



The South China Sea Arbitration : Responses From The Philippines and Singapore

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Philippines formally lodged its arbitration case under the UN's 1982 Convention of the Law of the Sea, known as UNCLOS, in January 2013. Although the ICJ decision favoured the Philippine claim, current President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, appears to have relaxed his stand on the territorial claim against China. In contrast, Singapore, which is not a claimant to any disputed part of the South China Sea, is home to the biggest port in Southeast Asia and has made clear its open economy depends on continued freedom of navigation in the area. Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has stressed the importance of abiding by international rules in the South China Sea despite China's rejection of a ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague that invalidated Beijing's claims.



SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The maritime territorial dispute in the SCS remains as one of the many destabilising factors within the region's security environment. This study examines the effectiveness and factors that could alter the perspectives of the Philippines and Singapore as a non-claimant country particularly in their interest. It is also important to understand the nature of this dispute, identify the important controlling variables and attempt to derive possible means and the reasons for the involvement of Singapore. The South China Sea has been an increasingly prominent international diplomatic agenda item since late 2015.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research paper endeavor to answer two primary questions as follows:

- Why the Philippines didn't take further action to secure their territory after the arbitration case sided them against China over South China Sea claim?
- Why Singapore, as a non-claimant country, wants China to abide by the international arbitration on South China Sea?



RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- This research paper has the following research objectives:-
 1. To explain the historical claim and why the South China Sea is the most contentious disputed region in this century.
 2. What are the factors determining the differences in approach in the foreign policies of the Philippines and Singapore vis-à-vis the UNCLOS arbitration.
 3. To analyse why Singapore, as a non-claimant country, shows interest in the South China Sea despite much pressure from China.



CENTRAL ARGUMENTS

This research paper argues that:

Issues regarding sea denial and sea control will be triggered if China's 'String of Pearls' threaten. It refers to the network of Chinese military and commercial facilities and relationships along its sea lines of communication is disturbed. Incapability of the Philippine's Government to resist Chinese pressure and lack of support from the United States, has obliged the Rodrigo Roa Duterte Government to accept China's "charm diplomacy". There is the possibility of Singapore facing diplomatic row with Beijing through serious disagreement with China's maritime claims in the region. China's Maritime Strategy is the key determinant to provide South China Sea a passage to be sea power. China's maritime strategy is part of its grand strategy and the effort to achieve foreign policy objectives. China will rise as maritime power and protect its interests beyond the South China Sea.



ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Independent Variables

- Big Power Dynamics
- Leadership
- UNCLOS
- Security
- Economic Interests

Intervening Variables

- ASEAN
- International System

Dependent Variables

- Differing responses by the Philippines and Singapore



METHODOLOGY

► **Qualitative:** Interpretation of observations

► **Data Collection:**

<u>PRIMARY</u>	Face to face interview with some of the prominent scholars and academicians such as: i) Prof. Dr. K.S. Nathan ii) Prof. Dr. Suffian Jusoh iii) Prof. Dr. Aileen S.P Baviera iv) Dr. Kuik Cheng Chwee v) Dr. Hoo Chiew Ping ; and email interview with Dr. Collin Koh Swee Lean from S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) Singapore.
<u>SECONDARY</u>	Selected research academic books, articles published in academic journals, almanacs, newspaper, online materials , treaties and Theses



Findings of the Research

► Findings No. 1 - The Philippines Action :

- i) Being a small state
- ii) China's "charm policy"

► Findings No. 2 - The Singapore's Action :

- i) Upholding the rules of Law
- ii) Asean



Findings of the Research

- ▶ **Findings No. 3 :**
 - i) Economy Interests
 - ii) Big Powers
 - iii) Security
 - iv) International System

