

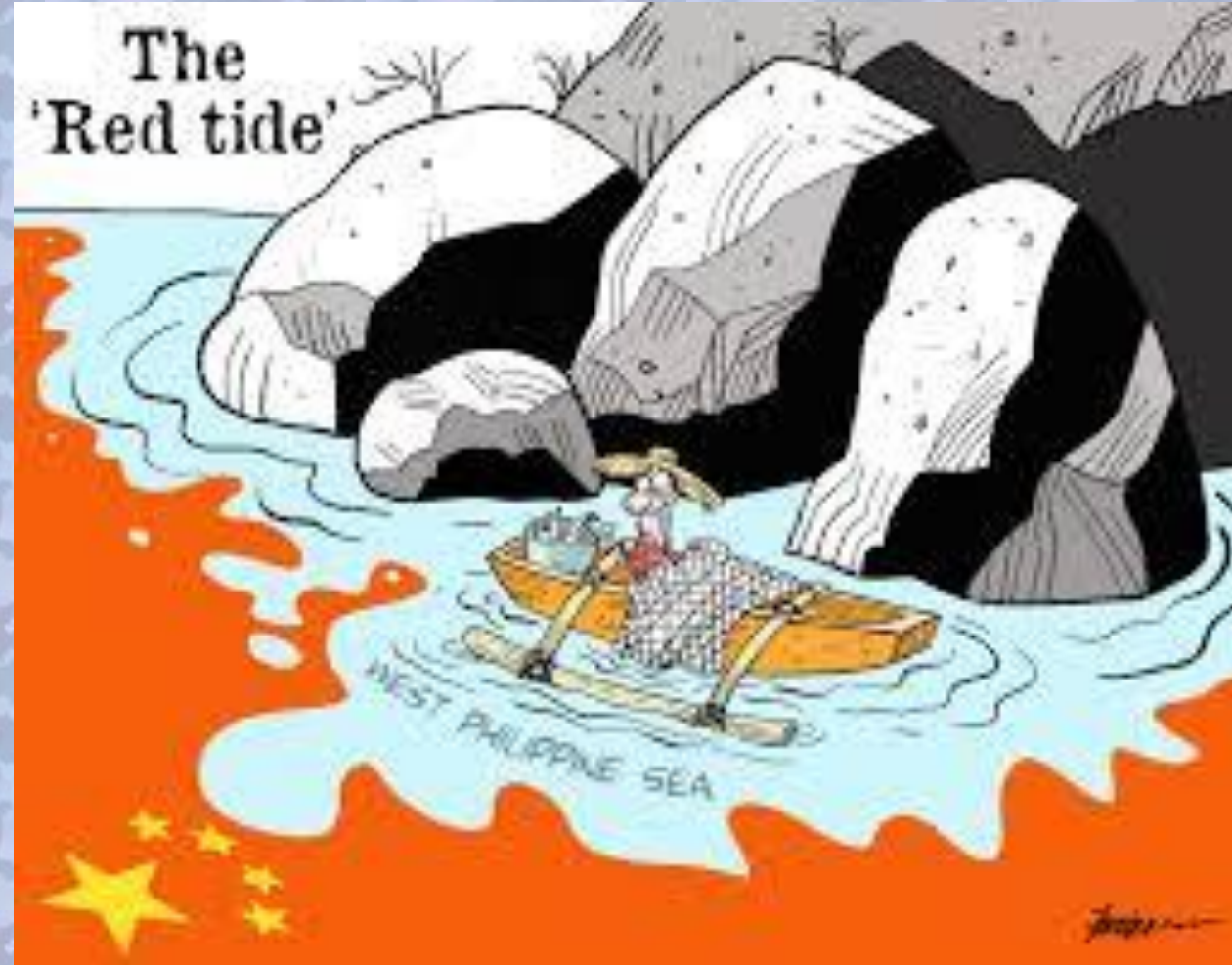
# **A Road Map for 21<sup>st</sup> Philippine Foreign Policy: The Imperatives for a Limited Hard Balancing Strategy and Further Indo-Pacific Orientation**



**A panel in “The Philippine Perspective on the Indo-Pacific, “ Redefining Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific in Age of Uncertainty, 12 July 2022, Conservatory, Manila Peninsular Hotel**

# Introduction

The major security conundrum that the Philippines has confronted since the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is China's maritime expansion into the West Philippine Sea.



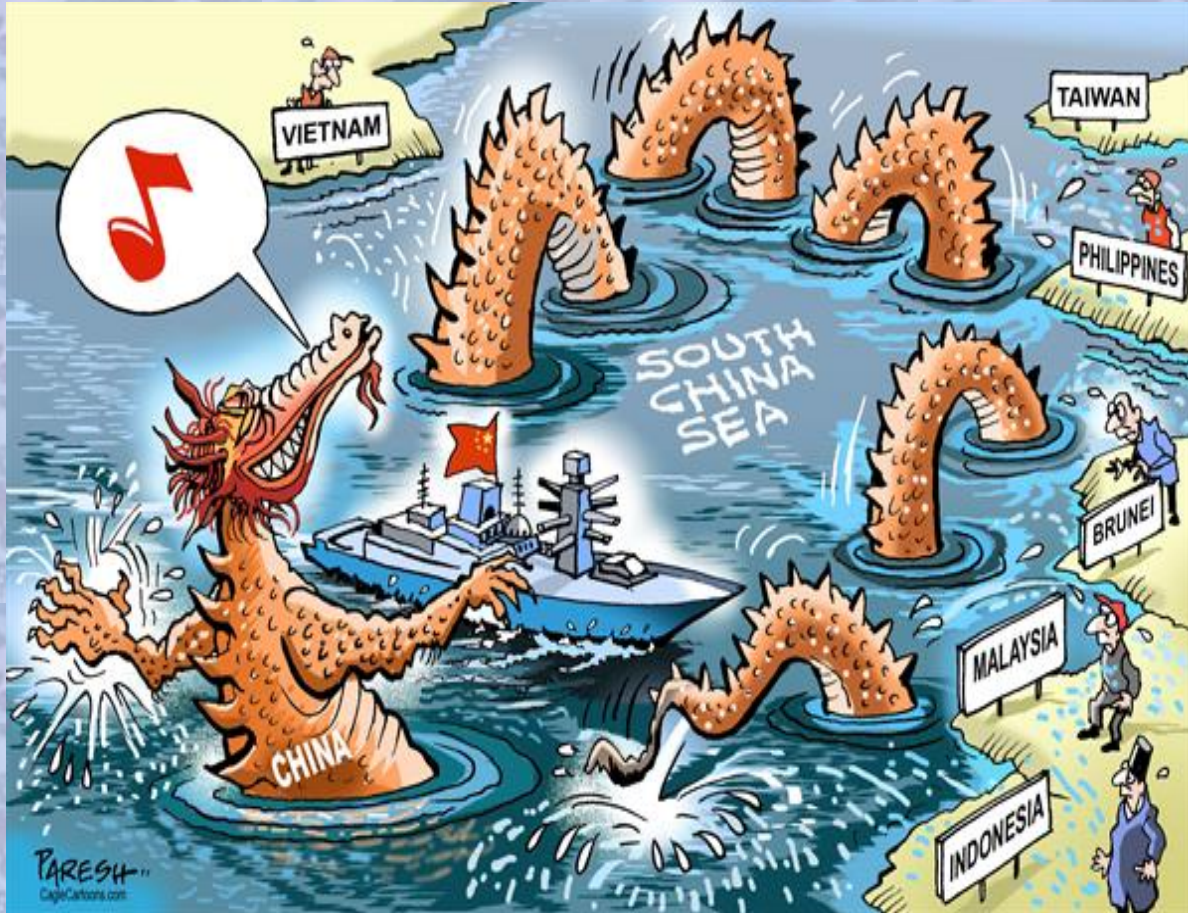




**In March 2010, China declared the South China Sea as one of its “core interests,” indicating its determination to assert its rights over the disputed waters.**



# Introduction



**China's aggressive pursuit of its territorial claim over the South China Sea has increased in tandem with the expansion of the People's Liberation Army's Navy (PLAN) navy and maritime services such as the Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) and the Maritime Militia.**



# Introduction

**China consolidated its jurisdictional claims in the South China Sea by expanding its military reach and pursuing coercive diplomacy against the other claimant states; as it consolidated its control of the South China Sea.**



# Introduction



Way to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, China is fielding advanced weapon system including long-range radars, air defense systems, satellite-based sensors, and long-range cruise and ballistic missiles to prevent or delay U.S. forward deployed forces from intervening in the first-island-chain respective regions.

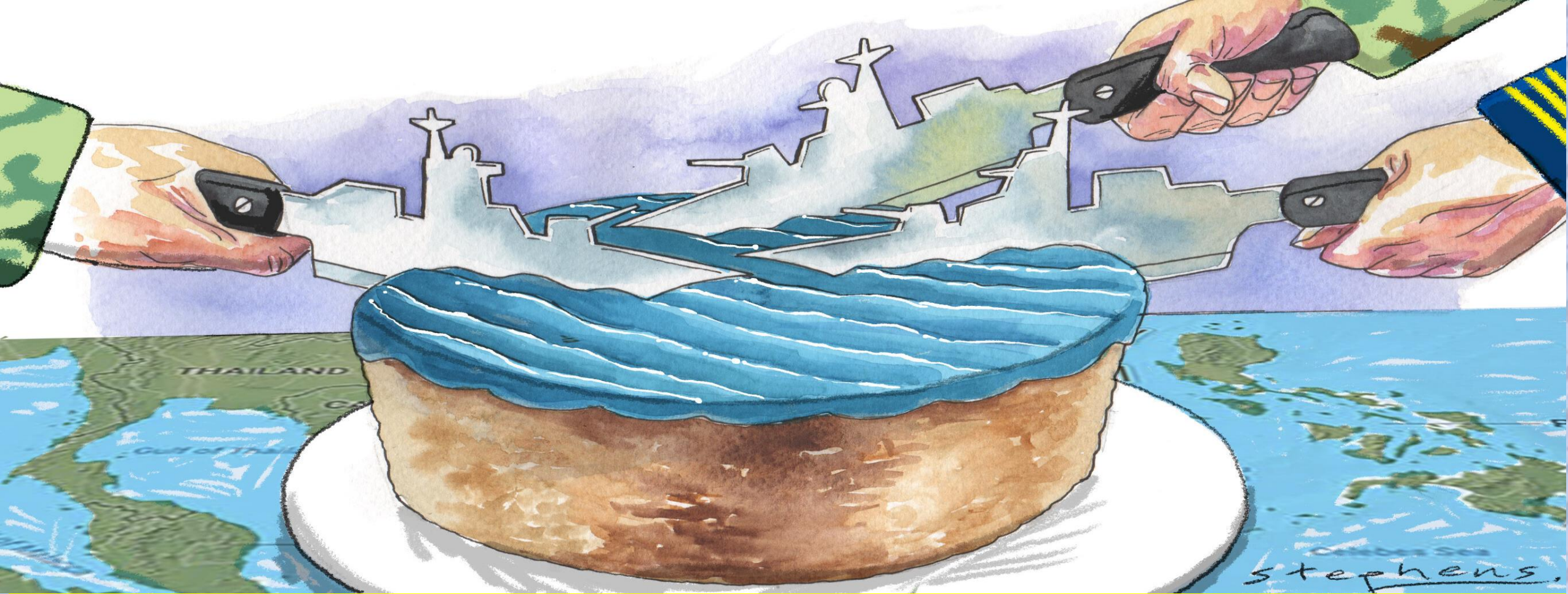


# Introduction

China's naval build-up, and development of its extensive anti-access/area denial capabilities in the First-Island chain and increasing assertiveness against the littoral Southeast Asian states are designed to challenge the U.S. role as East Asia's strategic off-shore balancer in particular, and the U.S.-led international order that was established in the end of the Second World War.







**China is now engaged in a tense and protracted geopolitical competition with the U.S., the country in whose image much of the current global order is fashioned and is determined to maintain an international order it helped established in 1945.**



# Introduction



The late President Benigno Aquino III implemented a strategy of balancing or challenging China's expansive maritime claim in the West Philippine Sea.



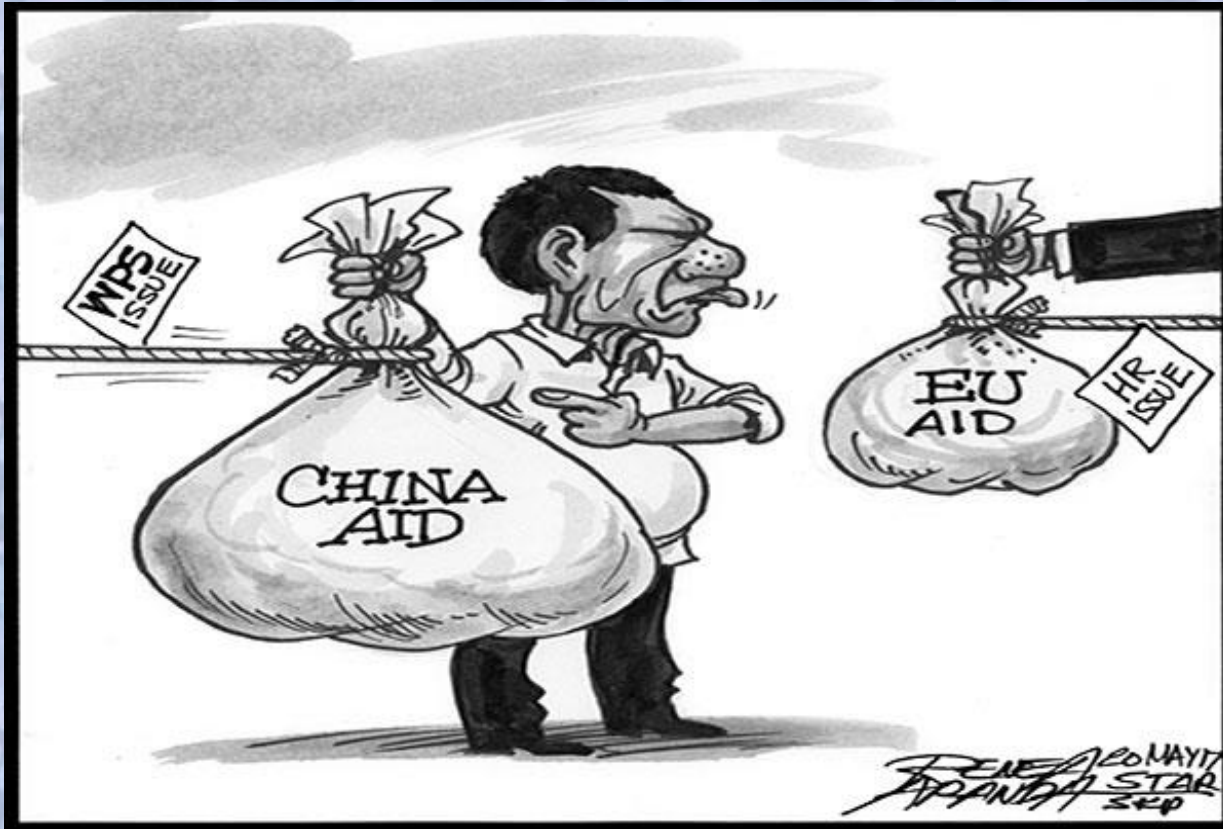
# Introduction

**President Rodrigo Duterte initially tried to unravel his predecessor's strategy of balancing China's expansive claim in the South China Sea when he became the 16<sup>th</sup> Philippine president in mid-2016.**





# Introduction



He distanced the Philippines from its long-standing treaty ally; and ingratiated the country to a regional power bent on effecting a territorial revision in East Asia.





**President Duterte managed the West Philippine Sea dispute according to China's terms: bilateral negotiations; setting aside the July 12, 2016 arbitral awards to the Philippines; and preventing third parties from interfering in the dispute, and joint development.**



# Introduction

The defense, military, and foreign affairs establishments, however, have questioned President Duterte's policy and have pushed for a grand strategy aimed at constraining China's revisionist agenda in the South China Sea.





# Introduction



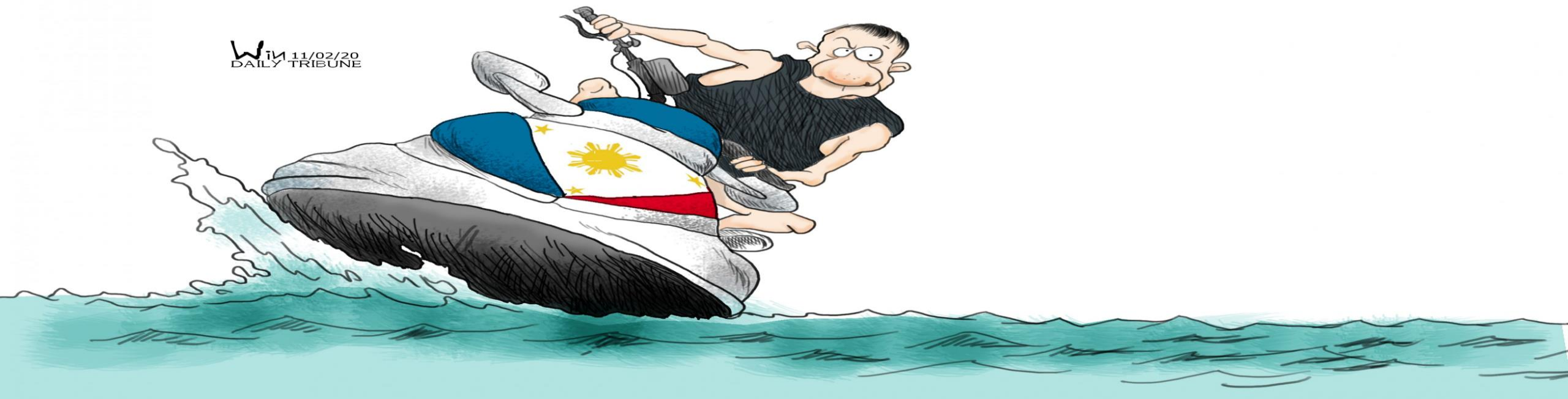
**This pushed the Duterte Administration to ponder on a grand strategy of “limited hard balancing” to constrain the hegemon’s revisionist agenda.**

# Introduction

The Philippines currently is at a crossroads on whether it will continue to pursue its policy of appeasing China or adopt a policy of limited hard balancing; as this presentation examines the prospect of limited hard balancing as the next administration's grand strategy in the next six years.







**Why should the next administration consider limited hard balancing as its grand strategy in a changing Indo-Pacific region?**

# The Duterte Administration's Appeasement Strategy



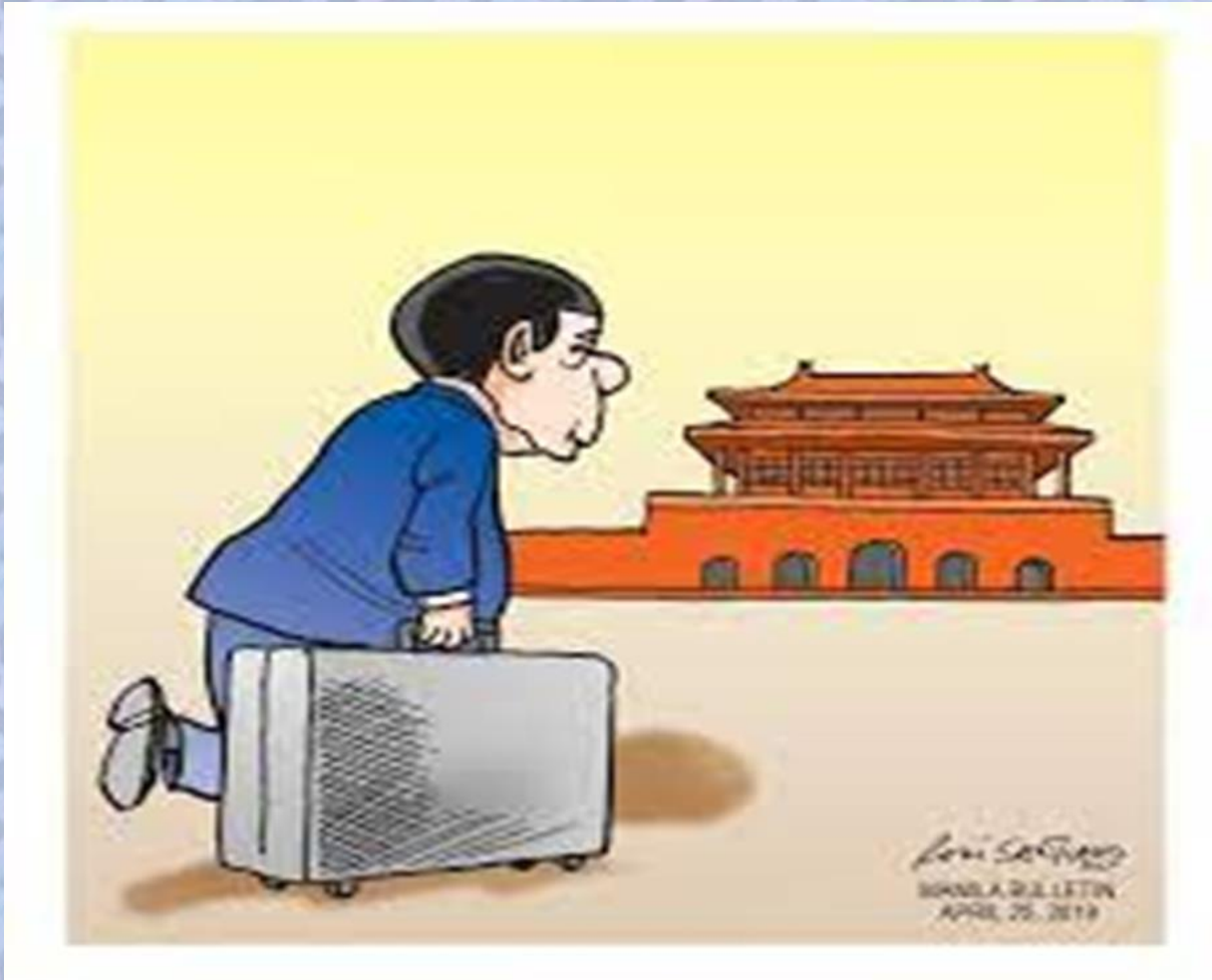


# The Duterte Administration's Appeasement Strategy

He down-graded the Philippines' long-standing alliance with the U.S., alienated Australia and the European Union, and announced his plan to move closer to China and Russia; as he doubted the Philippines' reliance on the U.S., questioned its willingness to defend the Philippines in any armed engagement over its territorial dispute with China in the South China Sea.



# The Duterte Administration's Appeasement Strategy



He announced that he was seeking to improve relations with China and was candid about his intention to change Manila's hardline policy toward Beijing, this was manifested when he reacted with sobriety and extreme caution when the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) Arbitral Tribunal came out with the July 12, 2016 awards to the Philippines.



# The Duterte Administration's Appeasement Strategy

The Duterte Administration accepted China's core procedural norms for dealing with the South China Sea dispute—shelving the sovereignty issue, discussing conflict-management in bilateral forums, and agreeing on bilateral engagements such as discussion for joint development, strengthening of bilateral trade and increased trade—in exchange for Chinese support for Philippine development.



# The Duterte Administration's Appeasement Strategy



PHILIPPINES SUSPENDS TERMINATION OF VISITING FORCES AGREEMENT

Prior to the presidential inauguration on 30 June 2016, defence analysts and observers assumed that President Duterte would simply follow former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's national security policy of gravitating toward China while ignoring territorial defence and concentrating on neutralizing domestic security challenges such as terrorism and insurgencies.

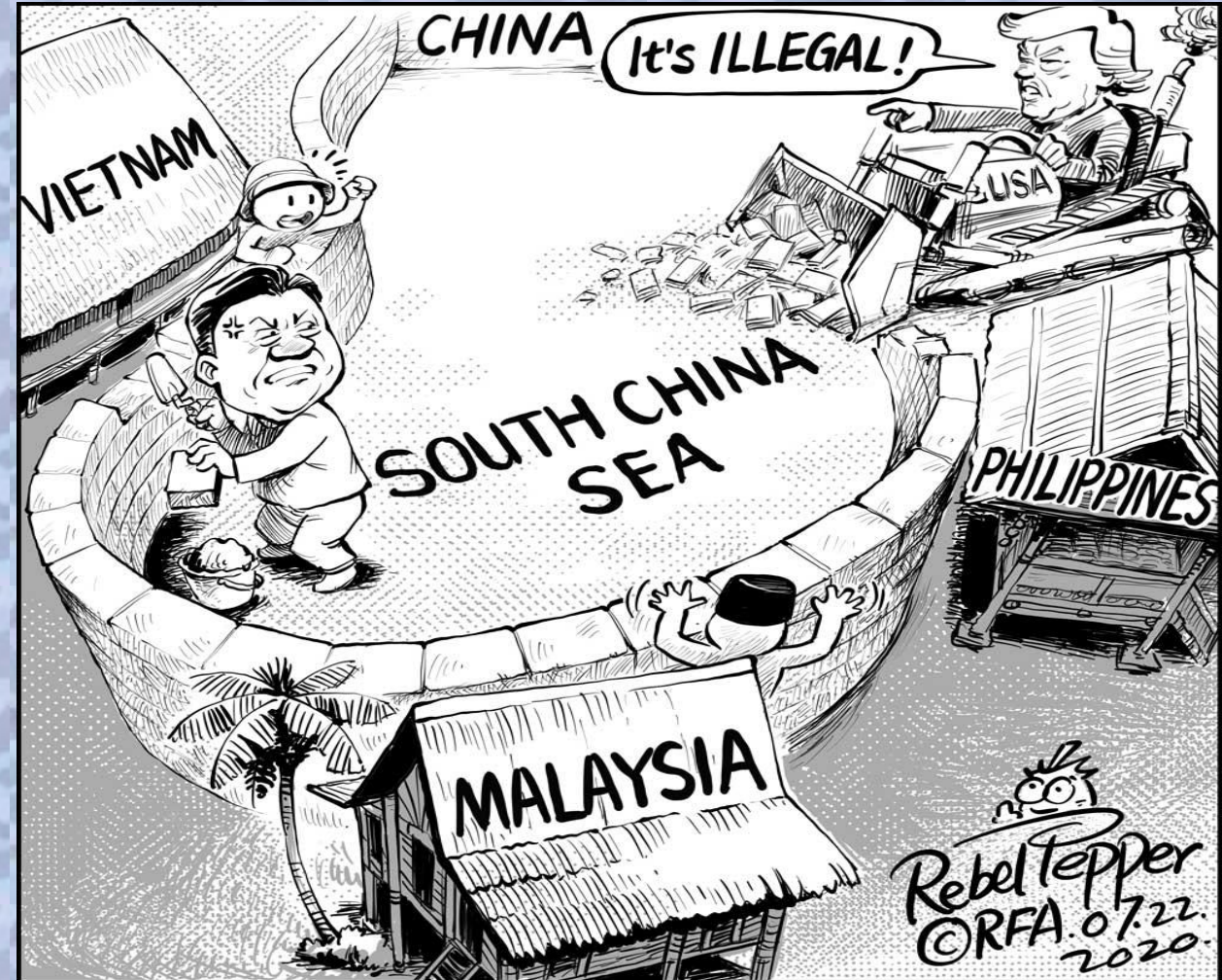


# From Appeasement to Limit Hard Balancing



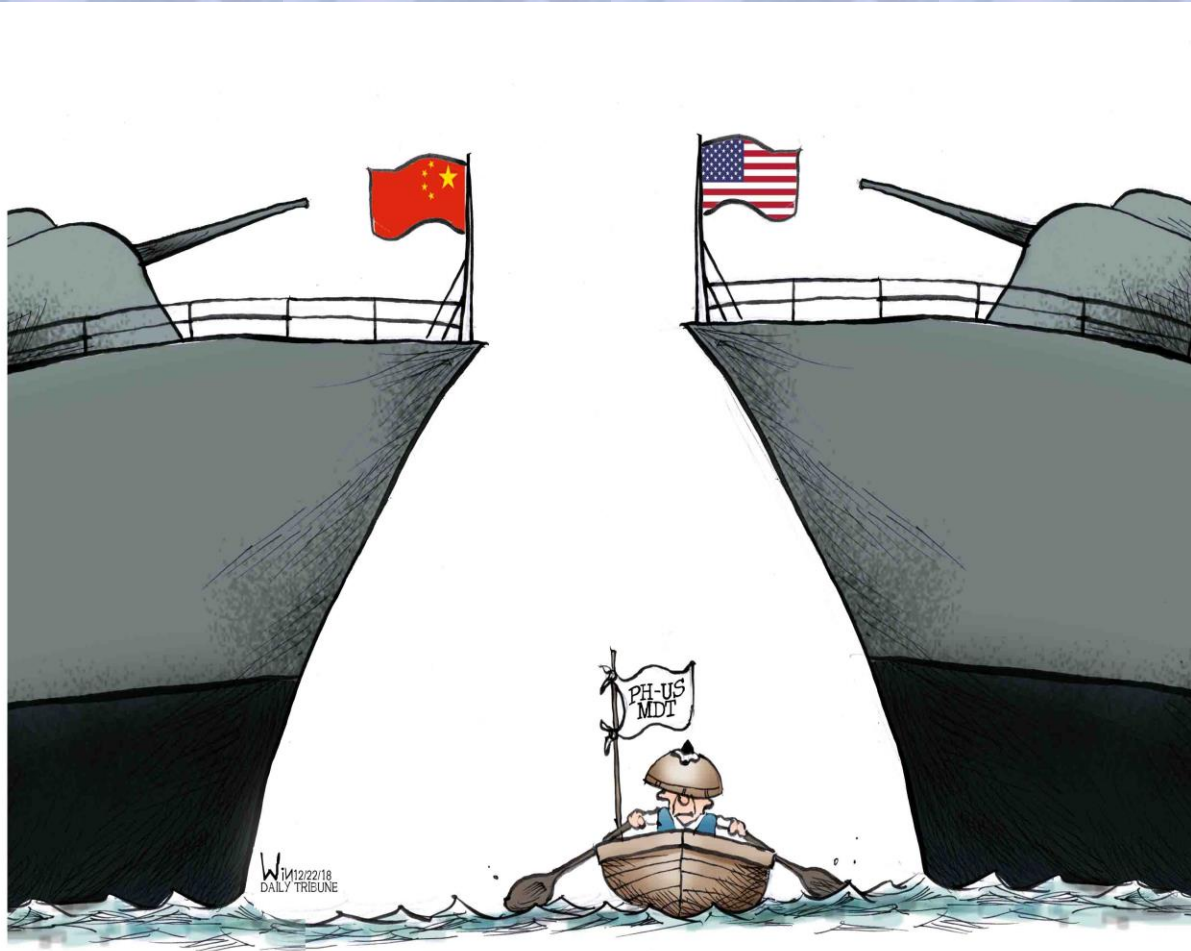
# From Appeasement to Limit Hard Balancing

On May 16, 2018, President Duterte signed the first National Security Strategy (NSS) since the Philippines became an independent republic in 1946.





# From Appeasement to Limit Hard Balancing



The release of the first NSS indicates that the Duterte administration was aware that the current regional security environment has become increasingly uncertain and dangerous for the country.

# From Appeasement to Limit Hard Balancing

**The release of the 2018 NSS coincided with a shift in Philippine policy towards China from appeasement to limited hard balancing.**





# From Appeasement to Limit Hard Balancing

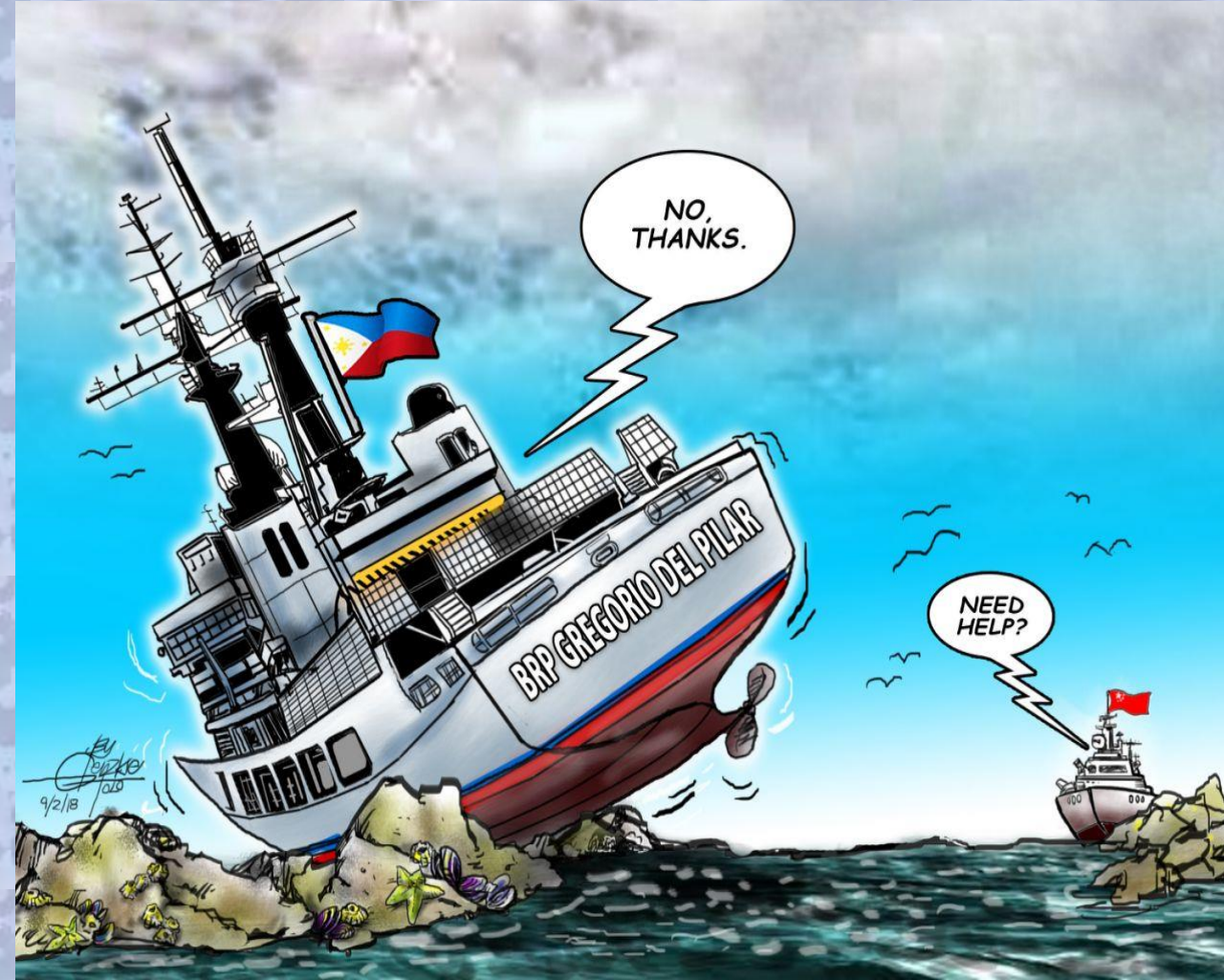


This shift can be partly attributed to the Philippine military's stance via-a-vis China's expansion into the South China Sea; as the AFP is one of the important institutions in Philippine society that has been very suspicious of President Duterte's pivot to China.



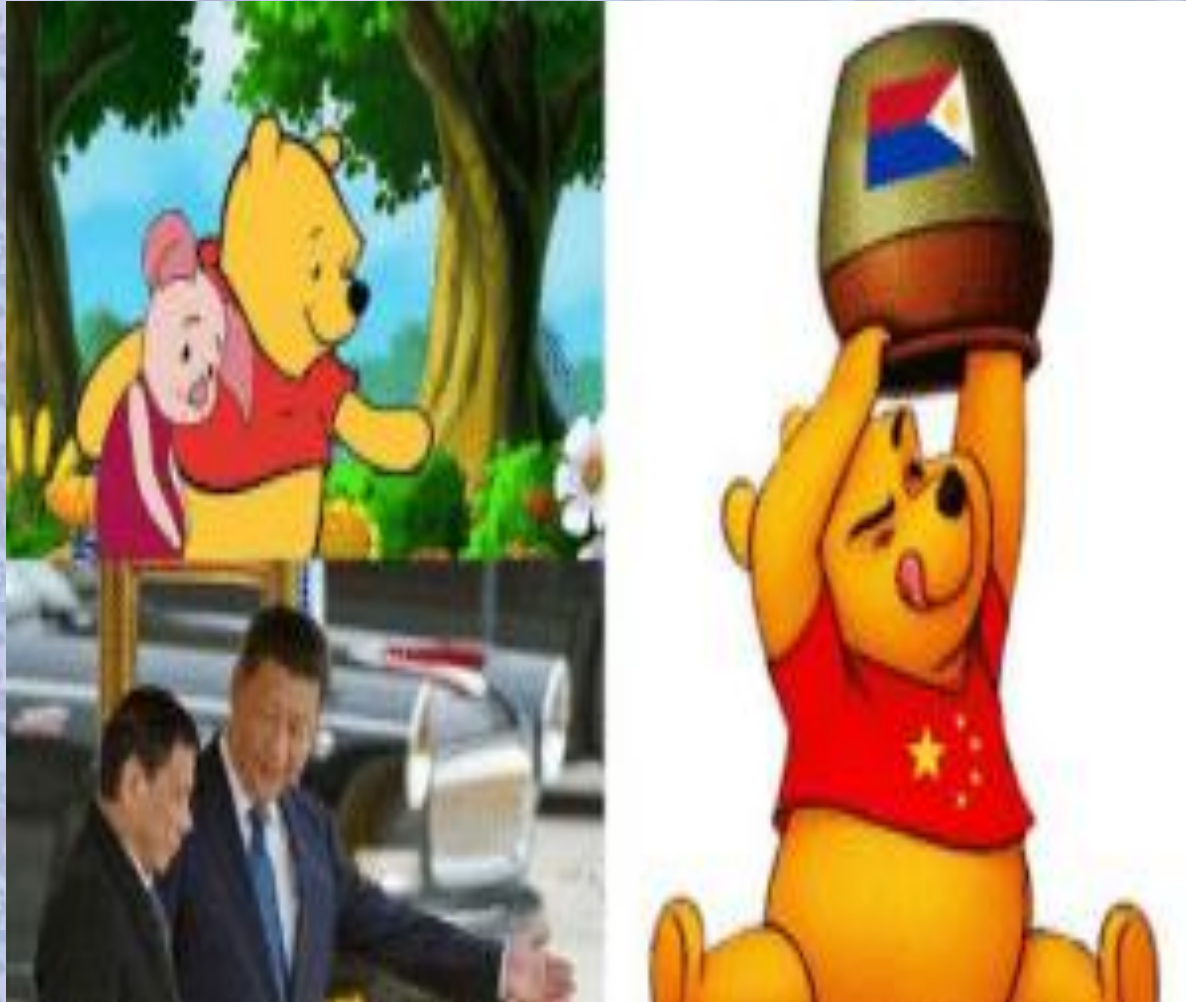
# From Appeasement to Limit Hard Balancing

The AFP is suspicious of Chinese funding of Philippine infrastructure projects and is skeptical of closer Philippine-China security relations--this stems from its mandate to protect the country's territory in the face of Chinese occupations of several land features deep in the country's economic exclusive zone (EEZ).





# From Appeasement to Limit Hard Balancing



**The Duterte Administration has not aligned or subordinated Philippine foreign policy to China's revisionist agenda of maritime expansion and the reason is simple--it does not want to put the fate of the Philippines in the hands of a more powerful and aggressive China.**

# From Appeasement to Limit Hard Balancing

**The Duterte Administration, probably realized that by appeasing an expanding power, the Philippines accepts and faces greater vulnerability in false hope that Chinese appetites for further expansion into the West Philippine Sea are sated or diverted.**



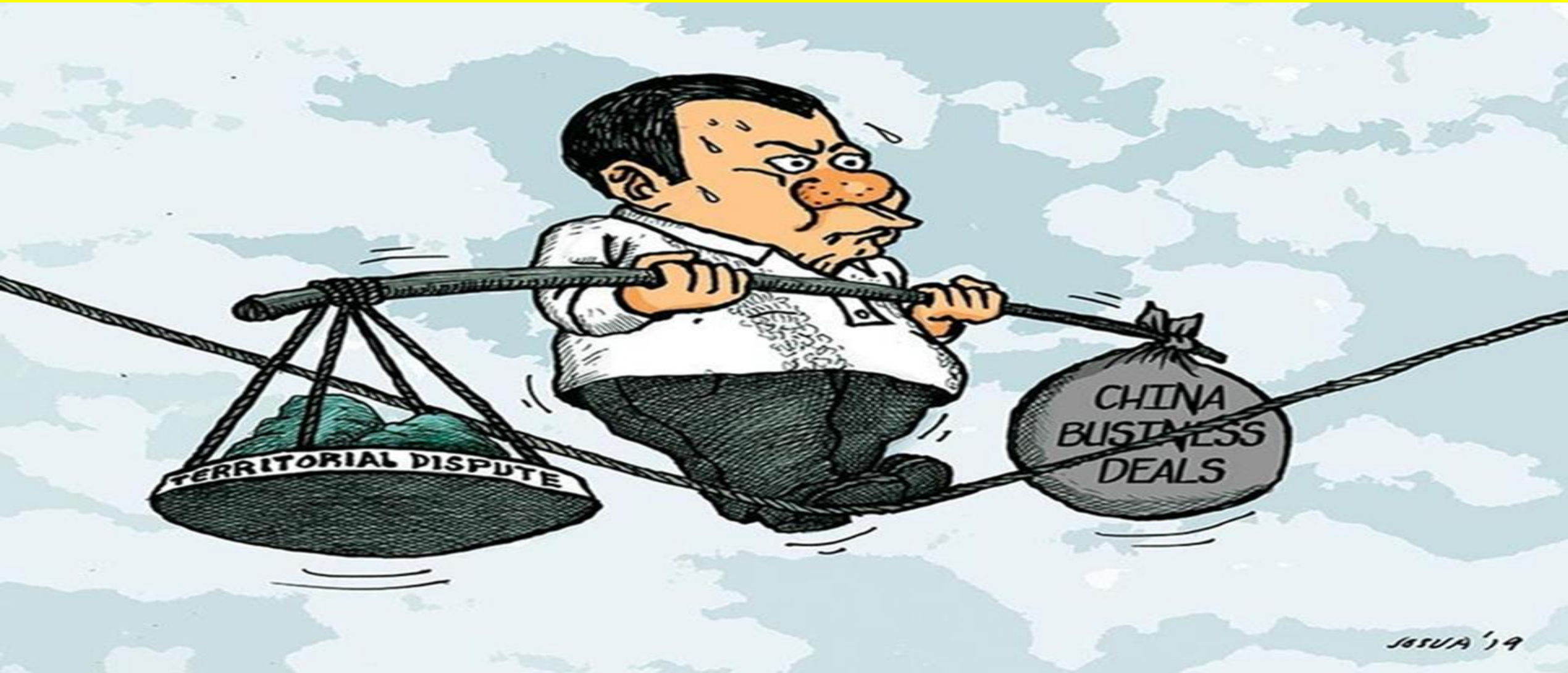


# From Appeasement to Limit Hard Balancing



This is evident in the Duterte administration's three policies: a) the continued funding of the AFP modernization program to develop the Philippine military's territorial defense capabilities against China; b) downgrading the Philippines' security relations with the U.S., but keeping the alliance intact ; And c) bolstering the Philippines' security partnerships with Japan and Australia.

# The Case for Limited Hard Balancing





# The Case for Limited Hard Balancing



**This current strategy of limited hard balancing towards China stemmed from the current administration's realization that a policy of appeasement requires the weaker party (the Philippines) to put its strategic stakes in hands of a more powerful state (China) which is harboring hostile intention of maritime expansion in the West Philippine Sea and is bent on exploiting the country's military weakness.**

# The Case for Limited Hard Balancing

A policy of limited hard balancing requires accepting that China is a major economic and military power in the region and that the Philippines must maintain a healthy economic and diplomatic relations with this emergent power.





# The Case for Limited Hard Balancing

However, the Philippines must also seek to mitigate any adverse externalities of this geopolitical reality, i.e., assertiveness, coercive behavior, and territorial expansion, by developing credible military capabilities and harnessing counter-vailing coalitions of other major powers designed to thwart or impede specific Chinese policies.



# The Case for Limited Hard Balancing

Limited hard balancing involves the Philippines' effective coordination of both military and diplomatic efforts in order to obtain outcomes contrary to China's preference of controlling a large portion of the West Philippine Sea, and the waters of the First-Island-Chain.





# The Case for Limited Hard Balancing



This policy was a result of the defense, military, and foreign affairs establishments questioning President Duterte's appeasement policy and this administration's belated realization that it needs an impromptu strategy aimed at constraining China's revisionist agenda in the South China Sea.

# The Case for Limited Hard Balancing



- During his six-year term, President Duterte did not change the Philippines' national security objectives as he continued the Aquino administration's efforts to develop a credible defense posture.

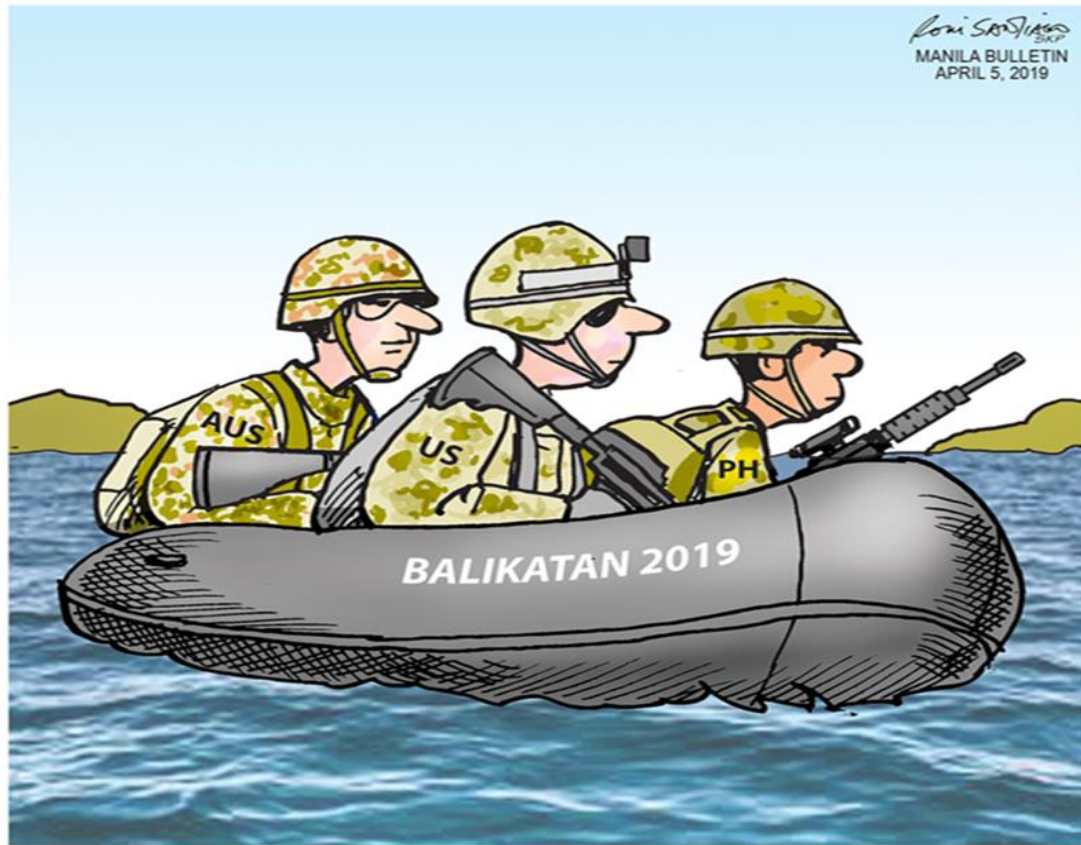


# The Case for Limited Hard Balancing

**Former President Duterte tried to down-grade and marginalize the Philippine-U.S. alliance; however, the alliance survive because of the DND/AFP and DFA support for the Philippine-U.S. security relations, Washington's policy of strategic patience with Manila.**



# The Case for Limited Hard Balancing



**Fostering security partnership with Japan and Australia in order to substitute the Philippines' alliance with the U.S. and to provide a leverage vis-à-vis the economic and diplomatic pivot to China.**



# A National Security Strategy (NSS) for the 17<sup>th</sup> Philippine President



# A National Security Strategy (NSS) for the 17<sup>th</sup> Philippine President



The key challenge for the 17<sup>th</sup> Philippine president is to transform the current administration's unplanned and makeshift strategy of limited hard balancing into a well-thought, comprehensive, and formal National Security Strategy (NSS) that will guide the Philippines in the next six years.



# A National Security Strategy (NSS) for the 17<sup>th</sup> Philippine President

- Immediate formulation by the National Security Council (NSC) of a new National Security Strategy (NSS) based on the July 12 2016 Arbitral Ruling on the South China Sea Dispute.



# **A National Security Strategy (NSS) for the 17<sup>th</sup> Philippine President**



**Wean the AFP from internal security so that the Philippine military can focus on the development of its territorial defense capabilities with a specific focus on developing its capability to wage an asymmetrical warfare in the country's maritime domain**



# A National Security Strategy (NSS) for the 17<sup>th</sup> Philippine President

Immediate implementation of Republic Act No. 11709 that addresses the problems associated with the revolving door practice by providing a fixed-three year term to the chairman and members of the joint chiefs of staff.



# A National Security Strategy (NSS) for the 17<sup>th</sup> Philippine President



- Repeal Republic Act 7898 or the AFP modernization law and instead pass a law that legally obliges the Philippine government to increase the annual defense budget at two percent of the Gross Domestic Product.







**Continue the outgoing administration's acceptance of China's core procedural norms for dealing with the South China Sea dispute—shelving the sovereignty issue, discussing conflict-management in bilateral forums, and agreeing on bilateral engagements such as discussion of joint development, strengthening of bilateral trade and increased trade—in exchange for Chinese support for Philippine development.**



# A National Security Strategy (NSS) for the 17<sup>th</sup> Philippine President

Strengthening the Philippine-U.S. alliance by fully implementing the 2014 EDCA and forming with the U.S. a bilateral “4+4 strategic, diplomatic, economic, and public health dialogue mechanism that will advance a comprehensive security partnership between the two allies.



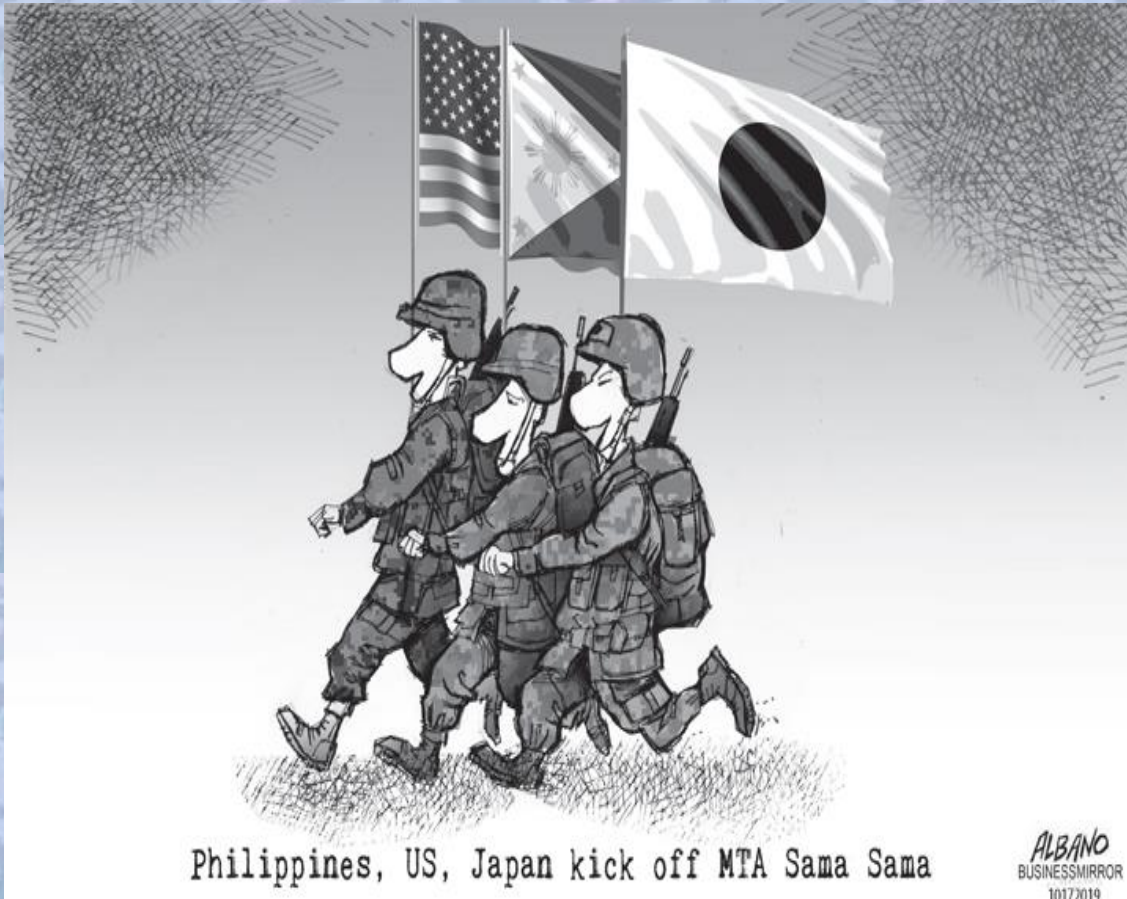
# A National Security Strategy (NSS) for the 17<sup>th</sup> Philippine President



Enhancing Philippine security partnerships with other U.S. allies such as Japan, the Republic of Korea and Australia, and establishing ties with new and emerging minilaterals—QUAD, ANKUS, etc.



# A National Security Strategy (NSS) for the 17<sup>th</sup> Philippine President



Formulate a medium-term policy guideline that will link the AFP modernization program with the defense policies of the country's formal treaty ally and its security partners as this will open the Philippine military to variety of material and ideational benefits, allowing it to develop interoperability with its ally and partners' defense systems and capabilities.

A person in a white robe stands on a sandy beach, holding a long staff. In the background, a large, bright, glowing orb, possibly a sun or moon, is visible in the sky. The scene is bathed in a warm, golden light.

**Thank you very much  
for your attention**