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**BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA: PHILIPPINES FOREIGN
POLICY IN THE CASE OF SOUTH CHINA SEA**

Bachelor's thesis

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Abstract

In 2016 there were several events that could change the Philippines' foreign policy in Southeast Asia. The tensions in the South China Sea were growing since several parties claimed the sea, and there were new presidents elected in the Philippines and the United States. This thesis focuses on the Philippines' strategy in this complicated geopolitical situation between the two great powers, the United States of America and China.

The aim of this thesis was to identify how the Philippines respond to the changing geopolitical dynamics in the region after 2016 in the case of the South China Sea and which strategy they are using in their actions. The author explains the situation in the region, defines a small state, and then discusses the potential strategies a small state has in the case. The author set a hypothesis that the Philippines mainly use a hedging strategy to respond to the region's geopolitical dynamics.

To test the hypothesis, the author conducted content analysis on the Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte's speeches, statements, interviews, and press conferences between 2016-2020. There were used official sources from the presidential web page. The purpose was to find statements related to the United States, China, or the South China Sea and identify the strategies.

The author confirmed the hypothesis. Several strategies were used to maneuver in this complicated geopolitical situation, such as balancing, bandwagoning, hedging, and engaging. According to the theoretical part and Duterte's statements, the main strategy used between 2016-2020 was hedging.

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Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to focus on how the Philippines respond to the changing geopolitical dynamics in the region after 2016 in the case of the South China Sea and which strategy they are using in their actions. The topic is important because it shows the options for a small state in the rivalry between great powers. The Philippines' actions can be used as an example for other small states in a similar situation. The hypothesis of this thesis is that the Philippines mainly use a hedging strategy to respond to the region's geopolitical dynamics. To test the hypothesis, the author analyzes the Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte Statements. This finding is important because it can confirm the theoretical argument that small states tend to hedge against great powers in the region to secure their interest first.

The first chapter of the thesis is about the theoretical background. In the beginning, the author gives an overview of the situation in the region. After that, the author defines a small state and then discusses the potential strategies a small state has. The second chapter in the thesis is about the empirical part. In the beginning, the author explains the method of the thesis. After that, the author refers to the Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte's statements from the official presidential sources and analyzes whether the Philippines are using balancing, bandwagoning, hedging, or some other strategy in their geopolitical situation.

The year 2016 has been chosen mainly because of three potential events. The first one is the new president Rodrigo Duterte elected in June 2016 (CNN Philippines, 2016). The second one is the new president of the United States, Donald Trump, elected in November 2016 (Politico, 2016). These changes are influential because the bilateral relationship between the United States and the Philippines has been historically strong and was considered a special relationship (Suhrke, 1975: 88). This rhetoric has changed after the elections. It is essential to understand where the Philippines are heading now and with whom they are cooperating. The third reason is related to disputes between the Philippines and China in the South China Sea and the Philippines' victory over China on July 12 in 2016, on a claim brought against China by the Philippines under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

(UNCLOS) (Panda, 2016). The Permanent Court decided to rule in favor of the Philippines of Arbitration at the Hague (Panda, 2016).

The decision is significant because the South China Sea has been a problematic area in the region for a long time. After all, different countries claim the territory in the sea. For example, the major countries included in the disputes are Brunei, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam (Straitstimes, 2016). There are many different reasons why so many countries are interested in the South China Sea. It is valuable because one-third of the global shipping passes the sea (chinapower.csis.org, 2017), affecting the countries nearby and their economic security. Another reason why it is also beneficial is because of the natural resources, which make more countries interested in the area (Song 2019: 424). China is especially interested in creating artificial islands for military purposes (Song, 2019: 440). Because of the decision made in favor of the Philippines, there might be a military conflict coming ahead because China might not accept that decision.

1. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the author will present the theoretical framework of the thesis. To answer how a small state responds to great power contestation, the author briefly opens the Philippines' background with the United States and China, then discusses the definition of a small state and whether the Philippines is a small state. After that, the author discusses about the possible options and strategies a small state has in the situation of great power rivalry. Based on the literature, there are several options which strategy the Philippines can choose in their decision-making processes as a small state. By explaining the different strategies, this discussion helps to find the most probable choice.

Southeast Asia, in general, is usually using a mix of different strategies (Roy, 2005: 306). Three main strategies are balancing, bandwagoning, and hedging (Koga, 2018: 633). There are also other options for the small states. This thesis focuses on the strategies suitable for small states and tries to determine which one the Philippines are using. There is a conflict between two great powers, the United States and China, because of the South China Sea. China wants to claim the sea and the United States wants to avoid that by emphasizing that there must be freedom of navigation and prevents military escalation in the sea (Global conflict tracker/conflict territorial disputes south china sea, 2020). Since the Philippines are also part of the South China Sea disputes, they need to choose whether they stay in this conflict alone, continue cooperation with the United States, warm up relations with China, or find another solution.

1.1 The background: Philippines' relationship with the United States and China

The Philippines have constantly ranked the United States as one of the favorite countries in the world (Global Indicators Database, 2020). In 2015 during Barack Obama's presidency, 92% of Filipinos viewed The United States favorably, and 94% were having confidence in the President (Global Indicators Database, 2020). That made the Philippines the most pro-American country in the world. After Rodrigo Duterte's elections, this relationship started to change its course. Duterte is supportive of a different foreign policy that is less dependent

on the United States and prioritizes closer relations with China (Blanchard, 2016). Since the Philippines is one of the oldest Asian partners of the United States, this change might have severe consequences in the region (Parameswaran, 2017). The Philippines and China relationships are mainly negatively influenced by their territorial disputes in the South China Sea (Blanchard, 2016). They have a dispute over the sovereignty of some islands and shoals in the Spratly Islands (Loja 2016: 313). In recent years China has started more aggressively reclaim islands and tries to militarize the land in the South China Sea (Global conflict tracker/conflict territorial disputes south china sea, 2020).

After Duterte's elections, the Philippines are maneuvering between the two superpowers China and the United States. For both parties, it's crucial to show their presence in the region. For the United States, it is essential to establish their presence in the South China Sea for balancing China's power (Jennings, 2020). Territorial disputes between the Philippines and China in the South China sea can potentially initiate war in the region. For China, it is essential to hold close ties with the Philippines to reduce the United States presence in the South China Sea (Jennings, 2020). In 2016 China invested 24 billion dollars in the Philippines economy, and that might be one motivation for Duterte to keep positive relations with China (Jennings, 2020). It seems that the Philippines' foreign policy tries to hold good relations with both superpowers China and the United States because China is giving the money and the United States is supporting the Philippines in the South China Sea. Neither China nor the United States is interested in having another powerful country in the region. These geopolitical maneuverings by China and the United States put the Philippines in a difficult position. They have to respond strategically to the geopolitical dynamics between two great powers, which brings us to the main question this thesis addresses: how a small state like the Philippines responds to the geopolitical contestation between great powers in the region?

1.2 The theory of small states

There is no one fixed conceptual definition of a small state, and there are many different options for defining it. There are mainly two categories to define a small state: absolute and

relative (Radoman, 2018: 180). The absolute category consists of upper limits, for example, 10-15 million inhabitants in economically advanced states or 20-30 million in under-developed states (Radoman, 2018: 181). Since the Philippines have approximately 110 million people (Worldometers, 2021), this is not the classification category. Radoman refers to Rothstein (1968) and explains that the second category is that small states are not able to secure their safety on their own in the option of their leaders (Radoman, 2018: 181). Since Duterte has said that the Philippines cannot defend themselves alone, this is more applicable definition (Duterte, 2018). Small states are incapable of making a significant impact on the international system alone, but they may influence it with unilateral or multilateral actions (Keohane, 1969: 295). This definition is also suitable because, in the South China Sea, the Philippines can fight against China with its allies. Radoman refers to Long (2017) and explains that there is also a need to consider different relations states have and their dynamics (Radoman, 2018: 181). Although small states might not have so many resources as the big ones, constructivists see that smallness can also be an advantage or an asset in international relations because this may lead to policy options available for small states (Radoman, 2018: 182). Radoman refers to Krause and Singer (2001) that small states are also those whose diplomatic and material resources are limited and they need to concentrate on safeguarding territorial integrity rather than more far-reaching goals (Radoman, 2018: 182). Radoman also refers to Hey and brings out that there is no need for a clear definition and suggests a concept (Radoman, 2018: 182). The concept bases on the perception of the state, self-perception of the state leaders and population about their position in the international hierarchy (Radoman, 2018: 182). Duterte has said that his state is very small (Duterte, 2019). This confirms that the Philippines president has a self-perception that the Philippines are considered a small state.

According to the literature, the Hey suggested concept and the relative category by Radoman are the most applicable definition in this work context. The reason is that the Philippines president says that the Philippines is a small state and emphasizes the importance of allies and cooperation, which also means that they cannot defend themselves alone if needed and consider themselves as a small state. These definitions show that the Philippines is a small

state and the author moves to a discussion about the potential strategies applicable for a small state. There are several possible options for a small state, and the first one author discusses is balancing.

1.3 The theory of balancing

One potential strategy is balancing, which means that there will be used specific measures, for example, shifting resources to strengthen the capability of defense to prevent one country from becoming a hegemon (Roy, 2005: 306). There are also other types of balancing, for example, institutional balancing, soft-balancing, cautious- balancing, internal balancing, external balancing (Koga, 2018: 634-637), high-intensity balancing, and low-intensity balancing (Roy, 2005; 306). According to the balance of power theory, balancing is the default strategy every state uses (Koga, 2018: 639). Internal balancing is when the state shifts its resource allocations to strengthen its defensive capability (Roy 2005: 306). In the Philippines situation, it means they should channel more resources to buy military equipment to protect their part of the sea. However, this includes a risk of maldistribution of internal resources (Koga, 2018: 637). Internal balancing is more likely to be used in states with higher GDP (Lieber and Alexander, 2005: 118). External balancing means that the state cooperates with another state with the same potential adversary (Roy, 2005: 306). In the Philippines context, it means they should ally with the United States against China. With external balancing, there is a risk of entrapment or abandonment (Snyder, 1984: 471-472). Roy refers to Khong (2004) that according to soft balancing strategy in Southeast Asia, it means that countries in the region except China are encouraging the United States to maintain their military presence, but they are not establishing formal military cooperation (Roy, 2005: 310). Balancing strategy also depends on the intensity. There are distinguished low-intensity balancing and high-intensity balancing (Roy, 2005: 306). In low-intensity balancing, the state attempts to maintain a constructive relationship with the targeted state (Roy, 2005: 306). The Philippines are using low-intensity balancing with the United States against China (Roy, 2005: 314). In high-intensity balancing, the relationship between balancing and targeted state is not so friendly and cooperative (Roy, 2005: 306). It is more adversarial and may include political tensions (Roy, 2005: 306). Since China has a more powerful military,

this does not seem a reasonable option because it may grow tensions and lead to serious conflict.

In the case of balancing, the best choice for the Philippines seems to be soft-balancing, external balancing, and low-intensity balancing. However, since Duterte does not have such good relations with the United States as the Philippines used to have, balancing does not seem a very likely strategy to use. Since it is not clear that the Philippines will use balancing, the author moves to the next possible strategy that is bandwagoning.

1.4 The theory of bandwagoning

The second possible option for the Philippines is bandwagoning which is a strategy without one clear definition (Roy, 2005: 306). One definition is that the state aligns with a threatening state to avoid being attacked by it (Walt, 1987: 17). The second definition is that the state chooses the winning side in the hope to realize economic gains (Schweller, 1994: 74). Since the definitions are different, the use of the strategy depends on which definition is used. In the Philippines situation, the first definition is relevant because of their purpose to avoid major conflict in the South China Sea. The second definition is applicable because China is one of the main trading partners (Duterte, 2019). This strategy also involves a risk of losing autonomy because stronger states are politically more dominant (Koga, 2018: 637). To ensure minimum security, secondary powers are more likely to bandwagon if they do not have any credible allies or partners (Koga 2018, 640).

The Philippines have allied before with the United States, but it is not clear if it will stay that way. The Philippines can also hope on the other Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) states who are also their allies. Since the Philippines have strong allies in the region and they are still allied with the United States, bandwagoning does not seem a likely strategy to be used. Since the Philippines seem not to use a bandwagoning strategy, the author moves on to discuss the next possible strategy that is hedging.

1.5 The theory of hedging

The third possible option is hedging, and according to the literature, this is one of the main strategies the Philippines is using (Roy, 2005: 305). Hedging is the most general strategy, and it means keeping open several strategic options against the possibility of a future security threat (Roy, 2005: 306). In the Philippines situation, this seems the most likely strategy because this keeps open the opportunity to stay allied with the United States and cooperate with China if needed. According to Goh's definition, hedging is a set of strategies to avoid a situation in which states cannot decide upon more straightforward alternatives (Goh, 2005: 8). Hedging is also defined as a behavior in which a state seeks to offset risks by pursuing multiple policy options intended to produce mutually counteracting effects under the situation of high-uncertainties and high stakes (Cheng-Schwee, 2008: 163). Hedging may also include balancing but not necessarily (Roy, 2005: 306). In the Philippines situation, it means that they are hedging, but they might use the United States to balance against China. Hedging is located between balancing and bandwagoning and is considered as a third strategic choice if the state is choosing a strategy (Koga, 2018: 635). A hedging state is strengthening economic cooperation but at the same time also increases military capabilities (Koga 2018, 634). The Philippines are trying to increase their military capability by buying military equipment from different states, including China (Duterte, 2017). This strategy may cause several strategic dilemmas. The purpose is to avoid confrontation with a potentially adversarial state (Koga, 2018: 634). Although there are not enough clarifications in the definition, and because of that, the concept suffers from a low analytical utility (Koga, 2018: 634).

To understand the concept of hedging, there need to be done some clarifications. Hedging leaves strategic options open, and because of that, it helps to explain the variations in state behavior (Koga, 2018: 634). The clarification also helps to identify the geographical area where the intensive power competition takes place. Since hedging states are not clarifying their strategies, it is essential to understand the geographical area where the competition takes place (Koga, 2018: 634). Although great powers are trying to pressure hedging states to clarify their political stance, this pressure may create unnecessary tensions (Koga, 2018:

634-635). This might cause a possibility that China and the United States are trying to make the Philippines choose who to ally with, and this choice may impact the following moves of the states. It seems that the Philippines do not want to grow tensions in the South China Sea, but they also do not to ally with the United States anymore. Hedging also tries to avoid tensions with a target state and rather be cooperative (Koga, 2018: 636). Since there is a potential threat of military escalation in the South China Sea, the Philippines try to avoid tension, but they do not want to disclaim their part of the sea. Hedging is useful for states to reduce the risks associated with a resolute course of specific strategy (Koga, 2018: 638). Hedging is primarily used by the secondary powers in the unipolar world because it is costly to balance against the superpower (Koga, 2018: 639). In this thesis context, there are two superpowers China and the United States which means that it is not a unipolar world. Although it still seems likely that the Philippines are hedging.

In a bipolar system, superpowers balance with each other, and secondary powers experience difficulties in strategic ambiguities, so hedging is rarely used (Koga, 2018: 639). Hedging is more likely used in a multipolar world by superpowers and secondary powers because power is more diffused and distributed (Koga, 2018: 639). Although it might seem that there is only China and the United States rivalry, there are also other main actors included in the conflict, such as ASEAN states, Japan, and South Korea (Duterte, 2017, 2019). That is another reason why hedging strategy may seem likely to be used. Six main patterns can identify hedging state behavior: conventional hedging (military balancing/economic bandwagoning), soft hedging (diplomatic balancing/economic bandwagoning), economic hedging (military bandwagoning/ economic balancing), security hedging (military bandwagoning/diplomatic balancing), diplomatic hedging (economic balancing/diplomatic bandwagoning) and politico-military hedging (military balancing/diplomatic bandwagoning) (Koga, 2018: 642).

Since there are different parties included in the South China Sea conflict and one definition of hedging is pursuing multiple policy options open, this seems to be the most likely used strategy. Whereas there are other possible strategies suitable for a small state, the author

discusses them briefly in the next chapter and then makes a final decision which strategy seems to be most likely used in the Philippines situation.

1.6 Other possible strategies

Although it is most likely that the Philippines choose a strategy according to these previously discussed three strategies, there are also other options. For example, engagement, buck-passing, or binding. Engagement is a strategy where a state uses inclusion and rewards to attempt dissatisfied power (Roy, 2005: 306). With attempting, the state wants the dissatisfied power to accept the rules and institutions of the pre-existing international order (Roy, 2005: 306). According to Roy, engagement is widely used in Southeast Asia to avoid possible domination of China (Roy, 2005: 310). For example, other states encourage the Chinese to be part of multilateral organizations, international dialog, and agreements because they do not want to exclude China (Roy, 2005: 310). Excluding China may grow unnecessary tensions, and it is more beneficial to socialize China than fight against it. Engagement is useful in both ways because it includes benefits for both parties.

Buck-passing is a situation where states avoid balancing by counting on third parties to bear the costs of stopping a rising hegemon (Christensen and Snyder, 1990: 138). It is a strategy that works best under multipolarity (Christensen and Snyder, 1990: 138). Buck-passing occurs when states can identify actors other than themselves who may challenge the influence of the pre-eminent or potentially most threatening state (Christensen and Snyder, 1990: 141). In that case, the Philippines might hope that the United States or any ASEAN state will stop China and they can avoid the conflict.

Binding is a strategy when a weaker state is able to restrain the actions of the powerful state through the creation of institutional agreements and frameworks between stronger and weaker states (Ian, 2003: 11). In exchange, weaker states support the status quo under the leadership of the leading state (Ian, 2003: 11). In the Philippines situation, it means that the Philippines may support China or the United States. Binding also permits formal autonomy and influence over the powerful state by the weaker states (Ian, 2003: 11). It makes use of

the institutional and network linkages available to exert their influence (Ian, 2003: 12). Weaker states are not able to do much about their power shortfalls so that they may use existing institutional and network relationships with the preponderant state and the rest of the world (Ian, 2003: 12). This may help them to preserve or forward their interest (Ian, 2003: 12). Binding may fit states already in institutions and networks with accepted mechanisms that allow some formal channels of influence on the leading state by the weakest members (Ian, 2003: 12). For example, it may fit to smaller ASEAN states as well as the Philippines. However, the importance of worldwide linkages to the second-tier states makes it costly to disrupt the world system (Ian, 2003: 12). That is why this does not seem a likely option. Binding may be measured by how formal restraints are allowed on the powerful states (Ian, 2003: 12). Indication of binding is a tendency where powerful states adhere to institutional restraints in relations with weaker states. (Ian 2003, 12).

Other strategies, such as buffering, bonding, beleaguering, or hiding, are not relevant in this research because these are not very suitable for small states, are more suitable in a unipolar world, or because of other reasons (Ian, 2003: 1-2). Buffering is a strategy that decreases exposure and influence of the more powerful by creating alternative spheres of influence or carving out neutral geographical areas or functions (Ian, 2003: 13). A bonding strategy is when a state promotes autonomy by providing a function or service indispensable for others (Ian, 2003: 10). Beleaguering is when the state's purpose is to undermine the influence and authority of the powerful state (Ian, 2003: 12). Undermining may include sowing of discord between the stronger power and its allies, instigating domestic unrest within the territory of great power, or disturbing the smooth implementation of the policies by the powerful (Ian, 2003: 13). Hiding is when a state ignores the threat, declares neutrality, or draws into isolation (Schroeder, 1994: 117). It appears when states voluntarily withdraw themselves from actual disputes and potential disputes by reducing or cutting contact with potential or existing adversaries (Ian, 2003: 14).

Based on the previous discussion, the author will define the main possible strategies, which are balancing, bandwagoning, and hedging. In this research, the author will consider the

strategy as balancing if the Philippines cooperate with another state such as the United States or ASEAN states since they have the same potential adversary, China. The strategy is considered bandwagoning if the Philippines align with China to avoid being attacked by it. The classification of hedging will be used in two ways. The first one is if the strategy contains several strategies, such as balancing and bandwagoning at the same time in the same year. The second one is if the strategy includes multiple options at the same time, such as praising both China and the United States at the same speech; strengthening economic cooperation and increasing military capabilities; not choosing any specific strategy to keep the options open; avoid tensions by not criticizing either China or the United States. Based on the definitions, the author states that the Philippines is mainly using the strategy of hedging. The strategy will be proven in the empirical part by analyzing the Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte's statements.

2. Empirical part

In this chapter, the author presents the empirical part of the thesis. In the beginning, there is an explanation of the methodology of the thesis. After that author analyses the Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte's statements from his speeches, interviews, and press conferences from 2016-2020. The chapter ends with a discussion of which strategy the Philippines are using in the great power rivalry in Southeast Asia.

2.1 Methodology

This research was carried out using a qualitative method (Lamont, 2015: 88). The goal of this research is to see which strategy the Philippines is using. Are they using balancing, bandwagoning, hedging, or another strategy to one of the great powers. In this research, the author made content analysis where is empirically analyzed the Philippines' foreign policy from the Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte's points of view from the official presidential sources. Official sources are Duterte's statements and speeches from the official webpage of the government (Lamont, 2015: 88). The main question of this research is how the Philippines respond to the changing geopolitical dynamics of the region using the case of the South China Sea after 2016.

President Rodrigo Duterte was elected in June 2016. Since then, he has been very controversial because of his statements and not typical actions. This work brings out Duterte's statements from different speeches, interviews, and press conferences from 2016-2020. Since the purpose is to see how the Philippines respond to the United States or China, there will be analyzed speeches where it is mentioned United States, China, or the South China Sea and the attitude towards the states. The relevant information was also the progress in the South China Sea.

In the beginning, the author sorted out all speeches related to previously mentioned topics starting from 2016. To find suitable speeches, the author looked speeches from bigger summits, such as ASEAN summits and summits related to the economy or military. Relevant speeches were also those from the meetings while visiting different states, especially

meetings with the president of China. There were also used anniversary or celebration speeches related to China, the United States, the South China Sea, the Philippines military or navy. To use the speech for further analysis, there needed to be relevant information for understanding which strategy the Philippines are using. In the beginning, the author found 24 speeches from 2016, 35 speeches from 2017, 39 speeches from 2018, 21 from 2019, and 9 from 2020. 2016 and 2020 were different because, in 2016, there were speeches from June and not a whole year since Duterte was elected in June. Due to the COVID-19 crisis in 2020, most speeches in 2020 were related to the COVID-19 crisis, and there were fewer speeches related to the thesis topic.

After the first selection of speeches, there was a second one to sort out the most relevant ones and those suitable for further discussion. The purpose was to sort out 3-4 speeches every year to continue further analysis. In the final selection, there were 11 speeches from 2016, 12 speeches from 2017, 12 speeches from 2018, 8 speeches from 2019, and 3 speeches from 2020. There are two ways how the speeches have been analyzed. A small part of the speech has been quoted in the thesis followed by analyzes, or there is referred to the speech in the discussion. There has not been any program used to analyze the speeches, only the authors' choice, which are the most relevant speeches. In the background information, there is also used other media sources or statistics to find relevant articles about the Philippines' relations with the United States and China and information about the South China Sea dispute.

2.2 Duterte's statements 2016

Duterte started his controversial speeches from his inauguration speech on June 30 when he said that he knows that there are people who disapprove of his methods, but he also knows his limits of power and suggests people to mind their own work (Duterte, June 30, 2016). In his speeches, he brings out several problems the Philippines has, and one of the main problem is the South China Sea. In Duterte's 2016 statements, the author found the indications of balancing, bandwagoning, and hedging strategies.

2.2.1 Balancing

The author has found that in 2016 the Philippines sometimes moved towards balancing. There are several proofs of balancing found in Duterte's statements. In the following chapter, the author refers to Duterte's statements from his speeches which can be considered as balancing.

In 2016 Duterte says that security dialogues must deepen to build greater understanding and cooperation to pursue a peaceful conflict resolution and management in the South China Sea (Duterte, July 25, 2016). He confirms that the Philippines will remain committed to international partners and engaged with the international community (Duterte, July 25, 2016). Since he promises to stay committed with the international partners, there is a possibility that there are several states that can balance China. At the beginning of Duterte's tenure, he also confirms his alliance with the United States by saying that he will reiterate their strong alliance with America (Duterte, August 10, 2016). Duterte says that everybody, especially ASEAN states are worried about China and the China Sea conflict that might go out of control (Duterte, September 10, 2016). Since other states are also concerned, and Duterte emphasizes the importance of cooperation, he might hope that other allies in the region and the United States are balancing China.

It was also seen that the Philippines have not very close relations with the United States anymore, and the next potential partner is ASEAN (Duterte, November 17, 2016). It means that ASEAN states, including the Philippines, can balance against China and solve the conflict peacefully through joint cooperation. While visiting China, Duterte gave his word that he will cooperate with China, but he also continues the Philippines' independent foreign policy (Duterte, November 20, 2016). Since China and the Philippines are both interested in the development of Asia, they mutually agreed on many things, including that China is leading the economic development (Duterte, November 20, 2016).

Although Duterte does not have as close relations with the United States as they used to have, it might change after the elections of the United States president. After the elections,

Duterte talked with the new president Donald Trump. Trump said that they should fix their bad relations, and Duterte is doing a great job, although Americans criticize him (Duterte, December 7, 2016). When Trump became a new president, there is a possibility that they warm up their relations, and the Philippines will balance China with the United States.

2.2.2 Bandwagoning

The author has found that in 2016, the Philippines sometimes used the strategy of bandwagoning. This chapter refers to several statements from Duterte's speeches that will prove bandwagoning strategy.

In 2016 Duterte said that China is helping them and America is not, which might be the reason why he chooses to cooperate more with China (Duterte, September 9, 2016). At the same time, he is against China because of their sea dispute and knows he cannot go to war against them. This might be the real reason he accepts China's help, and it refers to bandwagoning because one possible option why Duterte is cooperating with China is to avoid tensions in the sea dispute.

"I said a few days ago, few months ago, that I will charter a new course, changing direction of the foreign policy and be with friends with everybody and with no enemies to contend with, no enemies to hurt, no friends to serve." "So why don't I go to China? What kept us from China was not our own making? We are almost a vassal state of America. Our foreign policy dovetails the policy of the United States and of the West." (Duterte, October 19, 2016)

The Philippines used to cooperate with the United States, but they changed their course towards China when the circumstances changed. Since Duterte said that before, they were more dependent on the United States, it seems that they also counted more on their help. Since the Philippines' main goal is to avoid conflict in the South China Sea and they do not have such good relations with the United States anymore, they need to ensure that the peace remains, and one reason to do that is to bandwagon to China.

"By reducing tensions with China, the president has contributed to the strengthening of China-ASEAN cooperation paving the way for other claimants to work on the settlement of their own disputes with China, for example Malaysia. With lesser

tension in the South China Sea, the U.S. will have difficulties in finding reasons to enhance its presence and monitoring in this water." (Duterte, November 17, 2016)

Duterte has achieved better relationships with China very fast, but this does not mean that he would forget the dispute and disclaim the Philippines part of the sea. It can be a sign of bandwagoning because warming up the relations with China is one possible way to avoid conflict. Duterte says that by reducing tensions with China, they can work on the settlement of their disputes which means they are bandwagoning to solve the dispute.

2.2.3 Hedging

Since the Philippines used both balancing and bandwagoning, it can be said that the main strategy in 2016 was hedging. The author also found other proofs to confirm the strategy of hedging.

The proof of hedging is that Duterte makes it clear that cooperation is crucial. He also emphasizes that the Philippines pursue their own independent foreign policy (Duterte, September 10, 2016). This refers to hedging because saying that they are cooperating and also having their own foreign policy keeps the options open for different options. In October, Duterte visits China and mentions it in his speech.

"We'll look forward to renewing the ties of friendship between the Philippines and China, and to reaffirm the commitment to work closer to achieve shared goals for our countries and peoples. As we mark this year of the 41st anniversary of the establishment relations between China and the Philippines, we will look at the sum total of our relationships. We shall seek ways to strengthen cooperation, particularly to intensify two-way trade and investments." (Duterte, October 16, 2016).

This speech refers to hedging because there are several strategies used. Duterte wants to have a closer friendship with China which can be interpreted as bandwagoning because he might hope that this will help him prevent the conflict. He also wants to tighten the economic cooperation between the Philippines and China, which can be interpreted as hedging. It is not clear whether Duterte wants to intensify the relations because of economic cooperation, which would refer to hedging, or is he afraid that China will escalate the South China Sea dispute. Since there are used several strategies in one speech, it refers to hedging.

Since the Philippines and the United States' relations are not so close anymore, the Philippines need allies in the South China Sea disputes. There is a possibility to cooperate more with ASEAN or neighboring states. Duterte said that they will be friends with everybody and have no enemies (Duterte, October 19, 2016). It refers to hedging because being friends with everybody also means keeping several different options open. The more states are in favor of the decision made by an arbitrary court and do not want war, the more secure the Philippines' position is. The more allies they have in the region and the better relations with China, the less they need the United States.

These findings confirm that in 2016 the main strategy the Philippines used was hedging. In the next chapter, the author brings out statements from 2017.

2.3 Duterte's statements 2017

In 2017 Duterte continued his rhetorics to move towards China, but he also did not forget the United States. In Duterte's 2017 statements, the author found the indication of hedging.

2.3.1 Hedging

The author has found that in 2017, the Philippines used the strategy of hedging. This chapter refers to several statements from Duterte's speeches that will prove hedging strategy.

Duterte said that he asked China if they can patrol the international waters without intruding into countries' territorial waters because the Philippines would be glad if China is presented there (Duterte, January 31, 2017). He also mentions that he is not guilty about their worsened relations with the United States (Duterte, February 2, 2017). He said that the United States started it, and now they are saying that the Philippines and the United States relations are bad because of Duterte's rhetorics (Duterte, February 2, 2017). In that case, Duterte is not against the United States, but the United States was against Duterte, which is why their relations worsened. Now when there is a new president who is not against Duterte, they might start to cooperate again, which can also be a sign of hedging because Duterte keeps his options open for China and the United States. Duterte said that China used to keep the

distance because the Philippines were dovetailing the United States' foreign policy, but Duterte wants to make friends with everybody (Duterte, February 10, 2017). By saying that, it is seen that Duterte does not want to pick sides, but he wants to be friends with everybody. Duterte admits that he cannot stop China from what they are doing, and since China is helping the Philippines to improve their economy, Duterte is even more friendly towards China (Duterte, March 19, 2017). Since Duterte knows he has no chance against China in case of a war, it seems likely that he is bandwagoning. However, they are also tightening their economic relations, which can be interpreted as hedging. Duterte knows he cannot afford to go to war and does not want to do that. In 2017 he also went to China.

"I went to China, I said, Mr. Xi Jinping, I am here to shake your hands. I am not asking for anything, I just want to trade with you because you seem to be far away. And he said because you stick your, the foreign policy seems to be just a dovetail of what America wants. So I said I will adopt and then align the foreign policy but I would like to trade with you and please help us." (Duterte, March 24, 2017)

After the president of China said that Duterte depends too much on the United States, Duterte was ready to change that, which mean he wants to keep several options open. The economic cooperation between China and the Philippines also refers to hedging. It seems that he does not want to cut the relation with the United States totally but be friends with both of them. With the United States because they can help the Philippines to balance against China and with China to avoid the escalation in the sea.

"But we remain friends with America, but I am chartering a new course. We are at our best level of friendship with China after I went there." "At any time during my term, we will have to talk about the arbitration of the China Sea. And when that time comes, I would present to you the judgment on all four corners of the paper and we will not talk about anything except the China." (Duterte, March 29, 2017)

It seems that Duterte is planning to make his move and tries to find a final solution in the South China Sea dispute. If Duterte previously said he is aligning his foreign policy with China, he also confirms that he will stay friends with the United States. There might be a possibility that after Trump was elected, the Philippines and the United States relations will be warmer. Although Duterte said that he has not entirely accepted Trump because he is tied up (Duterte, May 1, 2017). He also said that he was not distancing before, but it was rather a rift because Obama was against Duterte (Duterte, May 1, 2017). After visiting China,

Duterte said that China wants to help them, but it might fall out because the Philippines are identified with the United States.

Duterte confirmed that he would like to chart his own course, but he also stays friends with the United States because they have many things between them, and he has to think of his state first (Duterte, May 13, 2017). While choosing the course, Duterte shows that he has not chosen the side and uses a hedging strategy. He says that if America is willing to fight, they are also ready to fight, although it would be a massacre, and he also brings out that America is the only superpower that can go against China (Duterte, May 19, 2017). Duterte also says that he has nothing against America, but he does not like their double standards and refuses to deal with them (Duterte, May 19, 2017). After that, he states that they were following the American foreign policy, but now he is starting his own (Duterte, May 19, 2017). He also says that the independence of the Philippines foreign policy allows them to broaden the horizons of friendship with other states because overdependence on traditional partners has limited their cooperation opportunities. (Duterte, May 22, 2017). This means that he is not only keeping options open for China and the United States but also to other states, which again refers to hedging.

"But the problem, I said, is I do not want to criticize the big powers now because it was really of their own making." "But nobody, really... well, once in a while, raised a howl. You know, China is building, but his --- but her promises are peaceful. So in the meantime, I said, since there is no space to talk about a violent option, let us just continue." (Duterte, October 31, 2017)

By not criticizing the great powers, the Philippines Duterte again shows the strategy of hedging. Although he is trying to be friends with everybody, he is also preparing to go to war because he is trying to buy or lend military equipment from different states (Duterte November 7, 2017). Duterte has got arms from China and emphasizes that China is very kind and gave them additional firearms, but he also says that the Philippines remain best friends with America (Duterte November 7, 2017). In addition to China, many other states claim the sea, and Duterte sees that the potential of military conflict rises (Duterte November 7, 2017). Since the Philippines are trying to raise their military capability, it also shows that they are using a hedging strategy. However, it seems controversial because Duterte is buying

military equipment to fight against China in the South China Sea and at the same time says that they are friends with China.

These findings confirm that in 2017 the main strategy the Philippines used was hedging. In the next chapter, the author brings out statements from 2018.

2.4 Duterte's statements 2018

Duterte has realized that the potential of the conflict is rising, and it seems likely that he will continue his strategy of hedging so that he does not need to pick sides and can hope that there will be a peaceful solution. In Duterte's 2018 statements, the author found the indication of balancing, bandwagoning, hedging, and engaging.

2.4.1 Balancing

The author has found that in 2018, the Philippines used the strategy of balancing. This chapter refers to several statements from Duterte's speeches that will prove balancing strategy.

In 2018 Duterte confirms again that they have good relations with the United States, and since they have a military alliance, they cannot enter into another military alliance with any other state because there can be only one (Duterte, February 19, 2018). Since they already have a strong alliance and the Philippines cannot enter into another one, this might mean that the Philippines need to use the United States to balance against China rather than find other options. The next day after Duterte said that he has nothing against China, he said that he could declare war on China tonight (Duterte, May 16, 2018). So far, he has always said that he wants peace in the region, and he is not going to war with China because it will be a massacre. However, Duterte is worried that he does not have the assurance that America will remain by their side if there should be a war (Duterte, May 19, 2018). This means that even if the Philippines would like to balance against China with the United States, they cannot be sure if America will stay by their side.

Although Duterte has previously said that the Philippines has a strong alliance, he also has controversial feelings about them, and it seems he does not completely trust the United States. Duterte said that he feels that he does not want to talk to the United States because one president is berating and another one is praising him (Duterte, September 4, 2018). On the other hand, he also says that he is a friend, and Trump is his idol (Duterte, September 4, 2018). It seems that the relations between the Philippines and the United States are changing, and they are having better relations with the United States because of Trump. It might mean that they will try to balance together against China.

2.4.2 Bandwagoning

The author has found that in 2018, the Philippines used the strategy of bandwagoning. This chapter refers to several statements from Duterte's speeches that will prove bandwagoning strategy.

In the ASEAN conference, Duterte confirmed that they stand together with China, fight against the same problems, and are ready to work with all states in the region to seek friends (Duterte, April 10, 2018). From China's perspective, saying something like that at a big conference might increase the Philippines' credibility. However, Duterte might say that only to avoid the conflict with China, which again refers to bandwagoning.

"If there is any power now on planet Earth who can deal with that problem, it is America. But America never lifted a finger." "Hey, guy! You're not supposed to build something in the midst of water especially artificial construction" "Now, we can always appeal to the other nations for a concession. And you know what, however you look at China, I consider China a friend." "It's geopolitics actually. That's why I went out of my way to make friends with China." (Duterte, April 29, 2018)

In 2018 Duterte says that he cannot deal with the South China Sea problem, which is why he went to make friends with China. Since he realizes that the United States is not dealing with the problem and has not found any other solutions, he finds bandwagoning more suitable than balancing.

2.4.3 Hedging

Since the Philippines used both balancing and bandwagoning, it can be said that the main strategy in 2018 was hedging. The author also found other proofs to confirm the strategy of hedging.

"We are neutral, we will continue to talks with China. This is not the time to be fighting over the South China Sea because it only would lead into a war." "But just the same ,we cannot fight America, just like China. I'll just keep quiet." "They are competing for a world superpower in the next centuries to come." (Duterte, February 9, 2018)

Duterte understands that China and America are competing to be the next superpower. Not criticizing the superpowers and keeping quiet also refers to the hedging strategy. Since he has said that the Philippines are friends with both of them, he might want to stay out of this because he wants to avoid war. Duterte brings out that China builds structures and military bases in the South China Sea (Duterte, February 19, 2018). Although it is not intended for the Philippines but for those who Chinese think would destroy them, which is the United States (Duterte, February 19, 2018). Duterte plans to stay out of the great power rivalry because he is not going into a battle he cannot win (Duterte, February 19, 2018). China is giving firearms for free, and Duterte says that he needs China's help, he is not ashamed to admit it, and they maintain good relations (Duterte, February 19, 2018). However, Duterte has more reasons to have better relations with China because the United States is not selling them military equipment, but China gives them for free (Duterte, February 19, 2018). By increasing the military equipment, Duterte again confirms the strategy of hedging.

Duterte admits that the United States is the only one who can fight against China, but he is worried because they are not doing anything (Duterte, April 29, 2018). Previously he was critical towards the United States because they stayed in the waters of the South China sea, and now he is critical because the United States is not doing anything (Duterte, April 29, 2018). If he previously said that he is not criticizing the superpowers, he criticizes both China and the United States. Duterte is very passionate about improving the economy, and he wants to trade with everybody. His plan might not work out because he says that for the free trade agreement, he has to sign a document that says that if you are trading with America, you

cannot trade with China (Duterte, October 18, 2018). Hoping to strengthen the economic cooperation also refers to hedging. Duterte also said that he'd be neutral, but after that, he went to China (Duterte, October 18, 2018). This again refers to hedging because saying that he is neutral keeps open the options for cooperation for several states, and going to China keeps open good relations with China.

2.4.4 Engaging

The author has found that in 2018, the Philippines used in addition to balancing, bandwagoning, and hedging the engaging strategy. This chapter refers to several statements from Duterte's speeches that will prove engaging strategy.

"Our improved relationship with China, however, does not mean that we will waver in our commitment to defend our interests in the West Philippine Sea. This is why we engage China through bilateral and multilateral platforms such as the ASEAN-China and the Philippines China Bilateral Consultation Mechanism." (July 23, 2018)

If Duterte previously gave vague answers, he now clearly says that he uses the strategy of engagement. The reason might be that he realized his previous strategies did not work so well as he hoped, and he is testing other strategies to have better chances to win in the South China Sea dispute.

The Philippines is a Country Coordinator of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations until 2021, and Duterte emphasizes that they are committed to work with all parties in the negotiations and conclusion of the Declaration on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (Duterte, November 13, 2018). The ASEAN-China dialogue refers to engagement again because having more close relations with China can prevent the attack on the other parties included in the South China Sea dispute. Duterte affirms that this cooperation includes peaceful settlement, the exercise of self-restraint, freedom of navigation, and overflight in accordance with the international law, especially the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (Duterte, November 13, 2018). Duterte affirms that ASEAN and China will continue to reaffirm the importance of maintaining and enhancing promoting peace, security, stability, safety, freedom of navigation and overflight, mutual trust and confidence, exercising self-

restraint in the conduct of activities, avoid tensions that may further complicate the situation and pursue a peaceful solution of disputes in accordance with international law including the 1982 UNCLOS (Duterte, November 14, 2018). Duterte says that for the first time, ASEAN and China successfully completed an ASEAN-China Maritime Exercise, which is a valuable confidence-building measure, strengthens practical cooperation, builds mutual trust, friendship, and understanding amongst ASEAN and Chinese navies (Duterte, November 14, 2018). China and ASEAN also issued ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership Vision 2030, which will provide a strategic roadmap for ASEAN-China cooperation (Duterte, November 14, 2018). This will complement many ASEAN-China agreements made through the years and the Plan of Action to Implement the Joint Declaration on ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity (2016-2020) (Duterte, November 14, 2018). This partnership seems to be made, hoping that there will be a peaceful solution to the conflict, and while engaging China, they are less violent.

These findings confirm that in 2018 the main strategy the Philippines used was again hedging. In the next chapter, the author brings out statements from 2019.

2.4 Duterte's statements 2019

In 2019 Duterte is still emphasizing the same problems. He wants to buy military equipment from the United States, but since they refused to deliver, he asked the same thing from China, and China gave everything for free (Duterte, march 6, 2019). The more China is giving them money and equipment, the better are the relations. Although they have not solved the South China Sea dispute, they have managed to keep their friendship. In Duterte's 2019 statements, the author found the indication of hedging.

2.4.1 Hedging

The author has found that in 2019, the Philippines used the strategy of hedging. This chapter refers to several statements from Duterte's speeches that will prove hedging strategy.

Duterte said that the Philippines and China must continue their work together and explore new cooperation and partnership areas because they have a strong desire to further deepen their engagement (Duterte, April 25, 2019). Duterte is glad that the Philippines and China have elevated their relations, and it seems that they will keep that course. China is the Philippines' largest trading partner, and their growing economic exchanges can only strengthen the friendship (Duterte, April 26, 2019). Increasing military capability and strengthening economic cooperation is again a sign of hedging. Duterte brings out that all these problems about the South China Sea could have been avoided if the United States had intervened at that time when China was weak (Duterte, June 26, 2019). Now he is blaming the Americans that he had to go to China (Duterte, August 6, 2019). It seems that now when China has grown their military capability, no one wants to go against them, and Duterte again accuses both China and the United States.

Duterte wants to avoid the conflict, but it is not easy because he also wants to protect their territorial waters (Duterte, July 22, 2019). He went to China and said that he wants to go to his territory and dig oil, but he got the response that it can mean trouble (Duterte, July 22, 2019). It seems even more complicated because the Philippines ownership of the sea is internationally recognized by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the Arbitral Award in the case of People --- "Republic of the Philippines vs. People's Republic of China" (Duterte, July 22, 2019). However, it says that another state may utilize the resource found in the Exclusive Economic Zone (Duterte, July 22, 2019).

He is cooperating with China, but they have not signed any military treaties or agreements because the Philippines have a treaty with the United States, and it forbids getting another one (Duterte, August 6, 2019). This means that the Philippines are balancing against China with the United States and at the same time bandwagoning with China, which can be interpreted as hedging.

While his visit to China, Duterte said that he wants to dig oil, he got the answer that China is privileged to be friends with the Philippines, but this is the conflict they cannot solve

overnight (Duterte, August 6, 2019). If the United States has done anything previously, he should not have gone there because there would not be a problem. Duterte hopes that during the Philippines' tenure as the coordinator of China-ASEAN relations they will conclude the Code of Conduct and maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea (Duterte, August 30, 2019). It becomes more evident now that Duterte cannot do anything about the situation because they cannot go to war, and China is not retreating. It seems that he can only hope that some other state is doing something or will propose a solution which again refers to hedging because it will keep all the options open.

"The South Koreans are also against the occupation of the South China Sea and the claim of China. This will be taken up because one day, when we decide to really go for it, it will be the Western powers plus Seoul, plus Tokyo, and Australia. Malaysia --- I do not know if... I'm not sure of Malaysia if they'll join the fray. Philippines, Philippines." "I will decide when the time comes. I will not make any guarantees because I said we do not have the even the firepower and I will never commit to something which will just you know massacre." (Duterte, November 19, 2019)

It seems that when the time comes, Duterte hopes to balance China with western states on the question of the South China Sea. Since China has a more significant military capability, it takes many other states to balance the power, but it must be sure that all the other states are ready to go into that conflict. Although at the same time, he also says that he will decide what to do when the time comes. This refers to hedging again because he leaves the options open.

These findings confirm that in 2019 the main strategy the Philippines used was hedging. In the next chapter, the author brings out statements from 2020.

2.6 Duterte's statements 2020

Due to the COVID-19 crisis in 2020, there is less discussion about the South China Sea dispute, but the potential conflict still remains. Duterte has previously said that there will be a solution to this conflict during his tenure. He has been president for more than four years, but there is still no clear solution, and the threat of a military conflict is still alive. In Duterte's 2020 statements, the author found the indication of balancing, hedging, and engaging.

2.6.1 Balancing

The author has found that in 2020, the Philippines used the strategy of balancing. This chapter refers to several statements from Duterte's speeches that will prove balancing strategy. It seems that by 2020 Duterte has realized that balancing with the United States is not enough and calls for other states.

"I therefore call on the stakeholders in the South China Sea, the Korean Peninsula, the Middle East and Africa: if we cannot be friends as yet, then in God's name, let us not hate each other too much." "The Philippines affirms that commitment in the South China Sea in accordance with UNCLOS and the 2016 Arbitral Award. The Award is now part of international law, beyond compromise and beyond the reach of passing governments to dilute, diminish or abandon. We firmly reject attempts to undermine it." (Duterte, September 22, 2020)

If Duterte was previously trying to fix the situation bilaterally with China or with the United States, he seems to understand that this strategy is not working very well. He pressures the ASEAN states now and issues the dispute in his speech in the United Nations General Assembly (Duterte, September 22, 2020). It seems that he hopes they can do something about the situation. He says that the South China Sea issue is ASEAN's strategic challenge, and they have to deal with this matter with haste as a community (Duterte, November 12, 2020). It seems that Duterte sees the ASEAN states as the best option to balance China to have a peaceful solution and finally solve the conflict because it has been a long time without any solution. He emphasizes again that the dispute must be solved peacefully in accordance with international law, including UNCLOS, because the 2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea is an authoritative interpretation on the application of UNCLOS, and since it is now part of international law, it cannot be diminished or ignored by any state (Duterte, November 12, 2020). Duterte affirms that they are all committed to the immediate conclusion of a substantive and effective Code of Conduct in the South China Sea because it has been a long time and a long wait (Duterte, November 12, 2020). It seems that Duterte is hoping that ASEAN will do something about the issue because it is not only the Philippines' problem, but because of China's actions, there is a potential threat to all neighboring states.

2.6.2 Hedging

The author has found that in 2020, the Philippines used the strategy of hedging. This chapter refers to several statements from Duterte's speeches that will prove hedging strategy.

Including the South China Sea conflict, there is now another urgent and challenging issue that needs a solution, and states need to prioritize where to focus because they cannot solve everything simultaneously. Although the primary purpose is to fight against the COVID-19 crisis, the South China Sea problem has not gone. One possible option is that if the states are engaged with the COVID-19 crisis, they are not giving attention to what is going in the South China Sea, and that is China's opportunity to make their move. However, it does not seem likely because China is also wildly affected by the COVID-19 situation.

"I have nothing against America, I have nothing against China but if you put bases here, you will double the spectacle of a most destructive thing just like Manila during the Second World War --- during the retaking of this city." "Now, plenty of critics, both sides, claim about nothing has been done to retake forcefully or physically the South China Sea. Alam mo, unless we are prepared to go to war, I would suggest that we better just call off and treat this, I said, with diplomatic endeavors." (Duterte, July 27, 2020)

In 2020 Duterte said again that he has nothing against the United States or China. He also suggests using diplomatic endeavors. It seems that although Duterte has previously said that the Philippines have their own independent foreign policy and he has started his own course, he also admits that he might have to choose between China and the United States. This leaves open cooperation with both parties, which can be interpreted as hedging.

"The Philippines particularly looks forward to enhanced engagement in maritime security. Our disputes in the [South] China Sea may seem intractable. But they are not greater than our combined capacity to manage and solve. Let us [not] make the South China Sea another locus --- or let us not --- a locus of power play. It is a dangerous game to play and one without a victor. Let us lower tensions, not raise them; build confidence rather than doubts; listen and understand instead of threaten." (Duterte, November 14, 2020).

It seems that since Duterte has realized that the potential war is not going to disappear and he is gathering allies to balance China. Since he is not sure about the United States, the next best option are ASEAN states, and he emphasizes that together they can win China. Duterte hopes to engage states to enhance maritime security. He also calls for the ASEAN state to

cooperate to solve the dispute, which seems to refer to balancing. While using engaging and balancing, this refers to several strategies, which means hedging.

2.6.3 Engaging

The author has found that in 2020, the Philippines used the strategy of engaging. This chapter refers to several statements from Duterte's speeches that will prove engaging strategy. It seems that since Duterte has realized that the potential war is not going to disappear and he hopes to engage states to enhance maritime security.

"The Great Powers will continue to draw us into their respective camps. We should continue to nimbly engage them in ways that most [benefit us]. We must insist on an open and rules-based international order that gives all countries – large or small – not just one voice, but an equal standing." (Duterte, June 26, 2020)

In 2020 Duterte said again that they are using engaging in a most beneficial way to the Philippines. Although engagement has been used few times, it is still not a very common strategy. The reason might be that other strategies are usually more efficient. Although engaging can sometimes be used, and since Duterte said that they should engage states in the most beneficial way, this leaves open the chance that if he finds the way to do it might have a positive impact.

These findings confirm that in 2020 the main strategy the Philippines used was hedging. During the past years, there were mainly used different types of hedging. There were used balancing, bandwagoning, engaging, and hedging simultaneously in the same year, which can be interpreted as hedging. There was also used criticizing China and the United States simultaneously and avoiding tensions by not criticizing either China or the United States. During these years, there were several times mentioned strengthening economic cooperation and increasing military capabilities. Finally, cooperating with several states and not choosing any specific strategy for keeping the options open was another form of hedging. This means that the main strategy used by the Philippines in 2016-2020 was hedging. In the next chapter, the author moves on to the discussion part.

2.7 Discussion

During Duterte's four and a half years long tenure from 2016-2020, he has said many times that the Philippines have their own foreign policy and that the Philippines are changing the course. On one day, he is best friends with China, on the next with the United States, and on the third day, he does not want to know anything about them and emphasizes the importance of cooperation between ASEAN states. During these years, one thing has remained the same: the need for a peaceful solution and commitment to international law. Duterte's statements during these years refer mainly to hedging because his cooperation plans and strategies have changed a lot during these years, and it seems he is keeping all the options open.

There has been a shift in his statements during his tenure, and it is interesting to see how it is going forward. In 2016 he seemed very confident and emphasized that he will change the course and have his own foreign policy where he does not need to depend on others. He is mentioning the South China Sea dispute a lot and affirms that it needs to be solved. He also is warming up the relations with China and is moving away from the United States. He praises the president of China a lot because he is helping to improve the Philippines' economy and is ready to help the Philippines. He is critical about the United States for not helping them and because of their historical background. However, there seemed to be a change after the elections in the United States because Duterte likes Trump more than he liked the previous president Obama. Duterte hopes to strengthen the relationship with China more but is also not disclaiming the South China Sea. He was very straightforward while meeting the president of China and said that there must be a peaceful solution to the conflict. The main strategy in 2016 was hedging because there were signs of balancing, bandwagoning and hedging.

In 2017 he continued to strengthen the relations with China but was also mentioning the United States more. He said that he is not the reason why the Philippines and the United States relations have worsened. It might be that after the elections of Trump, he feels that he wants to warm up the relations with the United States as well because, in case of a conflict with China, the United States is the best ally to them. It is seen that he wants to stay friends

with both China and the United States. At the same time, he also confirms that he is having his own course of foreign policy. He hopes to find a peaceful solution because China seems to be a friend, and he hopes that they can solve the dispute by talking. It might be complicated to be best friends with China and with the United States. Since Duterte was not so critical of the United States anymore, it might be that he realized that he needs to have good relations with them if there should be an escalation of the conflict in the South China Sea. Since the United States and China have different interests in the region and are on the opposite sides, it seems that in 2017 the Philippines' main strategy was bandwagoning and hedging, which can be interpreted as hedging. Currently, Duterte can be friends with both states, but in case of a conflict, he needs to choose. Until that time, he does not need to clarify his position.

In 2018 Duterte said that he would be neutral and quiet. He understands the competition between China and the United States, and he wants to stay out of it. China is giving military equipment to the Philippines for free. It seems to be China's strategy to win the Philippines' support because they need weapons, and the United States is not selling anything to them. At the same time, Duterte has a military alliance with the United States, and he cannot enter into another alliance because of that. Since the possibility of an escalation of the conflict is not gone, Duterte emphasizes that he is talking to China and tries to solve the situation peacefully. He knows he cannot go to war, but there seem to be no signs of China retreating from the conflict. China is postponing the discussion about the situation, the United States is not doing anything although they have the capability, and the Philippines cannot do anything. There was ASEAN-China bilateral consultation, but during that, there was also no solution. It seems that Duterte hopes that involving ASEAN states might influence to find the solution. One possibility is that if more parties are involved, the problem will be solved, and Duterte does not need to make a decision. In his speeches in 2018, he says that they are trying to engage China and by ASEAN-China partnership, this might be one strategy to use to have a solution. By improving the ASEAN-China partnership engagement, there was added new strategy on engaging. There were also used balancing, bandwagoning, and hedging, which again refers to a hedging strategy.

In 2019 Duterte continues to strengthen the relations with China. He hopes to find new areas of partnership and cooperation for deepening their engagement. They are also improving their economic cooperation, and this enhances their friendship. However, the South China Sea dispute has not gone anywhere and is stressing the states. Duterte is worried about China and the United States trade war and is afraid of the escalation of the conflict. He hopes that the United States will do something and is accusing them of not doing anything previously. He also went to China to talk to the president about the situation. Although China and the Philippines have become close friends, the president of China said that if Duterte is going to dig oil in the sea, this can mean trouble, which sounds like threatening. The Philippines' tenure as the coordinator of China-ASEAN relations will continue, and Duterte hopes that there will be a peaceful solution. Since there have not been any moves to a possible solution, Duterte starts to seem more hopeless. After the ASEAN-China bilateral talks, he seems to hope that this might be the chance for a solution. On the one hand, it seems that Duterte continues the engagement strategy. On the other hand, it seems that he is trying to balance China with the ASEAN states. Since there are several options, it can be said that in 2019 the main strategy was hedging.

In 2020 the main issue was the COVID-19 crisis, and the potential conflict in the South China Sea got less attention. Although Duterte said at the beginning of his tenure that there would be a solution by 2020, there is still no solution. It seems that he has given up because his efforts to be friends with China or cooperate with the United States or ASEAN have not helped to get the solution. He affirms that the COVID-19 crisis has only worsened the relations between the United States and China. Duterte spoke about the South China Sea issue more widely in 2020. He called for other states in the United Nations General Assembly to pay attention to this issue and find a peaceful solution. Since he has understood that he cannot fight against China alone and the situation cannot stay that way forever, he is trying to get as many allies as possible, starting from ASEAN states to all the states in the United Nations. He seems to hope that together they can solve the conflict peacefully. However, China has not shown any signs of withdrawal. It seems that Duterte does not have any new ideas anymore on how to respond to the situation because he has tried different

strategies, and nothing has improved the situation. On the positive side, the situation has not escalated to a military conflict as well. In 2020 the main strategy again seemed to be hedging because there were used several strategies which can be interpreted as hedging.

After discussing several strategies in different years, the author confirms that the Philippines mainly use hedging strategy. However, this was not the only strategy because there has also been used balancing, bandwagoning, and engaging. According to the theoretical part, several statements were found every year to confirm the use of balancing, bandwagoning, hedging, or other theory. To conclude the thesis, the author will move to the conclusion.

Conclusion

The situation in the South China Sea has been constantly tense in the years 2016-2020. Although Duterte has tried to solve the dispute peacefully using different strategies, it has not given any concrete solution. China is still claiming the South China Sea, and the Philippines are still claiming their part of the sea. Neither ASEAN states nor the United States has not made any concrete moves, and all parties are just stating the fact that there is a dispute and it needs to be solved.

The aim of this theses was to find out which strategy the Philippines are using and how they are responding to the changing geopolitical dynamics after 2016. The author set a hypothesis that the Philippines are mainly using the strategy of hedging. To test the hypothesis, there was done a content analysis about the speeches from 2016-2020 of the Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte. The speeches were found on the official presidential webpage. The author chose speeches related to China, United States, and the South China Sea.

The author discovered that the Philippines are using different strategies and, according to Duterte's speeches and statements, explained which strategy was used. Every year, there were selected the most relevant speeches to define the strategy. In the discussion part, the author brought out mainly used strategies every year. According to the hedging strategy, which has several definitions, such as keeping open several options, and since it is a somewhat unclear strategy, it can be said that the Philippines are mainly using hedging. It also proves the hypothesis that the main strategy the Philippines are using in the great power rivalry is hedging.

In the Philippines, at the changing geopolitical situation in Southeast Asia, the strategies changed every year. However, the main strategy was hedging which means that the Philippines used the strategy of several strategies. This finding is important because it confirms that small states tend to hedge, and it also gives an example to other small states. In future research, there is a possibility to find out how the next president of the United States and the Philippines will change the situation and strategy.

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