

National Strategy of The United States on Defense Diplomacy for Confidence-Building Measure Efforts with the Philippines in the Era of President Donald Trump

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Abstract

The bilateral relations between the United States and the Philippines are strong and both nations are in an alliance that foundation on shared values, interests, and history. Both nations have been tied in defense agreements for decades to share collective security. However, in 2016 the last period of President Obama's administration and Presidential transition in the Philippines that elected President Rodrigo Duterte created distance relations in the defense field because of the different perspectives on drug issues and undermining each other's trust. This research will focus on the efforts of the next US administration under President Donald Trump on defense diplomacy for confidence-building measures with the Philippines. The analysis will be based on the confidence-building measures framework that refers to measures to address or resolve uncertainty between states and to prevent wanted or unwanted escalations of hostilities. President Donald Trump has changed the complexity of bilateral relations between the US and the Philippines. American First foreign policy became an instrument of President Trump to reaffirm defense diplomacy with President Duterte, the same perspective on drug issues between the two leaders has rebuilt their mutual trust and determined to continue promoting the mutual goals of peace, and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and around the world.

Keywords: Defense Diplomacy, Confidence-Building Measures, Donald Trump, and The Philippines.

Abstrak

Hubungan bilateral antara Amerika Serikat dan Filipina kuat dan kedua negara berada dalam aliansi yang didasarkan pada nilai, kepentingan, dan sejarah bersama. Kedua negara telah terikat dalam perjanjian pertahanan selama beberapa dekade untuk berbagi keamanan kolektif. Namun, pada tahun 2016 periode terakhir pemerintahan Presiden Obama dan transisi Presiden di Filipina yang memilih Presiden Rodrigo Duterte menciptakan hubungan jarak jauh di bidang pertahanan karena perbedaan cara pandang terhadap masalah narkoba dan saling melemahkan kepercayaan satu sama lain. Penelitian ini akan fokus pada upaya pemerintahan AS selanjutnya di bawah Presiden Donald Trump dalam diplomasi pertahanan untuk membangun kepercayaan dengan Filipina. Analisis ini akan didasarkan pada kerangka "confidence-building measures" yang mengacu pada langkah-langkah untuk mengatasi atau menyelesaikan ketidakpastian antar negara dan untuk mencegah peningkatan permusuhan yang diinginkan atau tidak diinginkan. Presiden Donald Trump telah mengubah kompleksitas hubungan bilateral antara AS dan Filipina. Kebijakan luar negeri "American First" menjadi instrumen Presiden Trump untuk menegaskan kembali diplomasi pertahanan dengan Presiden Duterte, perspektif yang sama mengenai masalah narkoba antara kedua pemimpin telah membangun kembali rasa saling percaya dan bertekad untuk terus mendorong tujuan bersama yaitu perdamaian, dan stabilitas di kawasan Asia-Pasifik dan seluruh dunia.

Kata Kunci: Diplomasi Pertahanan, Confidence-Building Measures, Donald Trump, dan Filipina



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INTRODUCTION

The United States and the Philippines bilateral relationship was established in 1946, and historically the Philippines is one of the former US colonies.¹ The diplomatic relations between both nations are strong and often described as a special relationship based on a shared commitment to democracy and human rights values.² Following the independence of the Philippines, both nations signed the Military Assistance Agreement (MAA) in 1947 considering the desire of the Philippines to obtain military assistance and the US to establish its military base.³ Both nations also signed the Military Bases Agreement (MBA) which granted the US the right to lease, use, and operate, military bases and facilities in the Philippines. Therefore, the Philippines has become one of the Asia countries that has been designated as a major non-NATO ally of the US and more strengthened by signing The Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) in 1951 as a foundation of security partnership for both nations which stipulates mutual commitment to each other's defense against an armed attack in the Pacific area.⁴

As time passes, the bilateral relations between both nations are confronting a geopolitics dynamic, which increases the tension. In 2016 in the last period of President Barack Obama's administration and at the same time there were presidential changes in the Philippines and Rodrigo Duterte was elected is impacted both nations' relations. During the presidential campaign, President Duterte's vow to end the issues of drugs and corruption, he stated that if he became President would have a bloody war on drugs.⁵ However, the implementation war on drugs by President Duterte earned condemnation from the international community including the US under President Barack Obama's administration related to human rights issues. Since President Duterte's taking office the policy of "war on drugs" has caused the deaths of 12,000 Filipinos and it has become a crime against humanity.⁶

President Barack Obama's concerns about the human rights issue of the war on drugs that has killed thousands of people with operations suspected vigilantes in the Philippines were responded to by President Duterte with "harsh" words, using the well-known Tagalog language which means "son of a whore" after warnings from the US President.⁷ The US responded by canceling the official meeting which had been arranged by two heads of state on the sidelines of a gathering of global leaders hosted by ASEAN in Vientiane Laos.⁸ Furthermore, in the middle of complicated relations between the US and the Philippines, The U.S State Department has halted the planned sale of 26,000 assault rifles to the Philippines' National Police.⁹ Moreover, the U.S. State Department also cut the assistance funds from \$5 million to \$4.5 million and diverted the assistance for narcotics control to maritime security and human rights training.¹⁰

¹U.S Department Of State, "Philippines: U.S - Philippines Relations," Accessed October 20, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/countries-areas/philippines/>.

² Ibid.

³ The US Naval War College, "(14) Agreement On Military Assistance, Manila 21 March 1947," Accessed October 20, 2023, <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2155&context=ils>

⁴ Leslie V. Advincula-Lopez, "Challenges and Gains in Military Relations between the Philippines and the United States," in *Asia Pacific Bulletin. East-West Center*, 568, (2022).

⁵ Triciah Terada, "Five Vows, Five Years Later: A Lookback Into Duterte's Major Campaign Promise," *CNN Philippines*, July 22, 2021, <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/7/22/SONA-2021-Duterte-presidential-campaign-promises.html>.

⁶ Human Rights Watch, "Philippines 'War On Drugs'," March 02, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/tag/philippines-war-drugs>

⁷"Barack Obama Cancels Rodrigo Duterte Talks After Insult," *Aljazeera*, September 06, 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/9/6/barack-obama-cancels-rodrigo-duterte-talks-after-insult>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "US Halts Sale Of 26,000 Assault Rifles To Philippines Police Amid Human Rights Concerns," *The Guardian*, November 01, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/01/us-halts-sale-of-26000-assault-rifles-to-philippines-police-amid-human-rights-concerns>

¹⁰ US Shifts Money Away From Philippines Policy Drug Effort," *VOA News*, November 28, 2016, <https://www.voanews.com/a/united-states-shifts-money-philippines-police-drug-efforts/3615492.html>

President Duterte strongly condemned the US halting rifle sales to the Philippines, he gave a hint or threat that may turn to Russia and China to fulfill its military needs.¹¹ The leadership of President Duterte has brought different approaches to “shared commitment and abiding security ties between the US where the previous administration created a common interest for both nations. In the era of President Donald Trump after being elected in 2017 the landscape of the US foreign policy also shifted and used different strategic approaches from the previous administration's and amid the transformation, the bilateral relations between the US and The Philippines also impacted.¹² President Trump's engagement with President Duterte is by giving sympathy for the drug issues in the Philippines and supporting the war on drugs. The different engagement strategies of President Trump's administration have helped restore the bilateral relation between the US and the Philippines. This research attempts to analyze the defense diplomacy for confidence-building measures efforts of the US in the era of President Donald Trump's administration between the Philippines within evolving regional complexities.

Literature Review

Many debates arise regarding the issue of defense diplomacy between the United States and the Philippines, this research will use three pieces of literature to describe the author's position. First, according to the perspective of Glenn G. Pajares and Marietta D. Bongcales in the article with the title “The Philippine And The U.S. Expanded Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA): An Analysis” (2014) explain the Philippines and the U.S. Defense cooperation through Enhanced Defense Cooperation Treaty (EDCA) is influence by three factors based on international relations theory. First is realism states that the EDCA integrates both nations' interests with a common enemy which is China's aggressor. Second is liberalism the EDCA is a reaffirmation between both nations of shared common values as democratic states and interdependence. Third is constructivism the EDCA is a product of ideas and norms of democracy that have been constructed by the history of both nations.¹³

Second, according to the perspective of Renato Cruz De Castro in the article with the title “The US-Philippine Alliance: An Evolving Hedge Against An Emerging China Challenge” (2009) explains the transformation of the US and Philippines alliance in facing China's military modernization regarding the issues of South China Sea. The deepening defense cooperation between both nations has evolved remarks on US defense policy that provide military and economic assistance to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) with the aim of building new defense initiatives such as the Security Engagement Board (SEB) and Cooperative Security Locations (CSLs).¹⁴

Third, according to Renato Cruz De Castro in the article with the title “The 21st Century Philippine-U.S. Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA): The Philippines' Policy In Facilitating The Obama Administration's Strategic Pivot To East Asia” (2014) explains that President Aquino administration policy supports President Obama's Pivot To East Asia foreign policy with the aim to enhance its defense partnership. However, it is also influenced by the situation in the South China Sea to counter China's aggression. The decision-making of President Aquino in negotiation and signing defense agreement is an effort as a small power

¹¹ “Philippines' Duterte Slams US For Halting Rifle Sale,” *Aljazeera*, November 03, 2016, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2016/11/3/philippines-duterte-slams-us-for-halting-rifle-sale>.

¹² “How Will Trump and Duterte Change The U.S - Philippines Relationship?,” *Asia Society*, January 13, 2017, <https://asiasociety.org/blog/asia/how-will-trump-and-duterte-change-us-philippines-relationship>.

¹³ Glenn G. Pajares and Marietta D. Bongcale, “The Philippine And The U.S. Expanded Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA): An Analysis,” *Recoletos Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 2. 2, (2014).

¹⁴ Renato Cruz De Castro, “The US-Philippine Alliance: An Evolving Hedge Against An Emerging China Challenge,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*, 31.3, 399-423, (2009).

like the Philippines to map out its own destiny.¹⁵ Based on the three pieces of literature that explain the defense diplomacy between the United and the Philippines occurs of shared common interest with the aim to provide security and stability from any threat including China's aggressive action in the South China Sea however, none of them explain about the dynamic of the US and Philippines bilateral relations and this research will contribute to explain the defense diplomacy for confidence-building measures efforts between the US and the Philippines in the era of President Donald Trump.

Conceptual Framework

This research employs confidence-building measures (CBM) as the conceptual framework to analyze the efforts of President Donald Trump on defense diplomacy between the Philippines. Confidence-building measures (CBM) are broadly explained as measures to address or resolve uncertainty between states and to prevent wanted or unwanted escalations of hostilities.¹⁶ The CBM is designed to build mutual trust among states as an assurance of the trustworthiness in the truth and reality of a fact that they create.¹⁷ Furthermore, CBM is not limited to a formal way that implements state-to-state but also includes informal activities of non-governmental in the issue of military or political.¹⁸ The activities of CBM can be unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral and indirectly related to diplomacy activities. The first application of CBM was in 1970 as the conflict management in Europe which related to military confrontation and competition between East and West. At that time the role of CBM was useful in bringing arms control, disarmament agreements, and facilitating conflict resolution, and CBM rapidly became an instrument for international security.¹⁹ Today almost every state in the world is considering CBM in their defense diplomacy agenda with their belief that improving trust among states will direct to better political and military relations.²⁰ The CBM also highlights how states use communication to reduce the risk of war or escalating into war.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this research is a qualitative method that focuses on understanding the complexities of phenomena with descriptive analysis by using a conceptual framework to gain an in-depth understanding of how the United States defense diplomacy for confidence-building measures efforts between the Philippines in the era of President Donald Trump. The qualitative method explores social contexts with the aim of understanding and interpreting phenomena by examining the various factors such as the larger social, cultural, and historical context.²¹ Furthermore, the qualitative method also acknowledges the role of the researcher as a process of the research from the data sources then the researcher attempts to reconstruct.²² The research objective is obtained through library research such as books, journal articles, news articles, publications of international organizations, and official government documents and reports.²³ A study case also becomes a research technique in this research that is related to investigating a particular event or condition that influences defense

¹⁵ Renato Cruz De Castro, "The 21st Century Philippine-U.S. Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA): The Philippines' Policy In Facilitating The Obama Administration's Strategic Pivot To East Asia," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, 26.4, 427-446, (2014).

¹⁶ "Confidence-Building Measures," *Central For Strategic And International Studies*, Accessed October 20, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/programs/international-security-program/isp-archives/asia-division/cross-strait-security-1>

¹⁷ Johan Jorgen Holst, "Confidence-Building Measures: A Conceptual Framework," *Survival*, 25. 1, 2-15 (1983).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Marie France Desjardins, "Rethinking Confidence-Building Measures," *Routledge*, (2014).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ John W. Creswell, "Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, And Mixed Method Approaches," *SAGE Publications*, (2014).

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

diplomacy for confidence-building measures efforts of the United States between the Philippines in the era of President Donald Trump as geopolitics movement in global and regional level which strongly related to emerging of China in the Indo-Pacific region.

Analysis

The United States and Philippines Defense Diplomacy: An Overview

Defense diplomacy is the concept widely used in the era of the end of the Cold War when the Soviet Union collapsed and the European countries were concerned that the former Soviet Union countries would hamper the process of spreading democracy in Europe. Defense diplomacy is a longstanding cooperation in defense fields in peacetime with allies or partner countries as an instrument of foreign and defense policy that is conducted by the Ministry of Defense.²⁴ Almost every country in the world has the activity of defense diplomacy including the United States and the Philippines. Historically the defense diplomacy between the US and the Philippines is strong and has been designed as the major non-NATO ally in Asia region.²⁵ Both nations have several security agreements to strengthen their mutual defense capability.

The major defense diplomacy activity between the United States and the Philippines is the presence of US military bases signed by both nations at the end of World War II called the Philippines-American Military Bases Agreement (MBA) and the Philippines Military Assistance Agreement (MAA).²⁶ Therefore the defense diplomacy between the two nations was also strengthened by signing a Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) with a focus on an armed attack in the Pacific area that threatened each party.²⁷ The agreement became a guideline and foundation of both nations in the practice of defense diplomacy and has shown the strong commitment of each party to have collective security to prevent conflicts and mitigate security threats.

The United States and the Philippines also participate in regional organization forums such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and East Asia Summit (EAS) as an effort to maintain and promote peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.²⁸ Both nations also support and commit to UN conventions relating to the law of the sea in terms of maritime disputes in the region. The defense diplomacy between the US and the Philippines is maintained in a positive way and always improvement as an example in 2014 both nations signed another agreement namely Enhanced Defense Cooperation (EDCA) that provides ports and airports that can be used by the US in the Philippines territory.²⁹

The placement of US military bases under EDCA aims to develop the Philippines' military and defense capabilities from attacks by external parties and as a strategy for US military surveillance in the South China Sea which is the area of ongoing territorial dispute between Philippines and China.³⁰ However, the defense diplomacy between the United States and the Philippines also through many dynamics related to leadership transitions, the diplomatic relations between the two countries are distant because of President Rodrigo Duterte's policy. A few months after being elected as President of the Philippines, President Duterte issued a

²⁴ Andrew Cottery and Anthony Forster, "Reshaping Defense Diplomacy: New Roles For Military Cooperation Assistance," *Routledge*, (2004).

²⁵ U.S Department Of State, " U.S Relations With the Philippines," February 23, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-the-philippines/>.

²⁶ Leslie V. Advincula-Lopez, "Challenges and Gains in Military Relations between the Philippines and the United States," in *Asia Pacific Bulletin. East-West Center*, 568, (2022).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Achmad Ichsan Nur, "Upaya Amerika Serikat Mempertahankan Hubungan Bilateral Terhadap Filipina Dalam Menghadapi Sengketa Laut Cina Selatan Pada Era Pemerintahan Donald Trump Periode 2016-2020," *Bechelorr's Thesis*, 2022.

²⁹ Felix K. Chang, "US-Philippines Enhanced Defense Cooperation," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, June 14, 2023, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/06/us-philippines-enhanced-defense-cooperation-agreement-revived/>

³⁰ Ibid.

policy called the “War On Drugs” which was the root of tension with the US.³¹ President Duterte's nationalist attitude is against the values of human rights and is being criticized by President Obama.

The tension also impacted the defense diplomacy activity of both nations, previously President Obama and President Aquino affirmed the deep security partnership by modernizing and enhancing the Philippines' defense capabilities and giving significant assistance.³² However, under President Duterte the foreign policy of the Philippines reflects a shift from the US as a long-standing ally to China and Russia, on his first trip to Beijing stated that it was “time to say goodbye to Washington”.³³ President US diplomat for East Asia said baffled by President Duterte's foreign policy starting from the disregard for human rights and a statement about the alliance relations.³⁴ Apart from that President Obama also stopped the sale of weapons to the Philippines over 26,000 assault rifles as a consequence of President Duterte's dangerous war on drugs policy. As a result in 2016 the last period of President Obama's administration, the defense diplomacy between the US and the Philippines faced a complex relationship.

President Donald Trump's Foreign Policy Approach

Foreign policy and the United States can't be separated and are linked as an instrument to interact with countries around the world. By definition, foreign policy is a set of actions of independent authority which is sovereign nations in the international environment to achieve national interest.³⁵ As a superpower state, the decision-making process of the US's foreign policy plays an important role, which can direct other nations to cooperation, competition, or conflict. For many years the US foreign policy may have changed related to the presidential transition, however, the strategies to guide relations among nations remained constant which contain several values such as the promotion of security, democracy, prosperity, and the development of the US and around the world.³⁶ The US relationship with foreign countries will be guided by those values despite different strategies being used by the President.

President Donald Trump was elected becomes the 45th President of the United States in 2017, he is a candidate from the Republican party considered to have conservative ideologies that emphasize smaller government and support a large budget for the military to protect US national security.³⁷ During the presidential campaign, President Trump brought up the issue of illegal immigrants from South America who bring drugs and many criminals to the United States, tax reform, and military modernization to make America great again.³⁸ However the issue is considered a controversial act and get the attention of countries around the world especially related to the plan to build a border wall between the US and Mexico, President Trump is success win the election.

³¹ “Philippine President Duterte Curses Obama Over Human Rights,” *BBC News*, September 05, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37274594>.

³² The White House, “Remarks By President Obama And President Benigno Aquino III Of The Philippines in Joint Press Conference, April 28, 2014,” <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/28/remarks-president-obama-and-president-benigno-aquino-iii-philippines-joi>.

³³ “Philippines President Duterte Says “Time To Say Goodbye To America,” *The Guardian*, October 20, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/20/philippines-president-duterte-says-time-to-say-goodbye-to-america>.

³⁴ David Brunnstrom, “Obama's Top Asia Diplomat Says Baffled By Duterte Pronouncements,” *Reuters*, October 13, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-duterte-usa-idUSKCN12C2DE>

³⁵ Jean Frederic Morin, and Jonathan Paquin, “Foreign Policy Analysis,” *Palgrave Macmillan*, (2018).

³⁶ National Museum Of American Diplomacy, “What Is Foreign Policy?,” Accessed October 22, 2023, <https://diplomacy.state.gov/teacher-resources/what-is-foreign-policy-video/>.

³⁷ Benjamin C. Waterhouse, “Donald Trump: Campaign And Elections,” Miller Center, Accessed October 22, 2023, <https://millercenter.org/president/trump/campaigns-and-elections>

³⁸ Ibid.

The US foreign policy approach under President Trump's administration is to use American First terms to achieve and protect its national interest. President Trump's first speech at the White House was to announce his strategy for America's security, prosperity, and American role as the greatest country for peace and justice in the world, he stated that the previous US President forgot how to make America great again and sink into negotiated that brought massive disaster of American people.³⁹ The prioritized issues of President Trump's foreign policy are related to security, which emphasizes rebuilding the US military to restore American sovereignty at home and American leadership abroad.⁴⁰

Furthermore, the implementation of President Trump's foreign policy in terms of security engagement with foreign countries is by strengthening relations with alliance and partnership countries to promote security, prosperity, and peace at global and regional levels. The strategy of defense policy by President Trump is "peace through strength" where the President tries to rebuild American power by increasing its military capabilities as a restoration act of America's leadership in the world.⁴¹ President Trump also highlighted the crucial issue in the Indo-Pacific region and will work to advance a free and open Indo-Pacific. In line with President Trump's defense strategy, it also includes the Philippines as a long-standing ally although the US's previous administration had complex bilateral relations with President Duterte.

Defense Diplomacy For Confidence Building Measures Of President Donald Trump

The complexity of bilateral relations between the United States and the Philippines increased during President Barack Obama's last period in 2016 and coincided with the inauguration of the new president of the Philippines Rodrigo Duterte. The two government was critics of each other which impacted its defense diplomacy, where President Obama stopped weapon sales and decreased military assistance related to the war on drug policy. One year after the tension, in 2017 the US was in the election and won the presidential candidate, President Donald Trump who prioritized a vital issue which is security. The foreign and defense policy of President Trump is under the principle called America First which prioritizes American interest and national security and also a reevaluation of defense commitments with allies and partner countries.⁴²

The diplomatic relations between the United States and the Philippines in the era of President Donald Trump and President Rodrigo Duterte have been in different engagement compared to President Barack Obama. President Trump has a different perspective on the war on drug policy of President Duterte who has been criticized suspected of violating human rights. President Trump officially made a phone call several months of elected as the new President of the US to President Duterte with the aim of praising the war on drugs policy and supporting the government in giving sanctions to drug suspects.⁴³ Furthermore, President Trump also said to President Duterte that the US is also facing the problem of drugs that come from illegal immigrants at the border.⁴⁴ President Trump's engagement by a phone call with President Duterte had a positive response, he also praised President Trump and emphasized their leadership as a controversial politician who won against all obstacles.⁴⁵ President Trump also

³⁹ "Trump Transcript: America First Security Speech," *Aljazeera*, December 18, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/12/18/trump-transcript-america-first-security-speech>

⁴⁰ The White House, "Foreign Policy," Accessed October 22, 2023, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/issues/foreign-policy/>

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ David E. Sanger, and Maggie Haberman, "Trump Praise Duterte For Philippine Drug Crackdown In Call Transcript," *The New York Times*, May 23, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/23/us/politics/trump-duterte-phone-transcript-philippine-drug-crackdown.html>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Mong Palatino, Is Rodrigo Duterte Really Anti-American?, *The Diplomat*, May 13, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/05/is-rodrigo-duterte-really-anti-american/>.

explained that the previous president did not understand the emergency issues of drugs, but he does understand and will take serious action.⁴⁶ Moreover, in a good situation, both President also discussed the current security related to the issue of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un and its nuclear and President Duterte stated “We will never be safe and will not know what will happen next as long as Kim Jong-Un holds the rockets and warheads”.⁴⁷ Both President also discussed Philippine ASEAN chairmanship in 2017 and the plan of President Trump visit to Manila.

However, the strategy of confidence-building measures of President Trump to the Philippines is not only a one-way effort, President Duterte who is known as “anti-America” and had complex bilateral relations in the President Obama era has also made an effort to rebuild relations with the US, where President Duterte has willing to send his Presidential Communications Secretary Martin Andanar and Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon to attended the inauguration of President Trump.⁴⁸ Moreover, President Trump also personally invited President Duterte to the White House to discuss the importance of their alliance.⁴⁹ Although President Duterte responded that he didn’t make a promise to come visit the White House because of must state visit to Israel and Russia, he stated that any distancing relations in the era of President Obama may have changed related to the new leadership of President Donald Trump.⁵⁰

The complexity of defense diplomacy between the United States and the Philippines in the era of President Barack Obama has also changed in the era of President Donald Trump. In November 2017, President Trump visited Manila for the first time to meet President Duterte with an agenda to discuss a broad range of shared interests and priorities.⁵¹ On that good occasion, both leaders were praised for the strong and enduring US-Philippines alliance, also reaffirming that was built under shared values, common interests, and history. President Trump and President Duterte also committed to expanding and reaffirming their bilateral alliance partnership which has been a 70-year success in building mutual security and contributing to regional peace, stability, and economic prosperity.⁵² President Trump praised President Duterte as an ASEAN chairmanship and commended him for promoting regional peace, stability, and socioeconomic development.⁵³

Furthermore, during the visit, both leaders shared common security concerns such as continuing defense cooperation under the ASEAN framework to achieve their goals in the Asia-Pacific region, condemning the unlawful nuclear weapons and missile development by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), and the US also promise to continue support and assistance the Philippines to fight against terrorism and rehabilitation for the tragic loss of life in Marawi.⁵⁴ President Trump and President Duterte also committed to enhancing their contra-terrorism cooperation by conducting additional exercises, increasing information sharing, and addressing the cause of conflict and extremism. The highlight of defense diplomacy for confidence-building measures efforts of President Trump's visit to Manila is his success in

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Philippines Presidential Communication Office, “New Releases,” January 21, 2017, <https://pco.gov.ph/january-21-2017-news-releases/>

⁴⁹ “Donald Trump Invites Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte To White House, *ABC News*, April 30, 2017, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/donald-trump-invites-philippine-president-rodrigo-duterte-white/story?id=47112097>.

⁵⁰ “Philippines President Duterte May Turn Down Trump’s Invite,” *BBC News*, May 01, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39762742>

⁵¹ The White House, “Joint Statement Between The United States Of America And The Republic Of Philippines,” November 13, 2017, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/joint-statement-united-states-america-republic-philippines/>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

reaffirming the US-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951, where both sides supported the US efforts to help modernize and develop the capacity of the Armed Forces of the Philippines for maritime security.⁵⁵

The issue of the South China Sea was also highlighted by President Trump and President Duterte, they stressed the importance of peacefully resolving disputes based on the Law of the Sea Convention, the climax is President Trump also supported President Duterte's campaign for drug criminal both sides acknowledged that issue of drug is a same problem that face of both countries and as a commitment they committed to share best practice in prevention, enforcement, capacity-building, investigation, and rehabilitation.⁵⁶ It is the program that has been canceled by President Barack Obama and started again in the era of President Trump. Both governments are determined to promote inclusive partnership and pledged to continue to promote the mutual goals of peace, and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and around the world.

CONCLUSION

The bilateral relations between the United States and the Philippines are strong and attached to defense agreements that have been built for decades, where both nations are in an alliance based on shared values, interests, and history. However, the US-Philippines relations also faced a dynamic and created a distance in 2016 the last period of President Barack Obama and the Presidential transition in the Philippines that elected President Rodrigo Duterte. There is shifting trust between the two governments, culminating in mutual criticism of each President related to the issues of the domestic policy of President Duterte on drugs issue and the US values of human rights. The impact is that several agendas of both countries are canceled, such as decreasing military assistance and stopping sealing weapons. In the era of President Donald Trump's administration, the US-Philippines bilateral relations changed and the foreign policy "American First" became an instrument to build defense diplomacy for confidence-building measures with the Philippines during the President Duterte administration. The American First foreign policy also created a defense policy of the US that impacted the reaffirmed defense diplomacy with the Philippines where the previous government faced complex relations. President Donald Trump's American First foreign policy prioritizes the issue of security and highlights the drugs from illegal immigrants which have similarities to President Duterte's concerns and his policy war on drugs that President where the previous US government against it. As a result, American First in defense policy has brought reaffirmed defense diplomacy between the US and the Philippines and President Trump has succeeded in creating again a trust or confidence-building measures between the two nations.

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