# Philippine Pivot to China:Threat to Stability in the West Philippine Sea

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# MAIN POINTS

1. President Rodrigo Duterte's pivot to China has threatened PH sovereign rights over the West Philippine Sea (WPS).
2. What he did and didn't do:
   * Disregarded the 2016 ruling that invalidated China's nine-dash line
   * Didn't seek the support of the int'l community to put pressure on China
   * Didn't firmly stand up to China
   * Framed false policy choices: either talk to China or go to war
3. Result: escalated presence of China in WPS

# OUTLINE

I BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

II THE PHILIPPINES VS. CHINA CASE: WHAT PH WON

III OPTIONS: MOVING FORWARD

# Friends with Benefits

- Duterte has visited Beijing 5 times & met with Xi Jinping 8 times in his first 3 years in office.
- Public pressure in PH forced Duterte to raise arbitral ruling with Xi in August 2019 visit to Beijing.
- Most Filipinos want Duterte to assert sovereign rights over WPS.
- As expected, Xi refused to recognize this.

(*Photo from Chinese Embassy Manila Facebook page*)

# After 3 years…

- Dramatic rise in Chinese investments: $28.79 million in 2017 to $198.68 million in 2018
- But China still behind US, Japan and Singapore, top sources of FDI
- Top ODA sources, March 2019: Japan, World Bank, ADB, US, South Korea, Australia, UN, AIIB, France, EU and China (8th place).
- June 2019: China is top trading partner but imports from China overtook PH exports.
- April 2019: China is top source of tourist arrivals. (Data includes workers who arrived as tourists.)

# ‘Maritime incident’- Duterte

- PH fishing boat rammed by Chinese trawler in PH EEZ in June 2019
- 22 fishermen abandoned; rescued by Vietnamese

# Timeline of Skirmishes (1)

- Sept. 2016: CCG harasses Filipino fishermen in Scarborough Shoal
- Nov. 2016: Chinese blockades restrict PH access to Scarborough (AMTI photos)
- April 2017: Bataan fishermen claim CCG chased them while fishing in Union Bank (Spratlys)
- Feb. 2018: China continues reclamation activities (*Inquirer* photos)

*(Photo by Alamid: Fishing boats in Scarborough Shoal; CCG watches)*

# Timeline of Skirmishes (2)

- May 2018: Chinese navy chopper harasses PH navy rubber boat resupplying troops in Ayungin Shoal
- June 2018: TV footage of PH news program shows CCG taking catch of Filipino fishermen
- Nov. 2018: CCG bars PH TV journalist and crew from taking video near Scarborough
- Jan. to March 2019: as many as 600 Chinese maritime milita circle Pag-asa

*(Photo by Alamid: BRP Sierra Madre guarding Ayungin)*

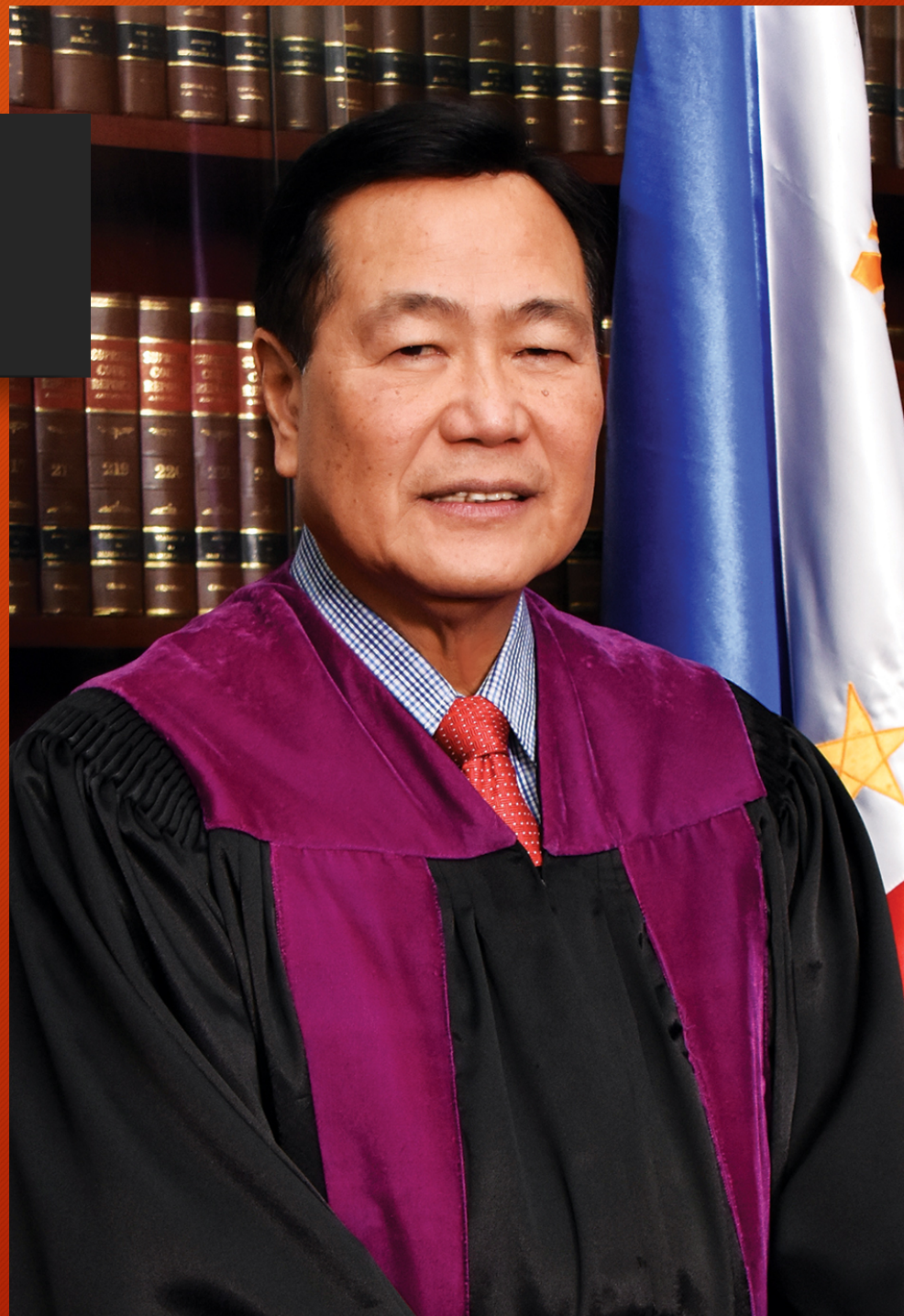
# WHAT PH WON IN 2016

- China’s nine-dash line illegal
- None of PH entitlements are overlapped by any of China’s
- China violated PH sovereign rights in its EEZ by interfering with PH fishing & oil exploration
- China caused harm to coral reef, threatened endangered species by building artificial islands

# MOVING FORWARD (1)

- Enter into sea boundary agreements with Vietnam, Malaysia on adjoining EEZs.
- Claimant countries can enter into Convention declaring that “no geologic feature in the Spratlys generates an EEZ” to isolate China
- Send new PH Coast Guard vessels (donated by Japan) to patrol WPS
- PH to encourage FONOPs of US, UK, Canada, France, Japan, India, Australia in South China Sea, including WPS

*(Supreme Court photo: Justice Antonio Carpio)*



# MOVING FORWARD (2)

- 5. PH to send navy to join FONOPs
- 6. PH to invite Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia to conduct joint FONOPs
- 7. Elevate arbitral ruling to UN General Assembly to seek resolutions (case of Nicaragua vs US)

(*Photo of Amb. Albert del Rosario by Philstar*)