



Geopolitical luck or crisis? Communicating China's Built and Road Initiative amidst South China Sea Dispute

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Article History	Abstract
Received: 06 June 2023 Revised: 05 Sept 2023 Accepted: 30 Oct 2023	<p><i>As the maritime dispute in the South China Sea (West Philippine Sea) continues, this paper speculates on the possible outcomes of former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's sustained commitment to have stronger trade ties with China by participating in the Built and Road Initiative (BRI). During Chinese President Xi Jinping's official visit to the United States last year, 29 bilateral agreements were inked. When it comes to military, security, law enforcement, maritime cooperation, transnational crime, and other issues, China, Asia's biggest economy, has both agreements and worries. Even if mistrust in Asia's economic superpower is growing due to debt trap concerns and a maritime dispute, there is still hope for achieving the American goal of financial security because of the government's cooperative influence on China's power aspirations. Although estimates on total investments differ, Chatzky and McBride (2019) cite Morgan Stanley as saying China's entire costs throughout the duration of the Built and Road Initiative (BRI) might reach \$1.2-1.3 trillion by 2027. In conclusion, the Philippines and other Southeast Asian nations need to have room for conversation and cooperation in order to construct shared progress. According to Gou and Yang (2017), it is clear that all Asian nations want to maintain cordial ties with China. China's US\$40 billion funding schemes, via the 21st century Maritime Silk Road, may accelerate regional infrastructure development and integration, and there are strong cultural and people-to-people links. The economy and increasing middle class provide significant prospects.</i></p>
CC License CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0	Keywords: Propaganda, conflict, forecasting, bilateral relations, political economy

1. Introduction

Background of the Study

The foreign policy of Duterte

According to the Asian Special Report published by Nomura, a financial services company, Duterte's efforts to defuse tensions in the contested South China Sea helped the Philippines under the Belt and Road initiative. In the words of Nomura (Cigarral, The Philippine "President Duterte's so-called 'pivot to China'—which was a quick reversal from his predecessor's stance—is paving the way for a slew of proposed China-funded infrastructure projects and investments into the Philippines."

as envisioned by the government. There are twenty-four "Build, Build, Build" infrastructure projects planned by the Department of Public Works and Highways, and six of them will be located in Mindanao. The government would spend P112.58 billion to complete them while Mr. Duterte is in office or soon after.

There were 1.26 million Chinese visitors to the Philippines in 2018, up 30% from the year before (Lim, Business World, 2019). The recent year of progress in the Philippines bodes well for the rest of Southeast Asia. Mr. Duterte said at the 2018 Belt and Road Forum that our regional community can benefit from a more equitable international relationship based on Asia.

Representatives' Speaker Gloria Macapagal Arroyo agreed, saying the government should do all it can to leverage Chinese financing to support the administration's big development plans. Our nations'

economic and commercial ties are certainly stronger than they have ever been. In a recent article by Romero, Flores, and Porcalla (The Philippine Star, 2019), Arroyo was quoted as saying, "the main thing to focus on now is on the implementation side" during the Boao Forum for Asia in Manila.

President Arroyo has said that "bilateral ties between the Philippines and China have reached new heights," as China has become the Philippines' biggest commercial partner and the location of a rise in Chinese investment. Paraphrasing from an article by Romero, Flores, and Porcalla (2019) in The Philippine Star: "international trade and investments cannot operate without brick and mortar infrastructures," which is where the Belt and Road Initiative comes in.

President Duterte's proclaimed shift to China is perhaps the most politically risky of his unorthodox stances. The fact that his popularity hasn't waned despite his groveling backing of China demonstrates Americans' disinterest in international affairs. If Filipinos see mainland Chinese swarming into their communities and seizing their jobs, the political atmosphere might shift dramatically overnight (David, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2019). As Duterte becomes closer to Beijing, there is widespread concern that he may sell national pride and patrimonial assets in return for development money, according to Chinese guards at Panatag (Pascual, The Philippine Star, 2019). No one in the Philippines knows how long it will take for the 19 new agreements to become a reality, how Duterte would handle the replacement of Filipino workers with Chinese labor on construction projects, or how he will explain China's occupation of Philippine land during his presidency.

Nonetheless, PRRD's diplomatic stance toward the People's Republic of China is analyzed in this paper, making it a valuable resource. The reality of Chinese capitalism and the role of the media in the Philippines in reporting on government choices will also be discussed. It remains to be seen whether the new economic system in Southeast Asia will be successful in bringing about social fairness.

Theoretical Framework

The Logic of Propaganda

The propaganda model serves as the basic theoretical foundation for this investigation. According to this theory, Duterte's partnership with China's Built and Road Initiative is the subject of propaganda because of China's apparent dominance and prejudice in the Philippine media. Even though the media outlet claims to be impartial, the way it covers government efforts to deal with China, the BRI economic initiative, and the South China Sea issue suggests otherwise.

Chomsky's (1994) *Manufacturing Consent* is an institutional examination of the main media outlets that reaffirms the propaganda paradigm. He elaborated by saying that largely the national media, which tends to establish a broad agenda that others more or less stick to if they pay any attention to national or international issues at all,

Since it contradicts established ideas and implies that the media are used for undemocratic purposes, it is often ignored in discussions about media bias. Conservatives, who accuse the media of being too liberal and taking an antagonistic position against government and industry, are usually on one side of these disputes, while moderates and liberals, who refute the allegation of adversarialism, are on the other (Bailey, 1948, p. 13) *The Propaganda Model*, a framework for comprehending the process and function of the media, supports one of Chomsky's ideas that education might be a crucial instrument for freedom (Gonzales, 2013).

Theorizing Conflict

The theory of conflict is also used here as a secondary theoretical framework. The purpose of this framework is to facilitate a high-level debate about how a pan-regional political and economic initiative, like the Belt and Road Initiative, may threaten Southeast Asian democracies. To make sense of democracy in the context of development, nations participating in the BRI project will now consider a larger scope of democracy owing to the many organizational, cultural, and historical variations among them. Nations with an interest in democratic ethos and capitalism, such as China and members of ASEAN, are included in this definition of democracy, which is not limited to a single nation.

Conflicts within groups are not always negative, and "disharmony" and "dissociation" are necessary for healthy social interaction. Instead of being a sign of dysfunction, healthy levels of conflict are necessary for group development and survival (Cosser, 1956, p. 31).

2. Materials And Methods

This Source critique is the main research strategy used here. News stories and editorials from June 2016 (when Rodrigo Duterte became president) to May 2019 were analyzed to extract and classify variables.

Only three national dailies—Business World, the Philippine Daily Inquirer, and The Philippine Star—were included in the research. Each of the three chosen broadsheets has a nationwide readership and an internet presence, and all three engage in confrontational journalism. West (no date) claims that while you are working on a report or a project, you are consulting some kind of source, whether it is an encyclopedia like Britannica or Wikipedia, a textbook, a library book, or even a newspaper item. When we know where a document came from, we may better understand its context and meaning. These days, it makes a big difference to the reader whether the material comes from Fox News or the New York Times. In a nutshell, the significance of source criticism

Source criticism has not been replaced by other approaches to explaining this type of evidence, such as form criticism (which seeks to explain how a story or saying was used in the church's oral tradition before it was written down) or redaction criticism (which seeks to explain how the writers of the New Testament used their sources). As Wenham (1977) points out, both the form critic and the redaction critic require the knowledge gained from source criticism. The former needs to know what sources an author was using in order to make reliable comments about the author's editorial tendencies, while the latter needs to know what sources an author was using in order to speculate about the oral period.

3. Results and Discussion

China-Philippine economic ties Since the Philippine government sees China's BRI as a viable option for addressing the country's infrastructure requirements, the Build, Build, build initiative is consistent with it. While in Manila for an official visit in November, Chinese President Xi Jinping signed a number of agreements and promised to contribute \$24 million. According to research published in April 2018 by the global think tank Nomura (Aguinaldo, Business World, 2019), China's BRI is expected to have the most positive impact on the economies of the Philippines and Malaysia.

Thanks to their partnership, China and the Philippines were able to realize their full potential. In 2017, our commerce with China was over \$50 billion, and we received fresh investment of \$53.84 million, an increase of 67% from the previous year. China is currently the Philippines' primary import supplier and trading partner. China replaced Japan as the Philippines' largest export market in August of this year. Our discussions in the fields of economics, commerce, agriculture, fishing, energy, science, and technology have been fruitful. There have been more than forty agreements established to work together in the future (Xi Jinping, The Philippine Star, 2018).

The initiative, which the report notes is not restricted to the nations along the route, will be funded by investments, syndicated loans, and bank credits. However, there was silence on the topic of how to join the assembly. After a number of SREB and MSR projects were finished, the nitty-gritty of being involved became clear. Several bilateral agreements were negotiated between China and BRI member nations when the initiative got underway. A nation takes the first step toward becoming a part of the BRI when it signs one of these bilateral agreements. BRI develops becoming a network of bilateral connections with China as its hub (Estrada, 2017).

Freer trade and greater economic integration seem to be here to stay. China is prepared to share the possibilities and potential of its market with other nations since it is a large, responsible country devoted to win-win collaboration and increased openness. Recent events, such as the first China International Import Expo, demonstrated this dedication. The Chinese government aggressively promotes the Philippines and other nations to ride shotgun on China's expanding economy. A quote from Xi Jinping's 2018 essay for The Philippine Star reads as follows: "China will work with other countries to firmly uphold the WTO-centered multilateral trading system and promote the evolution of the international political and economic order toward fairness and equity." The MOU is a formalization of the two countries' agreement to collaborate on the Belt and Road Initiative (Esguerra, 2018).

One such example is the upcoming launch of the Chinese Industrial Park in the Philippines. Furthermore, China strongly backs programs that promote Mindanao's economic and social progress. China is doing all it can to assist reconstruct Marawi and finance local initiatives in Davao. New roads, bridges, markets, drinking water pumping stations, and schools have all been built thanks to grants from the Chinese government (Jinhua, The Philippine Star, 2018).

Proclaiming Philippine participation in China's MSR may seem like the less difficult part of the engagement; nonetheless, putting the port infrastructure plan into action in the nation will be the most challenging and important part. In order for an MSR to be successful, logistical, political, and financial obstacles must be overcome. Considering the local challenges faced by many international port development projects, China and the Philippines would be wise to conduct a thorough examination of the implementing institutions and technicalities before beginning projects. With goals like "sound

macroeconomic policies and accelerated infrastructure development," the recent approval of the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 couldn't have come at a better time for the nation. In order to ensure the success of its prospective infrastructure projects, the Philippines has been making tremendous progress in determining the ideal conditions for doing so. But these aims and plans can't come to fruition until they're implemented via concrete measures (Estrada, 2017).

As of the fourth quarter of 2018, the Philippine economy has grown by more than 6 percent yearly for 15 consecutive quarters, making it one of the fastest-growing in the region and the globe. There is a rising share of young, educated people, and fiscal stability is maintained by huge foreign currency reserves and a declining inflation projection. The government is investing more in public facilities like schools and hospitals, and business confidence is high (Lucas, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2019).

Relations between ASEAN and China on a bilateral basis

Beijing is now most concerned with bolstering China's standing in Asia, but the Belt Road Initiative (BRI) investment plan will have global ramifications. By luring regional economies closer to China, BRI hopes to increase Beijing's strategic sway over each nation in the area. China's investments in Southeast Asian countries including Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Pakistan, Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar have increased as a result of the ongoing trade war between the United States and China (Bremmer, The Philippine Star, 2018).

In order to achieve Vision 2030's objectives of mutual development, peace, win-win progress, innovation, promotion of inclusiveness, and mutual learning, China and ASEAN will work closely together. Greater prosperity for the people of both areas will result from the Philippines' leadership as ASEAN's national coordinator and the joint efforts of China and ASEAN (Xilian, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2019).

Strong economic ties have been established between ASEAN and China over the last two decades, and despite the present difficulties, the relationship between the two has been largely positive. Beijing committed \$472 million at the ASEAN-China meeting in November 2011 for marine cooperation in the South China Sea. This was the situation before the bad things started happening this year. With the proven success of so much economic cooperation already taking place, the notion of locating and using South China Sea resources jointly is far from insane. If the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is to properly navigate the new geopolitics of Southeast Asia, it must convene to discuss the relationship with China and the difficulties in the South China Sea. To do this, you'll need laser-like concentration and accuracy. In order to stop China and the United States from using divisions to their advantage, regional nations will need to renew their commitment to ASEAN unity. Individual ASEAN member nations, especially those with notably strong relations with China, may be encouraged by ASEAN's dedication to the regional challenge to use some of that goodwill to further regional aims (Majid, 2012).

But if nothing is done, the escalating tensions in the South China Sea may easily escalate into a full-scale conflict. The number of events, such as Chinese ships smashing and harassing fishing vessels, has increased in recent years. The frequency and severity of these events have both increased over time. To what extent these events constitute "acts of violence" under international law is still unclear. The situation along the shore remains tense. In recent years, the South China Sea has become a major factor in international politics. As Crieekemans (2017) points out, in this era of resource scarcity, its undeveloped oil and gas resources and fishing areas are of crucial geoeconomic importance.

That is to say, the United States should not work to slow China's development or reduce its global clout. No matter how well-intentioned, these measures will only strengthen China's resolve to forge a new world order. If China comes to the conclusion that current institutions are not impartial, it will lend credence to the idea that they have a Western tilt and encourage the country to look for alternatives. The United States should look at other methods of conflict settlement (Nye, 2011). There are two main causes for this effect. In the first place, the United States shouldn't try to rein in China's rising military and economic might by using this tactic. The United States should learn a thing or two from its own strategy in the run-up to the Treaty of Portsmouth and the Camp David Accords (Teixeira, 2018) and urge China to have calm, bilateral discussions with its neighbors.

Our ties are no longer limited to the United States but span the world. The two billion people in China and the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have benefited greatly from the cooperation between these two groups. The East Asian Economic Community and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) are two examples of how we're working together to further regional economic integration. We will take firm action against

protectionism and unilateralism to defend the rules-based international trade system. A prosperous new age for both China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has begun. Due to our closeness and shared values, we share a bright future. The most effective way forward is for us to work together to achieve our common goals. The Philippine Daily Inquirer published Xilian's work in 2019.

China's continued effect is still Asia's defining fact, notwithstanding the misgivings and fears of China's neighbors. All of these nations need peaceful ties to Beijing in order to prosper economically, create jobs, and maintain political stability. They will do all in their power to reduce risks and maximize benefits in their dealings with China. The most pressing issue concerning the future of the United States in Asia is the nature of that position. Two instances of how international commerce has helped China are its ascent to the world's second-largest economy and the reduction of poverty for hundreds of millions of its citizens. Unfair trade and investment policies in the Philippines would result in a terrible worldwide reaction (Pascual, Philippine Star, 2019).

Dialogue-based arguments for averting a disaster

The growth of the Chinese economy has benefited capitalism across the world. The largest capitalist corporations may be the most cognizant of this fact, since they have reported record profits since moving certain operations to China. The government of China will not stand idly by while Western businesses took advantage of its cheap labor force. This was a chance for the company to expand its offerings, boost output, and break into new customer bases (David, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2019).

According to the Chinese president's philosophy, it is crucial that we remain silent on our sovereign rights. Repairing the economy or ending the conflict in the South China Sea might have positive consequences. Because of the Belt and Road Summit's emphasis on infrastructure and backing of the administration's infrastructure aims, this second option will be bolstered. If such is the case, Philippine investment would need extreme caution (Manhit, The Philippine Star, 2017).

Concerns about the BRI are being raised even by China's closest allies. As the financial situation in Pakistan worsens, the new administration, which is supported by the military, has been attempting to assess or renegotiate existing contracts. Pakistan, which has always cooperated with China to control India, would benefit the most economically from China's participation in the BRI. Concerns that Cambodia, another major beneficiary of Chinese loans, may soon become a Chinese colony are on the rise (Chellaney, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2018). Anti-Chinese sentiment is not exclusive to the United States. One of the heated debates ever took place at the most recent Pacific Islands Forum meeting. The president of Nauru, the world's smallest republic with a population of less than 11,000, spoke out against China's "arrogant" presence in the South Pacific, angered by Chinese strategy in the area and the conduct of the head of the Chinese delegation. One of his primary themes, as reported by Christopher C. Dellaney of the Philippine Daily Inquirer in 2018, was that China cannot "dictate things to us."

When it comes to the recent deals Malacaang has signed with China, Vice President Leni Robredo has likewise urged for openness. We have always emphasized on total openness. President Obama returned to China for a third time on this trip. Robredo said her administration has been "demanding" copies of these agreements ever since his first visit (Romero, The Philippine Star, 2019). Robredo said that the Filipino people need to know why their government is making these deals with China's financial sector. It is very important to us that all commitments made in contracts be kept. Second, we should find out what the administration hopes to accomplish by negotiating these treaties. How many people are there that want to get started? The woman is quoted as saying, "Because agreeing to something is the easy part" (Romero, The Philippine Star, 2019).

At least temporarily, the Duterte strategy seems to have successfully calmed the potentially catastrophic dynamics of a spiraling circle of mutual animosity. As a result of subsequent events, a new status quo has emerged, although a precarious one, from which all parties may benefit.

To reiterate, Obama is not pleased with Duterte's current approach to foreign affairs. Because the Philippines is generally so US-friendly, he might expect backlash at home if he tries to improve relations with China. In addition, many top officials in the Philippine government and military have a negative impression of China. An increase in Chinese FDI, according to Hendler (2018), may work out well for Duterte since it would lead to the creation of more jobs, the attraction of more tourists, and the development of renewable energy sources.

Since taking office, President Duterte's conciliatory strategy and apparent shift to China have drawn widespread criticism. Uncertainty has been raised about the prospect of Chinese investment in Philippine infrastructure and economic concessions from the Philippines in return for territorial rights.

Mr. Duterte seems to have disadvantaged the country by not using the 2016 Hague arbitral ruling as leverage in discussions with China and other foreign partners (Manhit, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2018).

If fishing in the SCS continues, China makes investments, and maybe royalties from energy production are shared, the economy may improve. Although the Philippines today holds just a small number of islands with the support of the United States and Japan, doing so would be admitting China's de facto ownership of most of the islands (Hendler, 2018).

Locals in Myanmar are still opposed to the Chinese-owned Letpadaung copper mine due to fears that it would have a devastating effect on the environment and force them to leave their homes. The controversial \$3.6 billion 6,000-megawatt Myitsone Dam is still under built. Around 2,100 individuals were forcefully relocated from five different communities in 2010, according to Mendoza, Business World (2018).

The World Bank is said to have banned certain Chinese contractors due to their dubious past in the same research. To guarantee that appropriate governance and environmental sustainability standards are met in relation to major Chinese projects, the Philippine government must use competitive bidding processes. Instead of relying on a vertically integrated Chinese supply chain of money, technology, and labor, BRI projects should be able to foster inclusive development and provide jobs for Filipinos. As Manhit of the Philippine Daily Inquirer (2018) points out, without this, any cooperation between the BRI and the Philippines would be fruitless and unstable.

Debtor nations caught in China's "debt traps" may be obliged to accept increasingly onerous conditions from their creditors in order to avoid default. After defaulting on its debts in December, Sri Lanka made the colonial-style decision to lease China the vital Chinese-built port of Hambantota for 99 years. Countries with large loans to China should take note of what happened in Sri Lanka. Because they are reluctant to part with valuable assets, they are attempting to back out of transactions or negotiate for more favorable terms. After initially embracing Chinese investment in Malaysia, Mahathir slammed the door on over \$23 billion in Chinese projects (Chellaney, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2018).

Last but not least, the alleged potential for environmental harm, a problem that always accompanies any infrastructure project, may be looked at as yet another tragedy. Civil society organizations in Indonesia are fighting against a 510-megawatt hydropower project on the Batang Toru river. Ecologists and villagers alike are concerned that the project will "irreversibly alter" the river's environment, putting thousands of people's lives in danger farther downstream. Mendoza, Business World (2018) estimates that there are just around 800 wild orang-utans surviving in the world.

Tensions in South China Sea geopolitics

The Duterte administration has chosen to overlook the maritime dispute between the two countries because it would be too costly to antagonize a military power and risk losing investment from an economic giant. Beijing has built artificial islands and fortifications inside the Philippines' EEZ (Lee-Brago & Mendez, The Philippine Star, 2018) as part of its sweeping claim to the South China Sea, which includes the West Philippine Sea. China's position on the planned expansion of the two countries in the South China Sea was highlighted by Ms. Chen, who also noted the broader opportunities for commercial engagement. She went on to explain, "The development in (the) South China Sea is just one example of the many projects and agreements at the heart of the bilateral relations between governments that will bring great economic benefit to the Philippines." Aguinaldo, writing in Corporate World in 2019: "I think there is still significant potential not just on the government side, but the larger possibility exists in corporate partnership. To begin, it's vital to remember that competing claims to the South China Sea originate from a variety of motivations among various nations. This sheds light on the source of regional animosity and state rivalry. Finally, Crikemans (2017) cites Schofield (2015) 31 as a source that UNCLOS discusses how to demarcate maritime boundaries where competing claims overlap. The United States and China are neck-and-neck in the regional struggle for the affections of the Philippines, and this is evident from an analysis of the political, military, and economic sectors. We now know that this Southeast Asian nation has a wide variety of suitors, each with its own idiosyncrasies and preferences. Philippine views of the United States and China are influenced by several factors outside their foreign policy. As a result, Arroyo brought home the Filipino troops she'd been supporting in Iraq. Efforts to use international law to settle disputes are usually encouraging. However, if just one party attempts to resolve the conflict in this manner, it might easily backfire and lead to an increase of tensions on issues of central importance to both sides. The Philippines, in a legally clever move, used the obligatory arbitration provisions of UNCLOS for a case that had nothing to do with territorial issues but in which the outcome would have far-reaching implications. It was evident that this move would

create resistance and conflict since it went against the conventional etiquette and political knowledge of the area (Kreuzer, 2018). Here, the Philippines has sought to play a better hand by leveraging ASEAN as a middle power 'bully pulpit,' despite the fact that China is more amenable to discussing economic arrangements with ASEAN than security arrangements (Yujuico, 2012). This is seen as a major geopolitical threat by every other nation. Japan has started spending money on domestic infrastructure, such as the Metro Manila metro project that would cost multiple billions of dollars. According to Cruz (The Philippine Star, 2018), China has promised to spend billions on its Belt and Road Initiative, while the United States has established the US International Development Finance Corp. to finance infrastructure abroad. The United States' ties to the Philippines remain robust, despite the country's seeming retreat from a number of countries and regions. There is a strong cultural and family tie between the two nations. There are significant commercial ties between the Philippines and China, but many people believe they are motivated more by convenience than real affinity. The United States profits more from Philippine economic development than China does since the two nations' people speak different languages and their exports sometimes compete in third-party markets. The Philippines is a primary focus for the United States and a potential opening for China in the strategic competition over the Asia-Pacific region. and 2012 (Yujuico) region's influence. According to a 2012 assessment by the International Crisis Group (ICG), the actions of China and the United States alone will not determine whether or not tensions in the South China Sea escalate into a significant clash. Southeast Asian claimant states may come into conflict with one another or be provoked into conflict. As has been the trend throughout the 1970s, tensions have been rising in recent years between China and Southeast Asian nations like Vietnam and the Philippines over disputed islands and waterways. While a recent thorough study may have concluded that the likelihood of a big conflict is low (as stated by Majid, 2012), there is still a substantial danger of error on the part of China, regional disputant governments, and the United Governments. Concerns about the West Philippine Sea have prompted President Rodrigo Duterte to make his fourth trip to Beijing since he took office in 2016. Duterte's trip was "highly successful" in promoting national security and interests, according to a spokesman.

4. Conclusion

The mainstream Philippine media has reported Duterte's geopolitical position on the South China Sea and the Belt and Road Initiative in a way that fits the propaganda paradigm. After the government's acts were revealed, the Philippines became more divided than ever. Only a small minority is ready to capitalize on connections to the mainland. More news articles and columns are adopting a positive view of BRI, but there is also rising anti-communist sentiment and concerns about Chinese exploitation.

In a nutshell, the major media are completely impotent. Good news: there hasn't been any censorship focused at embarrassing the Chinese thus far, and it serves as a dispassionate observer of government spin and geopolitical posturing. Duterte's geopolitical fortune in the South China Sea and the Built and Road Initiative is still being investigated by the Philippine government and the media. The theoretical frameworks of propaganda and war are similar.

China presents itself as a friend in the Philippine economic arena by supporting the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and providing greater credit subsidies. While the United States sees China as a danger to the Philippines, it sees the Philippines as an opponent. The Chinese have established a market system that is on par with the West's and a version of democracy and capitalism that works for them. Westerners may see this as hostile and divisive. To modernize its thousand-year-old business processes, China is embracing neoliberalism. As a result of China's expansive claim in the South China Sea, Philippine independence is at risk. Each nation has an obligation to safeguard democracy inside its borders, and the political and economic heart of China does not actively promote or instigate military confrontation or weapons rivalry. However, the Philippines and other developed Western nations pose a threat to its worldwide economic hegemony. However, the government of the Philippines has considerable sway to foster stability; doing so is critical to the country's economic progress in light of the Belt and Road Initiative. If the Philippines and the rest of Southeast Asia are going to create shared development, they need to be able to talk to one another and work together. Humanizing ties between the Philippines and China is essential if the former is to avoid falling into a debt trap.

Think about the improvements to business, manufacturing, and communication that have resulted from globalization and the capitalist system. This is reportedly one of the BRI's final objectives, as stated by David (2019) of the Philippine Daily Inquirer. The South China Sea maritime dispute has exacerbated tensions between the two nations and the rest of ASEAN. As a result, the norms established by the South China Sea Code of Conduct might be useful in avoiding and resolving territorial conflicts. If the code of conduct is implemented, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) might boost the economies of the

Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries. If the Duterte government is serious about building permanent peace and prosperity in the Philippines, it would be sensible to collaborate with China on BRI. In contrast, isolationism and protectionism are not part of this.

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