

Advancing National Interests in the Global Arena: A Systematic Review on President Duterte's Foreign Policies

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Abstract

President Rodrigo Roa Duterte is one of the Philippines' most popular yet controversial presidents. His foreign policies received contrasting reactions from domestic and international sectors. The key goal of this systematic review is to explore President Duterte's foreign policies and how he manages to advance the interests of the Philippines in the global arena. From the initial 979 articles, 13 were finally selected after passing the rigorous evaluation guided by the review protocols. Five themes emerged after analyzing the articles concerning Duterte's foreign policies. These are care for Overseas Filipino Workers, pivot to China, non-reliance with the West, political strategy, and advancing national interests. Though he did not get much support from local and international critics, his dealings with China and Russia allowed the Philippines to increase alliances while maintaining good relations with long-time allies, such as the US and European Union. Duterte's unpopular and sometimes controversial foreign policies challenge scholars for in-depth inquiry and discussion on existing international relations and political theories.

Keywords: Duterte, foreign policies, China, European Union, overseas Filipino workers, Philippines

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Introduction

Much has been written about President Rodrigo Roa Duterte of the Philippines, ranging from his leadership styles to his policies and actions. Moreover, reports highlight the many controversies surrounding his presidency, particularly the alleged extra-judicial killings. Understandably, most literature scrutinized how Duterte implemented his policies on purging criminality and illegal drugs while solidifying his power grip despite the pressures from international bodies like the International Criminal Court (ICC). However, very few touched on the merits of Duterte's international policies while ensuring the interests of his country. This review focuses on Duterte's foreign policies during his administration. The review's objectives are geared toward understanding his foreign policies and how he manages to deepen the country's existing international relations while expanding into new frontiers.

Duterte won the presidency overwhelmingly because of the strong support from the masses. He is known to receive the same support as a local executive. Most of his political career was spent decades as mayor of Davao City in Southern Philippines. According to political analyst Casiple (2016), the vote for Duterte in the 2016 presidential election was a protest vote against what he called an elite democracy. His rise to power can be attributed to the frustrations of the people who saw the failure of democracy, which alienated people with low incomes and the marginalized sector of society (Maboloc, 2020). However, though Duterte is famous in his country, some of his policies, particularly his War on Drugs, received international condemnation (Johnson & Fernquest, 2018; Thompson, 2022; Tusalem, 2019), including the withdrawal of membership of the Philippines of the International Criminal Court (de Dios, 2022). Nevertheless, even before becoming president, Duterte was already the subject of several criticisms during the campaign because of his vulgar words and unpresidential behavior. He even cursed President Obama and the Pope when the latter visited the country.

In the case of the Philippines, Duterte is careful enough to interweave the advantage of his foreign policies to its domestic benefits while playing the unpopular decisions that were not the path taken by previous administrations. As the theory of international politics necessitates a careful intellectual foundation (Burchill, 2005), this review aims to determine how Duterte advances the interests of the Philippines through his foreign policies. The findings shed light on the merits of Duterte's foreign policy and its impact on Filipinos and the country. It also provides a deeper

understanding of the controversial leader in Southeast Asia who triggered international curiosity with his War on Drugs.

Review of Literature

The Rise of Duterte to the Presidency

The 2016 presidential election was one of the most colorful electoral processes in the history of Philippine politics. Filipinos did not consider Duterte a contender in the early days leading to the campaign period. However, a small number of people from the South were creating noises, like going around the country trying to promote him or convince him to run with the evidence of strong support from the people. The elusive mayor of Davao City, who refused many media interviews, did not bite these initiatives and remained firm that he was not up for the coveted position. However, he actively promoted federalism (Montiel & Uyheng, 2020; Yusingco et al., 2022), which he believed could solve the longstanding struggles of the Filipinos. Later on, he was visible joining a small group of advocates of federalism in the country, which caught the attention of the electorates, who began checking on his background as the colorful mayor of Davao City.

As the campaign was about to commence, many wondered why this mayor from Davao was beginning to attract attention from both social and mainstream media. The clamor for him to run started to take an upward turn, prompting several sectors to call him to consider it. However, the mayor remained uncommitted even with the growing call, which started to escalate throughout the country and abroad, where Filipinos live and work. Other candidates began their campaign activities and submitted their application documents early. To the dismay of the supporters who gathered at the Commission on Election (COMELEC) national headquarters on the last day of candidacy filing, Duterte was nowhere to be found. It was a real-case drama of people lining the streets leading to the COMELEC headquarters showing support for Duterte. However, the ending was a sad one with no sight of Duterte. Nevertheless, there was a glimmer of hope as, out of nowhere, somebody from his political party arrived at the last minute and personally handed down an application for candidacy for president. For those who knew the electoral process, it was a strategy by the party to execute the replacement scheme should Duterte change his mind; at least the resignation of the candidate's standard-bearer could open Duterte's becoming the real presidential candidate, which eventually happened. Hence, the road to the presidency was established.

Duterte, as expected, drew thousands of supporters during his campaign sorties. Nevertheless, more than his message and campaign promises, Duterte captured the hearts of the electorate because of his charisma (Kenny & Holmes, 2020; Pertierra, 2017), which was evident by the influx of people during his campaign activities and the explosion in social media supporting him. As the election period peaked, Duterte had already garnered so much attention and capitalized on his brand of populism (Curato, 2017) to gain votes. The unexpected candidate who hailed from the South put his opponents in awe and unprepared, leaving many of them wandering about the fast turn of events. When the election result was released, Duterte claimed the highest position in the land. Indeed, the controversial city mayor from Davao became the 16th president of the Republic of the Philippines.

Duterte remained popular from the election period until he stepped down as president despite how the local and international media painted him as a bad person. He continued to receive a very high satisfaction rating from the surveys conducted by Pulse Asia and Social Weather Stations. Two weeks after he turned over the baton to the new president in 2022, the Social Weather Stations released the survey results conducted on April 19-27, 2022, which showed Duterte receiving a +65-net satisfaction rating, classified as very good (Social Weather Stations, 2022). His popularity and satisfaction rating were unprecedented in the history of Philippine politics. He got the support of the majority against the elites who were affected by his style of leadership and policies. Maboloc (2020) describes him as a cunning politician. "He knows what the common people want, and he also dances to the tune of what angers them" (Maboloc, 2020: 126).

Duterte and His Campaign Promises

The Filipino people saw a ray of hope from this controversial mayor. Teehankee (2016) considered the presidency of Duterte as a major rupture in liberal democracy, which was already achieved during the 1986 EDSA Revolution, which toppled the dictator. Duterte knew this very well, having served as a human rights lawyer for many years before embarking on politics. People were aghast of the influence and abuses of the country's elites, whom they accused as the root of poverty and the economy's slow growth. Duterte strongly criticized the elites and promised to dismantle them and their cohorts in his campaigns. The people saw a leader in him who they believed understood their situation and the country's actual situation that had been manipulated by the few but powerful elites for years. They saw him as an honest leader who had the guts to dismantle the evil of

bureaucracy (Arguelles, 2019; de Dios, 2022). Duterte answered their cries, as manifested in his campaign speeches.

Duterte was specific in his platforms, highlighting the three agenda- Purging Criminality, War on Drugs, and Fight against Corruption, aside from touching the people's hearts with his usual charisma. He was a city mayor of Davao for a long-time and was credited with transforming the city from a rebel-infested area into a peaceful and developed metropolitan. People believed he could replicate the success he had in Davao to the entire country. First, in Purging Criminality, Duterte was credited with turning a chaotic Davao City, infiltrated by rebels and lawless people, into one of Asia's top liveable cities (Curato, 2017). This achievement was almost impossible knowing the history of the city. In one of his speeches during the campaign period, Duterte boldly claimed that he would get rid of corruption, drugs, and criminality once elected (Tejada, 2016). He has a firm warning against criminals and tells them to stop their activities, or they will end up dead.

Second, in his controversial War on Drugs, Duterte promised to eradicate illegal drug problems within six months (Chapman & Babor, 2017), though he admitted later that six months were not enough. It was one of the boldest predictions by any candidate running for the presidency. Many were convinced of this promise knowing that he could clean his city with illegal drugs as a mayor. His pronouncements of killing the drug dealers during his campaign from January to May 2016 elicited positive reactions and support from the electorates (Reyes, 2016). However, his critics saw bloodshed and an incredible number of murders if he would be true to his promise. Nevertheless, most Filipinos believe that the problems of illegal drugs must be stopped. Hence, despite the looming deaths of would-be victims of the War on Drugs, the people supported Duterte, which motivated the latter to execute his promise when elected president.

On his promise to eradicate corruption in the government, Duterte capitalized on his record as a seasoned politician with no reported issue against him related to corruption. He was known to live a simple lifestyle, even living in a modest home in Davao City. It is not the case with many seasoned politicians who are mostly perceived to have enriched themselves through the years in government service. Moreover, he was precise in his election campaign to crack down on corrupt officials in the government (Kossow, 2019). Fighting corruption is one of his core campaign propagandas (de Jesus,

2021), which resonated with the sentiments of the Filipinos who are frustrated with the corruption in the government.

Duterte's War on Drugs and His Foreign Policies

The controversial mayor turned president promised to bring his War on Drugs from Davao City to all over the country. True to his election promise, the War on Drugs commenced on a large scale, with deaths reaching as much as 7000 (Simangan, 2018) or more than 9,000 deaths (Amnesty International, 2017) in just less than one year of Duterte's presidency. The administration cited the number of deaths as inaccurate, citing their reports. Nevertheless, most Filipinos considered the War on Drugs as protection for the good ones and punishment for the bad ones (Kusaka, 2017). Hence, despite the criticisms of extra-judicial killings, Duterte remained popular and received strong support from the Filipino people (Rafael, 2017), as evidenced by his high satisfaction rating. In addition, the people trusted the president. They considered the benefits of such a campaign against criminals (Maboloc, 2020), which were considered very concerning by other sectors, particularly human rights advocates.

Duterte brought a new face to the Philippines beyond the backdrop of negativity, especially in his foreign policies. It was also through Duterte that the Philippines began exploring and benefitting from forging stronger alliances with China and Russia (Balboa, 2020; De Castro, 2019; 2017; Lopega, 2019; Magcamit, 2020) while maintaining relations from its old allies like the United States of America and the European Union. It is interesting to note how Duterte put forward his country's interest in dealing with foreign relations. This paper contributes to the debate on balancing national interest and international politics. Weldes explained the two important concepts of national interest and international politics.

First, it is through the concept of the national interest that policymakers understand the goals to be pursued by a state's foreign policy. It thus in practice forms the basis for state action. Second, it functions as a rhetorical device through which the legitimacy of and political support for state action is generated. The 'national interest' thus has considerable power in that it helps to constitute as important and to legitimize the actions taken by states.

In this paper, the focus is on the foreign policies of the Duterte administration with emphasis on how the president himself facilitated a strategy of opening new alliances while strengthening existing international partnerships. It is interesting to note how Duterte managed to maintain its alliances with US and Europe but simultaneously embarked aggressively on forging partnerships with China and Russia. The Philippines under Duterte is an interesting case to study regarding international relations, diplomacy, and alliances.

Research Questions

1. What are the foreign policies of the Duterte Administration?
2. How do these foreign policies safeguard national interests while strengthening international linkages?

Method

Protocol and Registration

The review was conducted using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Liberati et al., 2009). It followed the four stages in the process of the review, which are identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. A review protocol was developed before the conduct of the search. It included choices of search terms, databases, and screening criteria. Several databases such as Taylor & Francis, ProQuest, Science Direct, Springer Link, and Google Scholar were used to search for articles. The choice of these databases were based on two grounds. First, these databases, except for ProQuest, were freely available online. Second, the intention was to get as many articles that are solely published in the aforementioned databases to have a wider and broader reach of the review process.

Illegibility Criteria

Included in the review protocol, we were guided by certain criteria in selecting articles. These criteria guided the review to ensure attaining the objectives of the study. Specifically, we followed the following inclusion criteria: (1) Articles that focus on the foreign policy of President Duterte and (2) Only articles written in English are considered. First, the focus was on the foreign policies of the Duterte Administration. Plenty of articles were written about Duterte, but this study only pointed out

his foreign policies. Hence, articles that speak directly or indirectly about his foreign policies were considered. Since Duterte came into office in 2016, we also ensured that only articles published beginning in 2016 were included. Otherwise, articles about his foreign policies as a mayor of Davao City could pop up in the search. Second, we only included articles about Duterte's foreign policies written in English for proper analysis and interpretation. Excluded were articles that only discussed Duterte's presidency without his foreign policy. Also, we excluded articles that only talked about his personal life, which had nothing to do with foreign policies.

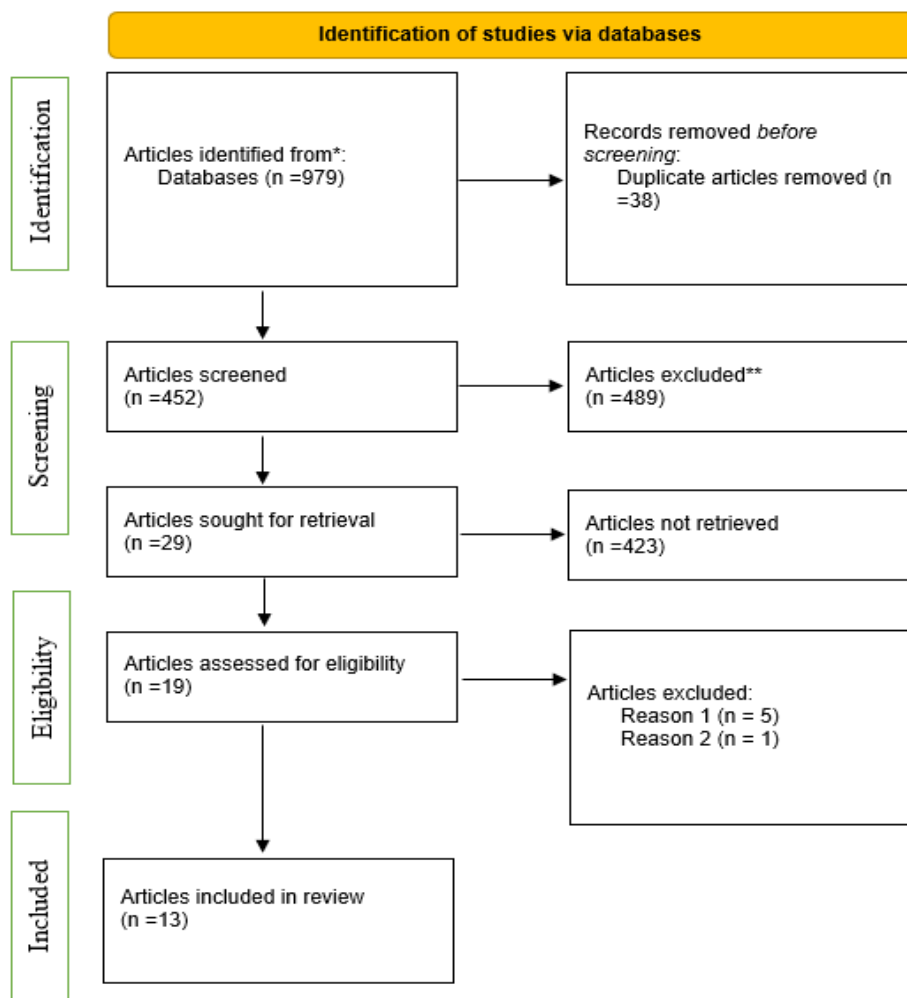


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Search Screening (Inclusion and Exclusion) on the Review.

Information Sources

The following databases were considered in the search: Taylor & Francis, ProQuest, Science Direct, Springer Link, and Google Scholar with the exact phrase "Duterte Foreign Policy" and "Duterte and Foreign Policy". These databases provided rich and relevant sources of articles on leadership, public administration, and management, which are focused on the objectives of this review.

Search

The extensive search using the terms "Duterte Foreign Policy" and "Duterte and Foreign Policy" yielded 979 articles in Francis & Taylor, ProQuest, Science Direct, Springer Link, and Google Scholar. For the Springer Link and Google Scholar, the "advance search" option and specified the "in the title of the article" (Google Scholar) or "where the title contains" (Springer Link) for the search terms were utilized. Similar technique of using advance search was used for Proquest, Science Direct, and Francis and Taylor.

Study Selection

As shown in Figure 1, there were 979 articles identified about President Duterte and his foreign policies, which came from different databases, specifically Francis & Taylor (382), ProQuest (409), Science Direct (70), Springer Link (86), and Google Scholar (52). Thirty-eight were removed for duplications. From the remaining 941 articles, 452 were screened, and 489 were excluded after evaluating the titles which are not specifically talking about Duterte's foreign policies. Out of the remaining number of articles, abstracts were evaluated, yielding only 29 articles that were sought to retrieve the full article while removing 423 articles that did not talk about President Duterte and his foreign policies. In other words, the discarded articles were not in line with the objectives of the study. These articles were evaluated, resulting in 19 articles being considered for eligibility assessment. Furthermore, one article was removed due to non-retrieval using the available link, and five articles were assessed as irrelevant to the review's objective. The final number of articles included in the review was 13.

Data Collection Process and Data Items

The identified articles were processed using Excel, which included the storing of the data. Duplications of articles published in two or more databases were treated as one, removing one entry. After this process, content analysis was conducted by carefully reading each article and considering the research focus, methods, and authors. As shown in Table 1, among the 13 articles, 14 are listed as

authors, of whom 5 were non-Filipinos while nine were Filipinos. Five out of the nine Filipino authors work in the Philippines, while the other four are overseas. One author had four articles published in different years.

Table 1. Distribution of Authors per Article.

Number of Articles	Number of Authors	Number of Filipino Authors	Number of Non-Filipino Authors
13	14	9	5

Results

Five themes emerged based on the analysis of Duterte's foreign policies, as explained in the 13 articles identified. These were (1) Care for Overseas Filipino Workers, (2) Pivot to China, (3) Non-reliance with the West, (4) Political Strategy, and (5) Advancing national interests. The four themes aligned with Research Question 1, while theme number five aligned with Research Question 2.

Table 2. Care for Overseas Filipino Workers

Sources	Key Policies
Lopez, R. R. A. (2020). Internationalizing pagdamay and palakasan: A Philippine perspective on Duterte foreign policy 1. In <i>International Studies in the Philippines</i> (pp. 86-101). Routledge.	The key issues at hand include his adversarial response to international criticisms of his War on Drugs and the orchestration of a 'rescue' mission for distressed overseas Filipino workers (OFW) in Kuwait, among others.
Encinas-Franco, J. (2022). The presidential kiss: Duterte's gendered populism, hypermasculinity, and Filipino migrants. <i>NORMA</i> , 17(2), 107-123.	'protective and angry father,' 'the Filipino everyman,' and 'a ladies' man,' thereby normalizing and trivializing the controversial act.

During the 2016 campaign, Duterte endeared the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) with his down-to-earth and uncharacteristic speeches, which many would say unbecoming of a statesman. When he became president, his concern for the OFWs was all the more manifested when he ordered

a rescue mission for the distressed Filipinos in Kuwait (Lopez, 2020). Furthermore, he ensured his foreign policies included protecting Filipinos working abroad who are recipients of several reported cases of abuse (Encinas-Franco, 2022). Duterte knows how the OFWs suffer from many abusive employers, particularly those who show little mercy to Filipino domestic helpers (Alanezi & Saleh, 2022). Moreover, his ways of dealing with OFWs showed how his government put the Filipinos abroad on his radar. Despite his controversies, he is portrayed as a protective but angry head of the family (Encinas-Franco, 2022). Hence, they fondly called “tatay”, meaning father.

Lopez (2020) described Duterte's foreign policy as caring for others, using the Filipino term "Pagdamay" (sympathy) to drive his point. The term has a deep meaning for Filipinos because they are known for having close-knit family ties and strong support for other people, immortalized by the “bayahinan” (shared group activity) spirit. Lopez (2020) also illustrated Duterte's policy to OFWs as reflected in his commitment to them, labeling him as an empathizing Filipino with a heart for others. He showed his compassion by putting them in his top priorities. On his trip abroad, he always met with OFWs captivated by his informal talks, specifically telling stories that would last for hours. The OFWs felt his concern and care for them. In fact, in one of his speeches during his visit to Japan, he gave specific instructions on what to do if they returned home and they encountered problems at the airport, particularly among immigration officers who were reportedly extorting money by threatening the OFWs through a “tanim bala” (plant-bullet) scheme (Encinas-Franco, 2022). This scheme practically stopped when Duterte took office.

Table 3. Pivot to China

Sources	Key Policies
Magcamit, M. (2020). The Duterte method: A neoclassical realist guide to understanding a small power's foreign policy and strategic behavior in the Asia-Pacific. <i>Asian Journal of Comparative Politics</i> , 5(4), 416-436.	President Rodrigo Duterte's method is characterized by four key elements: cultivating a more favorable image for China; moderating the country's American-influenced strategic culture; mobilizing state-society relations supportive of 'Sinicization'; and reorienting the country's Western-based institutions to accommodate Chinese pressures and incentives better.
De Castro, R. C. (2016). The Duterte administration's foreign policy: unravelling the Aquino administration's balancing agenda on an emergent China. <i>Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs</i> , 35(3), 139-159.	President Duterte's foreign policy is directed at reviving the equi-balancing policy on China, in contrast to then-President Aquino's balancing strategy. This is best exemplified by his efforts to harness China for several major infrastructure and investment projects in the Philippines and to resort to bilateral negotiations with Beijing.
Sevilla Jr, H. A. (2018). The Philippines' foreign policy direction: An assessment of the first year of President Duterte. <i>Journal of South Asian Studies</i> , 6(3), 165-173.	Under Duterte's administration, the Philippines opened up and became friendly with China despite the latter's aggressive militarization in the South China Sea.
Lopega, D. B. (2019). On President Rodrigo Duterte's "War on Drugs": Its Impact on Philippine-China Relations. <i>Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations</i> , 5(1), 137-170.	Relationship with China improved for the better due to Duterte's "War on Drugs."

If there is a daring and almost unheard act from any president before him, it is Duterte's pivot to China. He cultivated a more favorable stance for China (Magcamit, 2020). De Castro (2016) described

it as an equi-balancing policy on China, the opposite of the previous administration's dealing with its neighbor. The Philippines and China are in a tug-of-war situation regarding the claims of both countries on certain islands. In 2013, the Philippines brought the matter to an international tribunal in The Hague, which the Philippines won on July 12, 2016 (Vitug, 2018). As a consequence, the bilateral relations between both countries worsened, with China even banning some imported products from the Philippines, causing losses for the latter. However, Duterte came in as a good neighbor bringing a friendly stance that paved the way for what Magcamit (2020) called an equi-balancing policy. As a result, Duterte's government solidified bilateral arrangements leading to numerous investments from China to the Philippines. In Sevilla's (2018) article, Duterte opened its doors to China despite the latter's history of bullying in the contested lands in the South China Sea. Duterte looked at the brighter side and maximized the potential of having China as a good partner for the country in terms of economic development instead of making it an enemy. In another twist of events, Duterte's War on Drugs got China's support, which Lopega (2019) described as one ingredient in improving the relationship between the two nations.

Table 4. Non-Reliance on the West.

Sources	Key Policies
Shoji, T., & Tomikawa, H. (2017). Southeast Asia: Duterte Takes Office, South China Sea in Flux. <i>East Asian Strategic Review</i> , 131-155.	President Duterte's policies toward the United States were undergoing a 180-degree shift from the previous administration's policy of strengthening cooperation; the new president's policies instead put more distance into the relationship.
Bautista, L. B. (2016). Duterte's foreign policy confusion. <i>Institute of International Affairs</i> , 1-5.	Duterte's fiercely critical rhetoric toward the United States has placed the country's longstanding security alliance in question.

Table 4. Non-Reliance on the West (Continued)

Sources	Key Policies
De Castro, R. C. (2022). Abstract of crisis in Philippine-US security relations: from an alliance to a security partnership?. <i>The Pacific Review</i> , 35(3), 477-505.	President Rodrigo Duterte commented that an armed clash in the South China Sea would crush the Philippines because the involvement of American forces would make the conflict spiral out of control. This development, along with his decision to abrogate the 1997 Philippine-U.S. Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), has generated a crisis in the alliance.
Balboa, J. D. (2020). Duterte’s Foreign Policy Pivot and Its Impact on Philippine Trade and Investments: An International Political Economy Perspective. <i>Philippine Political Science Journal</i> , 41(1-2), 127-160.	The political relationship between the Philippines and the West has been changed by Duterte’s strong remarks against the US and EU.
De Castro, R. C. (2017). The Duterte Administration’s appeasement policy on China and the crisis in the Philippine–US alliance. <i>Philippine Political Science Journal</i> , 38(3), 159-181.	The Duterte Administration keeps silent on this maritime dispute in exchange for Chinese trade concessions, aid, and investments. President Duterte fosters closer economic and diplomatic relations with China and distances the Philippines from the US.
Balboa, J. D. (2020). Duterte’s Foreign Policy Pivot and Its Impact on Philippine Trade and Investments: An International Political Economy Perspective. <i>Philippine Political Science Journal</i> , 41(1-2), 127-160.	President Duterte's mercurial personality and antagonistic tirades against the country's traditional Western allies, including the United States (US) and the European Union (EU), and his statements about building closer ties with China and Russia, have changed the political and diplomatic tone of the Philippines overall.

Table 4. Non-Reliance on the West (Continued)

Sources	Key Policies
De Castro, R. C. (2019). China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Duterte administration's appeasement policy: Examining the connection between the two national strategies. <i>East Asia</i> , 36(3), 205-227.	Lured by the BRI, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte is undoing his predecessor's policy of balancing China's expansive claim in the disputed waters.
De Castro, R. C. (2016). The Duterte administration's foreign policy: unravelling the Aquino administration's balancing agenda on an emergent China. <i>Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs</i> , 35(3), 139-159.	Instead of relying on the US, President Duterte is fostering a closer security partnership with Japan to equi-balance an emergent China.

Duterte became controversial in his tirades against the West with his pivot to China. In the case of the United States of America, Shoji and Tomikawa (2017) described Duterte's policy as a 180-degree turnaround. The Philippines is a long-time ally of the US, as evidenced by the Mutual Defense Treaty Agreement signed on August 30, 1951. Duterte knew this much but was okay going in another direction without abandoning the US in the first place. The president was fearless in speaking his mind, which according to Bautista (2016), endangered the longstanding security alliance of both countries. Duterte did not hold angry words against the US for interfering in his foreign and domestic policies. Past presidents were cautious in their pronouncements if it involved the US but not Duterte. He even cursed Obama.

De Castro (2022) cautioned the president, saying a possible disaster for the Philippines should the US interfere in the conflict in the South China Sea. Duterte saw the possible scenario should a war break out in the East. Aside from the US, Duterte had no hesitations in uttering strong remarks against the European Union (Balboa, 2020), especially on the latter's comments on the country's War on Drugs. There were several attempts by European delegates to visit the country to investigate the reported abuses. Duterte was furious, considering this action as interference with the national affairs of the land. It was only after his term that a team of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights was able to visit in February of 2023. Instead, Duterte's foreign policy is leaning towards

China (Balboa, 2020; De Castro, 2019; 2017) and Russia (Balboa, 2020). Moreover, De Castro (2016) also discussed how Duterte counters the emerging power of China by fostering a closer security partnership with Japan. In short, Duterte was unafraid to speak firm against the US and EU while building stronger alliances with China, Russia, and Japan.

Table 5. Duterte's Political Strategy

Sources	Key Policies
Camba, A., Gomez, T., Khaw, R., & Cheong, K. C. (2021). Strongmen politics and investment flows: China's investments in Malaysia and the Philippines. <i>Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy</i> , 1-22.	Duterte still used BRI to reward his cronies, weaken the opposition, and tame the oligarchs.
Balboa, J. D. (2020). Duterte's Foreign Policy Pivot and Its Impact on Philippine Trade and Investments: An International Political Economy Perspective. <i>Philippine Political Science Journal</i> , 41(1-2), 127-160.	Duterte's foreign policy shift is mainly shaped by Duterte's "politics of survival".

Some scholars considered Duterte's foreign policies part of his political strategy. For instance, Camba et al. (2021) argued that Duterte used his preference for China and its investments to favor his supporters, weaken his enemies on the other side of the fence, and lure the oligarchs into supporting him. Moreover, Balboa (2020) criticized Duterte's foreign policy as a means of political survival. While these claims might hold some truths, Duterte was adamant in his policies. Also, his satisfaction rating did not suffer. Nevertheless, it remains a subject for scrutiny or debate whether his foreign policies are part of his political strategies.

Table 6. Advancing National Interest.

Sources	Key Policies
Garcia, L. S. (2018). The Philippine President's Rhetoric on Japan-China Rivalry and Independent Foreign Policy. <i>Journal of Nusantara Studies (JONUS)</i> , 3(2), 1-16.	Duterte's foreign policy rhetoric is just a strategy to accommodate China's influence while maintaining his nationalist narrative.
De Castro, R. C. (2019). China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Duterte administration's appeasement policy: Examining the connection between the two national strategies. <i>East Asia</i> , 36(3), 205-227.	President Duterte is convinced that his appeasement policy toward China is worth pursuing because it makes the Philippines a beneficiary of the BRI.
Shoji, T., & Tomikawa, H. (2017). Southeast Asia: Duterte Takes Office, South China Sea in Flux. <i>East Asian Strategic Review</i> , 131-155.	The new administration is seeking to improve relations with China with an eye to increasing economic cooperation, so that it seems to be softening its confrontational stance in the South China Sea.
Candice, J. J., & Perwita, A. A. B. (2021). The shift and continuity of the Philippines' foreign policy under Rodrigo Duterte on the south china sea issue. <i>Jurnal Dinamika Global</i> , 6(01).	Duterte foreign policy on this delicate issue is always based on the strategic dynamic of its "two-level game" (domestic and international political stimuli) to its national interests.

Any national leader must engage with another sovereign nation to put forward the country's national agenda. Some scholars see this trend in Duterte's foreign policy. For example, Duterte assures his country's interest while simultaneously maximizing China's power in the region and worldwide (Garcia, 2018). However, more than the appeasement policy towards China, Duterte positioned the country as the beneficiary of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is considered as the merger of the strategies for both countries (De Castro, 2019). Undoubtedly, it facilitates mutual benefits for China and the Philippines. Arguably, favoring China also reflects the administration's softening its stance on the issues of the South China Sea while increasing economic cooperation with China (Shoji &

Tomikawa, 2017), something that only Duterte was able to execute. Moreover, these policies are more favorable to advance the interests of the Philippines, especially in the economic and development aspects.

Discussion

Considered the most controversial president of the Philippines, Duterte has a 180% turnaround in foreign policy compared to his predecessor President Aquino, particularly in his approach towards China despite its well-publicized land dispute in the South China Sea or Philippine West Sea. Consequently, scholars scrutinize the president's pronouncements and actions as manifestations of his administration's foreign policy. In this review, five themes are identified as regards Duterte's foreign policy.

One of Duterte's actions was his love and concern for the OFWs (Encinas-Franco, 2022; Lopez, 2020). This is considered to be one of his priority policies for Filipinos abroad. It was evident during the COVID-19 Pandemic in what Liao (2020) described as the "Operation Bring Them Home" approach to struggling Filipinos trapped abroad and the rescue mission of distressed OFWs in Kuwait (Lopez, 2020). His concern for the OFWs was apparent starting from the presidential campaign, which revealed how they loved him, as manifested by their strong showing during his campaign rallies. Accordingly, the warm welcome and strong support of the OFWs were influential and helpful in making Duterte win the presidential election (Shipper, 2021). For example, one OFW can influence a family and relatives in the Philippines to vote. With thousands of OFWs, Duterte was able to multiply potential voters. When he became president, he ensured the Filipinos received their deserved respect. He even ordered to ban on sending Filipino workers to Kuwait if the government would not do something about the deaths of Filipinos (Malit & Tsourapas, 2021). As a result, both governments discussed and released the document entitled "Agreement on the Employment of Domestic Workers between Philippines and Kuwait," which included new rights for OFWs in Kuwait (Malit & Tsourapas, 2021). The Kuwait experience set the tone for Duterte's foreign policy for Filipinos working abroad. The OFWs saw how genuine Duterte was in his concern for them and the more they supported him in his foreign policies. In fact, in the country's history, he was the only president who stepped down from the presidency but retained a very high satisfaction rating from the people, especially among the OFWs.

What made Duterte more controversial, aside from his War on Drugs, was his favorable policy toward China (De Castro, 2016; Lopega, 2019; Magcamit, 2020; Sevilla, 2018). It was opposite to the policy of the previous administration. He did not use the United Nations arbitral ruling in favor of the Philippines against China, but instead labored to improve the relationship between the two countries. Though the Philippines experienced bullying from China in the contested lands in the South China Sea (Sevilla, 2018), Duterte welcomed China as a big brother. However, Duterte made some adjustments in the later part of his presidency, from appeasement to soft-balancing as manifested in his re-assertion of alliance with the US, strengthening security cooperation with Japan, and pushing for the formalization of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea at the level of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Castro, 2022). Moreover, Duterte's War on Drugs got support from China (Lopega, 2019; Mirasol, 2017), which helped improve the relations between the two countries. Duterte considered this gesture his leverage, especially having received backlash from critics (Fung et al., 2018; Smeallie, 2018). Though not all Filipinos are comfortable with China (Poushter & Bishop, 2017), Duterte's approach and narrative about China slowly showed the willingness of Filipinos to accept China as a partner (Tenorio et al., 2020). As a result, both China and the Philippines increased economic cooperation. Other manifestations were the visits of Duterte to China and President Xi Jinping to the Philippines.

Duterte's leaning toward China is interpreted as a protest against Western domination, which has also been critical of his policies, like the War on Drugs (Balboa, 2020). His harsh words against Obama and the United States raised eyebrows, as this was something no previous president had ever done. Leaning toward China (Balboa, 2020; De Castro, 2019; 2017), Russia (Balboa, 2020; Saighal, 2017; Oxford Analytica, 2016), and Japan (De Castro, 2016) was seen as departing from too much reliance on western countries (Chang, 2017; Saighal, 2017; Shoji & Tomikawa, 2017). Duterte sees the opportunity of forging good relationships with China and Russia as alternatives to the Philippines' existing alliances. On the one hand, it is a fact that Duterte was not happy with the West's negative remarks regarding his War on Drugs and other domestic and foreign policies. On the other hand, he brings more opportunities and benefits from having associations with China and Russia without terminating the country's alliances with the US, European Union, and other countries.

Duterte's critics pointed out his foreign policy as a part of his political strategy, either as political survival (Balboa, 2020) or as gaining investment from China to favor his supporters (Camba et

al., 2021). Despite these criticisms, Duterte still pushes his policies to attract more opportunities for Filipinos. However, despite improving the friendship between the two countries, his strategy was in question because of China's continued intrusion into Philippine waters (de Dios, 2022). Nevertheless, Duterte used his wisdom and long experience as a politician to ensure his country benefits from his foreign policies. He knew how to balance as Tenorio et al. (2020) described Duterte's leadership as bicephalous, which means populist in domestic policies and programmatic but unpopular in foreign relations.

Duterte, like any other world leader, always has his country's national interest at the forefront of any bilateral or multilateral relationships and agreements. His dealings with China (Shoji & Tomikawa, 2017), like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (De Castro, 2019), manifested Duterte's agenda of indulging in partnerships that would benefit the Philippines. Bearing in mind the tensions between Beijing and the previous administration, his pivot towards China softened the conflict in the South China Sea, which allowed the Philippine fishermen to continue fishing without much interference. However, this scenario has also been disruptive, with occasional reports of bullying from the Chinese Navy. Nonetheless, looking at Duterte's policy toward China and other countries discloses his priority of advancing the Philippine interest. It is about balancing domestic and international political stimuli to advance the country's agenda (Candice & Perwita, 2021). In other words, Duterte espouses a narrative on the debate about national interest and international politics through his unpopular and sometimes controversial foreign policies, ultimately benefiting his country. The foreign policies of the Duterte Administration provide avenues for scholars to discuss and scrutinize Duterte's approach to foreign policies concerning existing and emerging theories of international relations.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis using the PRISMA model to conduct a systematic review of literature, Duterte's foreign policies can be summarized, on the one hand, in terms of his care for Overseas Filipino Workers, pivot to China, non-reliance with the West, and his unique political strategy. On the other hand, Duterte's foreign policies are geared towards advancing national interests. President Duterte propels the Philippines to new heights through his administration's foreign policies by ensuring economic growth and development facilitated by its dealings with China, Russia, and Japan, three of the world's great powers. His unprecedented move, particularly with China, is a complete turnaround

of the previous administration's policy which is a bit hostile, highlighted by lodging a sea dispute between the two countries at the Hauge Tribunal. Instead, Duterte embraced Beijing as its big brother leading to more friendly relations and more investments from China to the Philippines. It can be argued that Duterte balanced his strategy of ensuring domestic support while embarking on unpopular, sometimes controversial, foreign policies. Moreover, despite disagreements and negative criticisms, he maintained good relations with long-time allies like the United States and the European Union. As a result, Duterte could advance his national agenda, such as care and protection of the Filipinos abroad, stronger security, and economic development for the country. The Philippines can indulge with any nation worldwide, ensuring long-term economic benefits ushering growth and prosperity. The study's findings call for a more in-depth study on international relations, based on the case of Duterte's foreign policies and their impact after he left office in 2022.

Furthermore, seeing how the new administration could maximize what Duterte had started will be interesting. With the continued uncertainty regarding the West Philippine Sea issue, the growing tension in Taiwan, and the war in Ukraine, how can the Philippine government position itself and maintain good relations with the US, China, Russia, and other countries? Hence, the foreign policies of the Philippines are important areas for research, which can provide rich sources of information, especially for countries like the ASEAN member states and other countries with situations similar to the Philippines'.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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