broadly are being faced with the consequences of bandwagoning. Rather than decreasing its encroachments in the South China Sea, China has only become more assertive. It has continued military buildups on reclaimed islands in the Sea, sent ships to encircle Thitu, a strategically vital archipelago that is still under Philippine control, and has increasingly used aggressive fleets to keep Philippine fishers off traditional fishing grounds (Kurlantzick, 2021). China has also disappointed Duterte with regard to the economic benefits that the Philippines was promised. Construction has only begun on two proposed Chinese infrastructure projects, presenting a lack of follow through which contrasts sharply with other Southeast Asian states (Kurlantzick, 2021). China's development aid to the Philippines remains small compared to other donors like Japan, which provided 17 times more than China provided in the first half of 2020 (Kurlantzick, 2021). These circumstances help to explain why Duterte has begun to take significant steps to fully reinstate security ties and rebuild trust with Washington in recent months (Grossman, 2021).

Individual Influence on Philippine Foreign Policy

Since the 1990's, Manila's policy toward China has been described as bipolar in the sense that it shifts regularly and with varying degrees of intensity (Hiebert, 2020, p. 473). This is because Philippine foreign policy is determined largely by the perception and views of whoever is president, and each president seems to reorient relations between China and the United States (Hiebert, 2020, p. 473). Duterte's reorientation toward China can be explained by his long-standing anti-Americanism, his own personal preferences, a desire to obtain Chinese economic benefits, anger at U.S. criticism of his war on drugs, and a lack of confidence in the U.S. as an ally (Murphy, 2017, p. 174).

However, despite Duterte's harsh rhetoric his individual preferences can only guide Philippine foreign policy so much. He faced distinct backlash among

the Philippine security establishment which is deeply entwined with and dependent on U.S. logistical support, hardware, training, and intelligence (Heydarian, 2017, p. 233). Trusted insiders within the security establishment played a key role in convincing Duterte to preserve the foundations of the U.S.-Philippine security alliance (Heydarian, 2017, p. 233). The Philippine military's long distrust of China probably played a role in preventing a significant increase of Sino-Philippine military relations (Hiebert, 2020, p. 507). Duterte as an individual actor no doubt had a measurable impact on the Philippines' shifting China policy, but this seems to be a larger trend in Philippine politics.

Conclusion

This research has explored the alliance activity of the Philippines under President Duterte and has attempted to categorize the country's most recent orientation toward China as bandwagoning. After exploring what constitutes bandwagoning, balancing, and hedging in depth, it is clear that Duterte chose to bandwagon with China at the beginning of his six-year term. When the benefits of bandwagoning did not meet his expectations, Duterte began to pivot back to the Philippines' longstanding alliance with the United States as observed in the last few months. This research also explored the impacts of domestic politics and the President as an individual actor in Philippine foreign policy. The Philippine President must operate within a two-level game at any given time, taking both domestic politics and the regional security environment into account. This is especially tricky for a small state like the Philippines that prefers equilibrium in the international system and is heavily impacted by the policies of two competing great powers. The political system of the Philippines concentrates a great amount of power in the individual executive. As such, Duterte certainly had a measurable impact on the foreign policy prerogatives of the Philippines during his term, but this phenomenon in general is not unique and the Philippines has experienced several notable foreign policy shifts in the last three decades.

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