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THESIS

**HOW DO SOUTHEAST ASIAN STATES RESPOND TO
CHINA'S MILITARY RISE AND FORMATION OF
A2/AD ZONES**

by

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March 2019

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RISE AND FORMATION OF A2/AD ZONES**

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ABSTRACT

In their relations with great powers, Southeast Asian states have long been characterized as using hedging strategies. These approaches have evolved within the region as an effective alternative to the more traditional balancing and bandwagoning policies. This thesis maintains that the hedging approach has only been possible due to the lack of power competition in the region. In particular, China's transformation from solely an economic great power to a considerable military power erodes these hedging strategies today. This thesis shows that China's formation of A2/AD zones have undermined the long-enjoyed regional primacy of the United States and have laid the basis for bipolar competition. As a result, Southeast Asian states have been forced to abandon their hedging policies and develop balancing or bandwagoning policies instead. Using a comparative case study, this thesis finds that during the past decade the Philippines and Vietnam initially shifted their respective hedging strategies to a balancing approach, but ultimately reversed their positions and are now bandwagoning with China, due to the lack of alternative external supporters. The thesis explores the realist school of thought that provides the conceptual framework to explain the likely rationale behind these evolving responses.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
A.	MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION.....	1
B.	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION.....	1
C.	LITERATURE REVIEW	3
1.	Great Power Rivalry.....	4
2.	The Response of Southeast Asian States.....	7
3.	Theoretical Framework.....	8
D.	POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES.....	12
E.	RESEARCH DESIGN	13
F.	THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE.....	15
II.	CHINA’S MILITARY RISE AND THE U.S. RESPONSE	17
A.	ADVANCEMENT OF CHINA’S MILITARY CAPABILITIES	18
B.	THE RATIONALE BEHIND A2/AD CAPABILITIES.....	21
C.	THE GRAY ZONE STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS	24
D.	THE U.S. PERSPECTIVE AND THE COUNTERMEASURES.....	26
E.	CONCLUSION	31
III.	CASE STUDIES.....	33
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	33
1.	Testing the Hypothesis Using Quantitative Data	34
2.	The Challenge of Quantitative Data: Irrelevance of the Measurements	38
B.	THE PHILIPPINES.....	39
1.	Historical Experience: Hedging as Historical Norm	40
2.	End of Hedging: Beginning of Balancing.....	42
3.	How and Why the Philippines Ended Up with Bandwagoning	45
4.	Conclusion	51
C.	VIETNAM	52
1.	Historical Experience: Hedging as Historical Norm	53
2.	End of Hedging: Beginning of Balancing.....	54
3.	How and Why Vietnam Ended up with Bandwagoning	58
4.	Conclusion	69
D.	COMPARISON AND ANALYSIS.....	70

IV.	CONCLUSION	75
A.	KEY CHALLENGES	75
B.	MAJOR FINDINGS	76
C.	IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS	78
D.	RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	79
	LIST OF REFERENCES	81
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	89

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	The Military Expenditures of Vietnam and the Philippines between 2003 and 2017 (in millions of USD at current prices).....	35
Figure 2.	The Military Expenditures of Vietnam and the Philippines between 2003 and 2017 (in local currencies).....	36
Figure 3.	The Military Expenditures of Vietnam and the Philippines between 2003 and 2017 (in percentage of GDP).	37
Figure 4.	The Visualization of Balancing, Bandwagoning, and Hedging Behaviors	73

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A2/AD	Anti-Access/Area Denial
AAW	Anti-Air Warfare
ADIZ	Air Defense Identification Zone
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ASAT	Anti-Satellite
ASW	Anti-Submarine Warfare
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CARAT	Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training
CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
EDCA	Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPS	Global Positioning System
JAM-GC	Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons
JCIC	Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning
JMSU	Joint Maritime Seismic Understanding
JOAC	Joint Operational Access Concept
MRBM	Medium-Range Ballistic Missile
MSRI	Maritime Silk Road Initiative
OBOR	One Belt One Road
OTH	Over-the-Horizon
OTH-B	Over-the-Horizon Backscatter
OTH-SW	Over-the-Horizon Surface Wave
PACT	Philippine-American Cooperation Treaty
PHIBLEX	Philippine Amphibious Landing Exercise
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PNP	Philippine National Police

RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
SRBM	Short-Range Ballistic Missile
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
USD	United States Dollar
VFA	Visiting Forces Agreement
ZTE	Zhongxing Telecommunications Equipment

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I. INTRODUCTION

Many of the Southeast Asian states' policies have long been based on maintaining security ties with the United States, while enhancing economic cooperation with China. This hedging strategy has given Southeast Asian states the decades-long luxury of not choosing a clear side in the great power competition. The rapid growth of China's military and its development of Anti Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities, however, carry a potential for weakening U.S. commitments toward the region, thus undermining its role as a security guarantor. This thesis examines whether such a shift is likely to provoke Southeast Asian states to abandon hedging practices and lean toward one side or another more clearly.

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

In order to analyze the phenomenon, this thesis provides an overview of the trends in China's military growth and modernization and the U.S. response as well, since these developments play a crucial role in determining the Southeast Asian states' policies toward the matter. First, this thesis addresses China's military advancements and the development of the A2/AD concept. In particular, the discussion analyzes the significance of the concept from the military perspective and evaluates whether the concept provides the essential means by which China can actually challenge U.S. military superiority in the region. Second, the research studies the U.S. response in terms of increased power within the region to evaluate whether the United States is willing and able to preserve its supreme position and power projection capabilities in the region. Finally, the thesis moves to the key questions of how the Southeast Asian states are likely to respond to evolving trends: How do these states perceive China's military rise and does it require a significant change to the hedging approach long employed by Southeast Asian states? If so, does their strategy appear to be evolving toward more balancing against or bandwagoning with China?

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The unipolar international system, formed after the end of the Cold War, has been challenged by certain emerging regional powers, China being the most notable example.

Its tremendous economic growth for several decades gave China status as an economic great power. Furthermore, the last two decades have clearly demonstrated how economic means can be transformed to provide more political and military capabilities. During this period, China has experienced impressive military buildup and is even said to have developed a concept to restrict U.S. military access toward certain domains of the Southeast Asia region. According to Robert Pape, “superior states often benefit from access to the territory of third parties.”¹ In other words, the superiority of certain states in terms of military power is exactly the ability to project their power on foreign territories. Therefore, the development of access denial capabilities by China ultimately challenges U.S. superiority, thus carrying the potential to deteriorate the stability enjoyed by the region under the unipolar system and provoke great power competition within the region.

Great power competition is primarily studied from the great power perspective; the role of secondary powers and other actors is often undermined, and their perspective much less often addressed. Nevertheless, analysis of their policies could contribute significantly to understanding the prospects of the future power competition. Great power competition is rarely based on direct confrontation and is much more about the expansion of influence of those powers over other actors and provoking them to exercise irritant policies.² Therefore, the secondary states, often referred as allies or partners, typically play a much more important role in the evolving great power competition than is usually ascribed. This suggests that the response of Southeast Asian states toward China’s military rise could be of a greater importance than previously thought. Their choice of taking either a balancing or bandwagoning stance, or even maintaining the status quo policies, could affect not only China’s chances to emerge as a regional military power or the United States’ chances to counter China’s emergence with an efficient manner but also the stability and the possible polarization of the region.

¹ Robert Pape, “Soft Balancing against the United States,” *International Security* 30, no. 1 (Summer 2005): 36.

² Hans Morgenthau, “To Intervene or Not to Intervene,” *Foreign Affairs* 45, no. 3 (1967): 428–33.

From the theoretical perspective, the study might be helpful to test the resilience of the hedging strategy. The Southeast Asian states have long been known to practice hedging policies.³ There are many definitions of the concept and none of them is absolute. Yet, the common principle shared by most of these definitions is all about obtaining security guarantees from one power, without any bounds on enjoying economic benefits from the other. This phenomenon has long been considered as an alternative to the two more familiar options of the realist perspective: balancing and bandwagoning. Nevertheless, the hedging approach was mostly possible because for decades China's military capabilities were too weak to challenge the United States; thus, the great power competition had yet to emerge. Now, since China's evolving A2/AD capabilities have the potential to restrict U.S. military access to the region, the costs of providing security guarantees have become considerably higher. Hence, the U.S. commitments are undermined and the credibility of its regional security alliances is directly threatened. Consequently, the hedging approach practiced by Southeast Asian states may no longer be the most efficient or even rational option after all.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section introduces three bodies of literature that are relevant for the thesis. The first section surveys research on China's military reforms and development of A2/AD capabilities and gray zone strategy, alongside the U.S. response and AirSea Battle concept. The second section addresses the same trend from the perspective of Southeast Asian states and demonstrates their responses. Together, these sections help to identify the key independent and dependent variables of the research. Finally, the theoretical section addresses the realist school of thought and provides the conceptual framework to explain the rationale behind the response strategies of Southeast Asian states.

³ Ann Marie Murphy, "Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages," *Asian Security* 13, no. 3 (2017): 165.

1. Great Power Rivalry

This section demonstrates how China's rising military capabilities pose a threat to the U.S. interests in the region and how the United States responds to the challenge by developing new concepts to overcome the denial zones.

a. *China's Military Modernization and A2AD Zones*

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China has made major advancements since the mid-1990s, which have resulted in increased operational capabilities. It is important to understand that Chinese military modernization consists of certain elements, which together represent integrated policies, aimed to form anti-access and area denial zones. In particular, China's missile systems are the cornerstone of its warfighting capabilities. Provided with extended range and sufficient precision, and diversified for different platforms (land, naval, air), the PLA's missiles can be used in counter-carrier and offensive counter-air operations, allowing operational effectiveness unmatched by any other Chinese systems.⁴ The PLA has deployed more than 1,000 short-range ballistic missiles along the coastline, and has engineered a significant number of stealthy patrol ships, capable of carrying long-range supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles.⁵ This missile-craft fleet consists of a variety of small vessels equipped with anti-ship cruise missiles, forming a different approach from the U.S. fleet, which consists of a smaller number of ships that are usually much larger and more technologically advanced. Furthermore, the PLA has improved targeting capabilities with increased situational awareness capacity, achieved through the development of reconnaissance satellites, space-based surveillance systems, onshore over-the-horizon (OTH) radars, and unmanned aerial vehicles.⁶ Some argue that China tries to integrate advanced tactical missilery, combat aviation, modern surface and subsurface combatants, and unmanned aerial vehicles to form a barrier to potential adversaries

⁴ Mark Stokes, Ashley Tellis, and Travis Tanner, "The Second Artillery Force and the Future of Long-Range Precision Strike," in *China's Military Challenge* (Washington, DC: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2012), 127–28.

⁵ Aaron Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia* (New York, NY: Norton & Company, 2011), 218–21.

⁶ Friedberg, 218–21.

operating within the region.⁷ The PLA's advancements are important from not only the technology modernization standpoint, but also even more from the revolution in military affairs (RMA) perspective, putting major emphasis on the new ways China can use military means. The Chinese often refer to these policies as *shashoujian* or the assassin's mace, which stands for possessing the capability to overcome a far more powerful adversary.⁸

Nevertheless, not everybody shares the same perspective. Some scholars argue that China's military modernizations are far from being revolutionary, referring to the developments as more evolutionary and sustainable.⁹ Others qualify China's military advancements by pointing out that China's rise has been relatively recent; therefore, procurement of major inventory equipment is quite logical and should not be seen as a revisionist tendency.¹⁰ These arguments emphasize that the U.S. capabilities are still significantly greater in aggregate terms; however, such views fail to acknowledge that even if outweighed, China's capabilities already provide the means to control its mainland area and these capabilities are constantly improving.¹¹ Hence, China's ability to challenge the U.S. dominance of nearby offshore waters has increased indeed. At the same time, PLA modernization efforts raise the risks for U.S. military forces operating close to China, making U.S. intervention in local conflicts more costly and less likely.

The significance of establishing the Chinese A2/AD zones becomes even clearer when analyzed in conjunction with the Chinese gray zone strategy. This strategy blurs the clear distinction between war and peace by effectively staying below the level of war, while at the same time using coercive diplomacy and military threats simultaneously to achieve

⁷ Andrew Erickson, "China's Modernization of Its Naval and Air Power Capabilities," in *China's Military Challenge*, ed. Ashley Tellis and Travis Tanner (Washington, DC: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2012), 93–97.

⁸ Bill Hayton, *The South China Sea: The Struggle for Power in Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 215–16.

⁹ Richard Bitzinger and Roger Cliff, "PLA Modernization: Motivations, Directions, and the Revolution in Military Affairs," in *China and East Asian Strategic Dynamics*, ed. Mingjiang Li and Dongmin Lee (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 32–34.

¹⁰ James Steinberg and Michael O'Hanlon, *Strategic Reassurance and Resolve* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 118–19.

¹¹ Erickson, "China's Modernization of Its Naval and Air Power Capabilities," 81–86.

narrow political objectives. This approach is based on exploiting the ambiguity to undermine U.S. commitments and is further encouraged by U.S. policies, directed to avoid risks.¹² The strategy incorporates the salami tactics of piece-by-piece progress to overcome the red lines and pursue China's objectives without risking escalation, thus successfully preventing intervention by greater powers, such as the United States. Some scholars have pointed out that the gray zone strategy is not a new concept or a Chinese invention, and many states have been sidestepping "defender redline commitments, employing intermediary actors as aggressors and presenting *faits accomplis* to defenders" in order to pursue competitive gains.¹³ This perspective, however, does not undermine the significance of the strategy; on the contrary, it helps to understand the true scope of its application. This point is further reinforced by the fact that one of the components of the gray zone strategy, the *fait accompli*, has been used nearly ten times more often than publicly declared coercive threats to seize territories during the previous century.¹⁴

b. The U.S. Response

The analysis of China's military modernization from the U.S. perspective indicates how Beijing challenges U.S. interests in Southeast Asia, making the regional stability, currently practiced under the U.S. leadership, questionable. Many scholars who study China's rise mention the still existing capability gap between the United States and China,¹⁵ and acknowledge that the threat of China overcoming the United States is more limited than often supposed.¹⁶ Nonetheless, they recognize that China's A2/AD capabilities pose a serious challenge to the U.S. force projection capability into the Western

¹² Michael Green and Kathleen Hicks, "Countering Coercion in Maritime Asia: The Theory and Practice of Gray Zone Deterrence," *CSIS*, 2017, 3–4.

¹³ Van Jackson, "Tactics of Strategic Competition," *Naval War College* 70, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 39–45.

¹⁴ Dan Altman, "By *Fait Accompli*, Not Coercion: How States Wrest Territory from Their Adversaries," *International Studies Quarterly* 61 (2017): 884–89.

¹⁵ David Gompert and Phillip Saunders, *The Paradox of Power: Sino-American Strategic Restraint in an Age of Vulnerability* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2011), 4.

¹⁶ Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, "Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Antiaccess/Area Denial, U.S. AirSea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia," *International Security* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 10–14.

Pacific,¹⁷ even if China's initial intentions are only defensive in nature.¹⁸ Some argue that China's military modernization, A2/AD zones, and convenient precision strike capabilities already undermine U.S. deterrence capabilities and push the United States to adapt in order to survive inside the denial zones.¹⁹ Following the same logic, others conclude that U.S. conventional deterrence might soon become less persuasive and effective.²⁰

The United States has manifested its approach toward the challenge within the joint Air-Sea Battle doctrine, developed to respond to the spread of A2/ADs. The concept was transformed to the Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons (JAM-GC), where the U.S. Department of Defense defined how to counter A2/AD environments and win the access to overseas regions. The key idea persisted as to put major emphasis on developing networked, well-integrated forces, with the ability to attack-in-depth in order to disrupt, destroy, and defeat adversary via "the application of cross-domain operations across all the interdependent warfighting domains (air, maritime, land, space, and cyberspace)."²¹ Nevertheless, some consider the U.S. response inadequate, since the developed concept only represents the operational level and is detached from the strategy.²² Moreover, cutting of the defense budget might make it difficult to implement the concept.

2. The Response of Southeast Asian States

Great power rivalry plays out in Southeast Asia and the states there have a unique regional perspective regarding how they respond to China's rise and U.S. engagement in

¹⁷ Hugh White, *The China Choice: Why We Should Share Power* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 62–78.

¹⁸ Pape, "Soft Balancing against the United States," 8–10, 36–41.

¹⁹ Evan Montgomery, "Contested Primacy in the Western Pacific: China's Rise and the Future of U.S. Power Projection," *International Security* 38, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 139–47.

²⁰ Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*, 224.

²¹ Air-Sea Battle Office, "Air Sea Battle: Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access & Area Denial Challenges" (U.S. Department of Defense Archives, 2013), 4–5, <http://archive.defense.gov/pubs/ASB-ConceptImplementation-Summary-May-2013.pdf>.

²² Dan Blumenthal, "The U.S. Response to China's Military Modernization," in *China's Military Challenge*, ed. Ashley Tellis and Travis Tanner (Washington, DC: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2012), 321.

the region. There are three major types of arguments developed by authors studying the phenomenon. The first claims that Southeast Asian states tend to balance against China, especially after its increased influence at sea that pushes regional states toward defense acquisitions and renewed reliance on U.S. protection.²³ The second argument maintains that many Southeast Asian states tend to bandwagon rather than balance against China as a result of its rise.²⁴ Most of the authors, however, treat these arguments as premature and highlight that regional states usually refuse to choose from only two options of balancing and bandwagoning.²⁵ According to them, Southeast Asian states primarily practice hedging strategies to sustain their freedom of choice, meaning they “secure economic and security benefits from different partners.”²⁶ This implies that regional states promote trade with China, while making themselves open to helping the United States maintain a military presence in the region. Some scholars look at the hedging from a slightly different perspective, claiming that this strategy allows small states to maximize economic benefits while minimizing security risks, because of the increased interdependence of the Chinese economy with that of Southeast Asia.²⁷ Others put the accent on the defense cooperation with the United States, thus describing hedging as a low intensity balancing against China.²⁸

3. Theoretical Framework

The following section draws the theoretical framework to provide the bases for understanding the rationale behind the policies that Southeast Asian states pursue and for

²³ Andrew Shearer, “Southeast Asia and Australia: Case Studies in Responding to China’s Military Power,” in *China’s Military Challenge*, ed. Ashley Tellis and Travis Tanner (Washington, DC: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2012), 241–76.

²⁴ Robert Sutter, *China’s Rise in Asia: Promises and Perils* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 177–208.

²⁵ Evelyn Goh, “Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies,” *International Security* 32, no. 3 (Winter 2007): 113–57.

²⁶ Murphy, “Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages,” 165–83.

²⁷ Chien-peng Chung, “Southeast Asia-China Relations: Dialectics of ‘Hedging’ and ‘Counter-Hedging,’” *Southeast Asian Affairs*, no. 32 (2004): 35–53.

²⁸ Denny Roy, “Southeast Asia and China: Balancing or Bandwagoning?,” *Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 27, no. 2 (August 2005): 305–22.

providing a capable explanation from the theoretical standpoint. The section focuses on the realist school of thought, since the thesis puts major emphasis on the role of power in interstate relations. Balancing, bandwagoning, and hedging are discussed as the key options that states possess from the perspective of realist theories.

a. *Balancing*

Balancing in the anarchical system is a rational technique aiming at the maximization of security. There are two major types of balancing. Internal balancing implies strengthening of one's own military potential, while external balancing represents efforts to engage in alliances. Both of them serve as deterrents to ensure security from the most powerful actor. Stephen Walt looks at balancing from a slightly different perspective, putting major emphasis on the threat, rather than on power, and pointing out that states usually balance in response to a threat of which the aggregate power is only one factor amongst others, such as offensive capability, geographic proximity, and state's aggressive intentions.²⁹

Some authors offer a distinction between different types of balancing; arguing that hard balancing refers to the use of military power or alliances,³⁰ while soft balancing refers to non-offensive, tacit coalitions.³¹ Others emphasize the importance of non-military instruments, such as political alignment, diplomacy, and economic strengthening to define soft balancing.³²

b. *Bandwagoning*

Bandwagoning is the exact opposite of balancing and implies that states choose to lean toward the greater power in order to appease the potential threat and maximize security. It is worth noting, however, that bandwagoning implies even more restrictions on

²⁹ Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 21–26.

³⁰ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2010), 113–28.

³¹ T.V. Paul, James Wirtz, and Michael Fortmann, *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 14.

³² Pape, “Soft Balancing against the United States,” 8–10.

the freedom of action than external balancing does and makes states dependent on the will of a hegemon. Walt suggests that bandwagoning makes more sense for weak countries with closer proximity to strong and threatening states.³³ This logic again refers to the threat as a major factor to consider when bandwagoning occurs. He argues that those who do not have promising allies are more likely to bandwagon, especially if they believe to appease the great power by doing so.³⁴ Others draw the distinction between balancing and bandwagoning differently, pointing out that states whose goal is security usually balance, while states whose concern is profit, usually bandwagon.³⁵ This notion implies that those satisfied with the status quo will balance, while revisionists are more likely to bandwagon.

c. Hedging

Hedging is far more flexible than the previous two strategies and provides greater space for small powers to pursue independent policies. Hedging grants small states an ability to avoid choosing sides between great powers and increases their room for maneuver. At the same time, hedging is a relatively new and less commonly agreed upon term than balancing or bandwagoning, making it extremely hard to provide an unconditional definition.

According to Evelyn Goh, hedging is different from both balancing and bandwagoning since it aims to preserve the existing equilibrium.³⁶ By contrast, balancing would focus on preventing power transition and bandwagoning would try to achieve revisionist results with the power distribution. Goh suggests that hedging is only possible when states are “able to pursue engagement policies concurrently with indirect or soft-balancing policies,” and avoid choosing one side at the expense of another.³⁷

³³ Stephen Walt, “Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power,” *International Security* 9, no. 4 (Spring 1985): 5.

³⁴ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 172–78.

³⁵ Randall Schweller, “Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In,” *International Security* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1994): 72–107.

³⁶ Evelyn Goh, “Meeting the China Challenge: The U.S. in Southeast Asian Regional Security Strategies,” *East-West Center Washington*, Policy Studies, September 2001, 2–4.

³⁷ Goh, 2–4.

Other authors offer different conditions for hedging, such as: No imminent existential threat to the hedgers; no ideological fault lines that force states to form alliances; and no scenarios that force states to choose sides, suggesting that any of these factors could make bandwagoning a more rational strategy for survival.³⁸

Some refer to hedging as mainly a product of unipolar systems, arguing that hedging helps secondary states to manage threats under the condition of unipolarity, while at the same time preparing them for the new threats and opportunities as the system leader declines.³⁹

Most of the literature discussed describes the phenomenon based on the recent developments within the Southeast Asian region or at least implies these developments to be the primary successful examples of hedging practices. These authors try to come up with a definition of the term by generalizing the actual policies pursued by Southeast Asian states, and it is hard to find the definition that is clearly derived from a different region or period. Therefore, it is often inconclusive to reapply the same definition to the same states within the same timeframe.

Despite recognizing the challenge, I still have to use the same approach and define the term based on the Southeast Asian experience. Chien-peng Chung provides a well-defended description of regional states' policies as oriented toward maximizing economic benefits and increasing regional stability by promoting economic interdependence with China, while at the same time helping the United States retain a military presence in Asia to enjoy the stabilizing element for sustainable economic growth.⁴⁰ Chung refers to these policies as pragmatic hedging. I use his explanation as the basis to construct the definition of hedging as a rational strategy, directed toward maximizing the security guarantees by engaging the hegemon's security policies in order to enjoy the stability of the unipolar system, while at the same time preserving the freedom of action to pursue own national

³⁸ Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "The Essence of Hedging: Malaysia and Singapore's Response to a Rising China," *Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 30, no. 2 (2008): 163–71.

³⁹ Brock Tessman, "System Structure and State Strategy: Adding Hedging to the Menu," *Security Studies* 21, no. 2 (2012): 193.

⁴⁰ Chung, "Southeast Asia-China Relations: Dialectics of 'Hedging' and 'Counter-Hedging,'" 35–53.

interests of maximizing economic benefits. For Southeast Asian countries that means increased economic cooperation with China, since it is beneficial for regional states, while at the same time supporting the status quo of U.S. primacy by providing base facilities, logistics support, and military exercises for the U.S. strong military presence—or at least not contributing to China’s military rise.

D. POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

The first challenge concerns the difficulty of confirming the actual shifts in foreign policies of Southeast Asian states. The strategy of hedging is very flexible and versatile; therefore, even if the study finds some significant shifts by the regional states toward a more balancing or bandwagoning approach, it might not immediately be clear whether the shift is genuine or just part of a hedging strategy. The argument could be made that since these states have enjoyed hedging for a long period, the contemporary shifts are also part of the same old strategy. To address this problem, a previously provided definition of hedging has to be used. This definition is based on the premise that hedging is not about changing partners from time to time, but about giving certain partners certain roles, as the concept of division of labor would suggest. According to this definition, the hedging strategy implies a security cooperation with the existing hegemon, while at the same time maintaining close economic ties with other regional actors. From this viewpoint, it becomes more evident that a significant decrease in security cooperation with the United States, as well as enhanced security ties or diminished economic cooperation with China are all signs of certain shifts from hedging toward more bandwagoning or balancing strategies.

The second problem has to do with the correlation and causation issue. Even if the study finds significant moves by some Southeast Asian states toward balancing against or bandwagoning with China, it could be extremely hard to prove that these developments were actually caused by China’s military rise and the evolvement of its A2/AD capabilities in particular. The only way to overcome this challenge is to provide a clear explanation of the relationship, based on the detailed analysis of the cases and profound reasoning. The research uses the realist lens, suggesting that all of the states are rational actors who mainly

evaluate the situation in terms of security and put major emphasis on hard power capabilities. Consequently, once these actors understand the scope of the challenge that China's A2/AD capabilities can pose to their existing security guarantees, they would eventually try to respond using the best possible strategy to maximize their security and minimize their costs by either more actively balancing against or bandwagoning with China.

Over the course of this thesis, several hypotheses are examined regarding the significance of China's A2/AD capabilities; the decline of U.S. relative power; and finally, the Southeast Asian states' response. The first hypothesis suggests that China's military rise, even though still far behind U.S. capabilities, is actually a real challenge to regional security and particularly the national security of individual Southeast Asian states, especially after the realization of A2/AD zones and the introduction of the gray zone strategy, which increased the risk of U.S. engagement and undermined security guarantees. The second hypothesis proposes that the current response from the United States does not provide enough counterweight to reverse the process and lacks the ability to assure its allies that their interests will be secure even when the stakes are not very high. As a result of the previous two hypotheses, the third anticipates that Southeast Asian states will be more likely to make certain concessions to appease the emerging power and move toward bandwagoning with China to maximize their security in the long term. On the other hand, the counter hypothesis could also be made that the regional states should be determined to take a more balancing stance, to provoke more support from the United States and prevent China from further advancements on relatively early stage of its military rise.

E. RESEARCH DESIGN

The thesis primarily employs the case study method to collect substantial evidence and analyze the possible changes in states' policies. First, it provides a brief overview of the quantitative data and then moves to closer research of two major examples of Southeast Asian nations, the Philippines and Vietnam. The Philippines is an appropriate case, since it has long been a U.S. ally. Moreover, it is a maritime country, directly affected by China's A2/AD capabilities in the South China Sea; hence, it would be interesting to evaluate its

response. Vietnam, on the other hand, is a mainland state, but it has strong littoral interests in the South China Sea, so restriction of U.S. access would still affect its security environment. Unlike the Philippines, however, Vietnam could not be considered as a traditional U.S. ally, but more as a partner, or an independent actor that definitely does not enjoy the same level of U.S. security guarantees as the Philippines does. Hence, it would be interesting to compare the differences between the approaches of these two Southeast Asian states.

In order to limit the scope of research, the thesis applies a realist view and mainly focuses on the role of hard power, primarily the military, rather than political and especially economic implications. Open source data on military capabilities are used to provide descriptive statistics and evaluate the ongoing changes in terms of hard power balance within the region. Yet, the analysis mainly employs the qualitative method, as China's military modernization is primarily important not because of the quantities of military equipment, but the strategy of using these resources together in an exceptional manner.

The assessment of both the United States' and Southeast Asian states' responses is based mostly on evaluating hard power indicators. In the case of the U.S. response, the research looks for the significant quantitative and qualitative increase in military equipment in the region, as well as important changes in command and control systems, that could potentially increase the speed and efficiency of the decision-making process and overcome the challenges presented by A2/AD zones. In the case of Southeast Asian states, the research focuses on evaluating whether existing defense treaties, military bases, quality or quantity of military equipment, the periodicity or scale of military exercises, or military spending in each case has been significantly affected. In general, these might be indicators suggesting the loosening of security ties with the United States, or increasing the security cooperation with China. Both of these trends contradict the definition of hedging, thus suggesting the occurring changes in the strategy.

Theoretical causes are used to explain the changes over certain periods. The study focuses primarily on the post 1990s, the period when China actually started its military modernization programs. The last decade is considered as the period in which China reaped

the harvest of its military advancements and developed A2/AD capabilities. Thus, the major changes in regional states foreign policies should be more visible after this period.

The research is based mostly on secondary sources such as published books and academic articles. These sources are relevant for providing both the theoretical basis and qualitative information on the developments. Official documents are also used to offer credible information about some otherwise sensitive data. Government documents, as well as official statements, are used to demonstrate the intentions and perceptions of specific states; however, they are judged primarily on their actions, rather than official statements.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

The thesis is organized into four major chapters. The first chapter has introduced the topic and the relevant theory, definitions and methodology. Chapter II focuses on China's military advancements and the rationale behind the development and likely implementation of its A2/AD capabilities, as well as the U.S. reaction. The chapter analyzes the development and realization of China's A2/AD concept, and tries to come up with a contemporary picture of how effective that concept already is and what its potential could be in the nearest future. Then the chapter addresses the U.S. response and tries to evaluate its credibility in terms of military application in order to demonstrate whether American military objectives are yet undermined by A2/AD domains and whether any tangible counter measures are being developed. Chapter III, the most important, looks at the same events from the regional states' perspective. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first provides a broad overview of Southeast Asian states' policies. The following two sections are dedicated to case studies of the Philippines and Vietnam. The fourth section offers a comparison and analysis based on the previous information. Chapter IV of the thesis develops a theoretical explanation for the obtained results and offers more generalized conclusions, which could ultimately be applied to other regions with the same characteristics.

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II. CHINA'S MILITARY RISE AND THE U.S. RESPONSE

China has demonstrated considerable progress in terms of its military capability development in the last decades, raising the question of a potential shift of power within the East Asian region. The ongoing U.S. responses to China's military modernization and expansion leave the impression of addressing only a fraction of the issue, and thus, opening up gray zone opportunities. These developments largely shape the strategic framework for Southeast Asian nations to pursue their own foreign policies and affect their strategic decision-making calculus. Therefore, this chapter provides a detailed analysis of both China's military rise and the U.S. reaction, establishing the foundation for the following chapters of the thesis, which examine the responses of the Southeast Asian states.

This chapter examines China's military advancements over the last two decades and analyzes the development of its A2/AD capabilities and gray zone strategy in order to evaluate their impact on U.S. engagement in the Southeast Asian region. The analysis suggests that China, even though still far behind the United States in terms of military power, has already developed the capabilities that can tremendously increase the cost of the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asian regional conflict in the possible event of escalation. Furthermore, China has developed the gray zone strategy as a way to use coercion without risking escalation, thus decreasing the chances of American engagement. The American response so far has mainly been drafted in the AirSea Battle concept and has further progressed in the JAM-GC. Both of these documents focus on countering A2/AD zones, but their effectiveness is still uncertain. Moreover, both represent the tactical-operational level and are far from providing the strategic outline on the U.S. response, suggesting that they do not have much to offer against the gray zone strategy. Even the recently developed Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning (JCIC) lacks the capacity to address this challenge, leaving the problem unsolved, since China could still use the coercive means to make systematic advancements on behalf of the regional states without risking an escalation, thus successfully preventing U.S. engagement in the region and undermining its security guarantees toward other nations.

The chapter focuses on the post 1990s, the period when China actually started its military modernization programs. The last decade is especially important, as it is the period in which China reaped the harvest of its military advancements and developed A2/AD capabilities. The first section discusses these developments and presents the key areas of progress for the PLA. The second section focuses on the rationale behind the A2/AD capabilities and the evaluation its current status in order to determine how effective China's A2/AD already is and what its potential could be in the near future. The third section is dedicated to the political domain of China's overarching approach, discussing the gray zone strategy and the potential threat it carries for the regional security environment. The fourth section discusses the U.S. response to China's rise militarily and evaluates any tangible countermeasures that have been developed. Finally, the conclusion sums up the major findings of the chapter.

A. ADVANCEMENT OF CHINA'S MILITARY CAPABILITIES

Since the mid-1990s, the PLA has made major advancements that have significantly increased China's operational capabilities. The major domains of improvements have been missile systems, naval capabilities, air power, and surveillance capacity, along with anti-satellite and cyber capabilities.

China's missile systems are the fundamental elements of its warfighting capabilities. Their possible applications include counter-carrier and offensive counter-air operations. The development of extended range for missiles and their compatibility with different platforms, in addition to the increased precision capabilities, make these assets extremely valuable.⁴¹ The PLA Rocket Forces (formerly known as the Second Artillery) units are already equipped with more than 1,000 mobile short-range ballistic missiles (SRBM) that are deployed along the coastline.⁴² China has also increased its medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM) forces. These missiles can be used to deliver both

⁴¹ Stokes, Tellis, and Tanner, "The Second Artillery Force and the Future of Long-Range Precision Strike," 127–28.

⁴² Andrew Krepinevich, *Why AirSea Battle?* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010), 17, <https://csbaonline.org/uploads/documents/2010.02.19-Why-AirSea-Battle.pdf>.

conventional and nuclear munitions, or to conduct counter-network attacks with nuclear weapons' electromagnetic pulse.⁴³

The Chinese Navy has made significant advancements since the early 2000s, when it was a still modernizing force with very limited capabilities in several warfare areas. The only exception was the submarine force, which, although composed mostly of old and conventionally rotated boats, still presented a considerable threat to adversary forces, mainly because of the difficulties in identifying the submarines' locations.⁴⁴ Currently, however, the PLA Navy has modernized, becoming a challenging force in all warfare areas. According to Bernard Cole, the surface combatant force has made considerable improvements and currently possesses anti-air warfare (AAW) destroyers and more capable anti-submarine warfare (ASW) vessels.⁴⁵ The navy's infrastructure has been improved and continues to increase in capability. The ability to administer, operate, and command and control tactical formations continues to improve, especially by long-range deployments of small flotillas.⁴⁶ China has engineered a large number of stealthy patrol ships, capable of carrying long-range supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles. This missile-craft fleet consists of a variety of small vessels equipped with anti-ship cruise missiles, indicating a different approach compared to the U.S. fleet, which consists of smaller numbers of ships that are usually much larger and more technologically advanced.

China's long-range aviation forces have also made great progress. The major maritime strike platform, the H-6K naval aircraft, has demonstrated a combat radius of 1,600 nautical miles (nm) and is compatible with a wide range of missiles.⁴⁷ It is capable of carrying up to six anti-ship cruise missiles and could be escorted with Russian-built land-based strike-fighters Su-30MKK2, with an extended combat radius up to 1,400 nm

⁴³ Krepinevich, 17.

⁴⁴ Bernard Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea: China's Navy in the Twenty-First Century*, 2nd ed. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2010), 95–99, 113.

⁴⁵ Cole, 95–99, 113.

⁴⁶ Cole, 95–99, 113.

⁴⁷ Krepinevich, *Why AirSea Battle?*, 20.

with one refueling.⁴⁸ The characteristics of these aircraft outrange all of the manned strike aircraft in the U.S. Navy's program of record's carrier air wing.⁴⁹ This suggests that in case of offensive operations, the U.S. carriers would have to be located within the range of Chinese long-range aviation, making them vulnerable from the air and undermining their operational effectiveness. Together, the PLA Air Force and the Naval Aviation Force are able to field more than ten regiments of aircraft, capable of attacking the potentially approaching adversary combatant ships using cruise missiles.⁵⁰ Based on metrics of two regiments per aircraft carrier battlegroup, the PLA could potentially attack three or four carrier forces. Yet, it still lacks long-range, air-launched cruise missiles that could provide the capability to attack adversary forces from a safe distance, without crossing the hypothetical lines of the U.S. surface-to-air missiles range.⁵¹

The PLA has improved targeting capabilities with increased situational awareness capacity, achieved through the evolution of reconnaissance satellites, space-based surveillance systems, onshore OTH radars, and unmanned aerial vehicles.⁵² Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities are still a weakness for China. Bernard Cole suggests that the reason for this is a highly centralized and inflexible command and control structure, as well as the lack of experience of China's Navy in net-centric warfare.⁵³ The PLA tries to approach these capabilities from other angles, including submarine detection, helicopter OTH missions, and space-based assets.⁵⁴ China continues to work on improving its targeting systems, including over-the-horizon backscatter (OTH-B) radars, land-based over-the-horizon surface wave (OTH-SW) radars, electro-optical satellites, and radar

⁴⁸ Krepinevich, 20–21.

⁴⁹ Krepinevich, 21.

⁵⁰ Michael McDevitt, "The PLA Navy's Antiaccess Role in Taiwan Contingency," in *The Chinese Navy: Expanding Capabilities, Evolving Roles*, ed. Phillip Saunders and Christopher Yung (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2011), 206–7, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/portals/68/documents/books/chinese-navy.pdf>.

⁵¹ McDevitt, 206–7.

⁵² Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*, 218–19.

⁵³ Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea: China's Navy in the Twenty-First Century*, 196.

⁵⁴ Cole, 196.

satellites.⁵⁵ The PLA has deployed advanced imaginary and reconnaissance satellites (Yaogan 1–5, Haiyang-1B, and CBERS-2), and is developing terrestrial long-wave radar systems focusing particularly on OTH-B high-frequency radars.⁵⁶ China’s increased targeting capabilities threaten to expose the location of U.S. aircraft carriers that operate within about 1,200 nm from the Chinese coastline, making it unsafe and relatively risky for them to continue their presence.

Finally, China has developed anti-satellite (ASAT) capabilities and cyber capabilities that could be used to target adversary’s military battle networks in case of direct encounter. The PLA has developed both kinetic ASAT systems and ground-based laser ASAT weapons.⁵⁷ They could be used against the U.S. Global Positioning System (GPS) satellites that operate in medium earth orbit. The PLA is also believed to be developing complex and sophisticated cyber capabilities, able to target the U.S. computer networks, leaving the U.S. forces without major lines of communication.⁵⁸ China’s increased ASAT and cyber capabilities pose a threat to the U.S. military battle network and make its effectiveness in a potential future conflict questionable.

B. THE RATIONALE BEHIND A2/AD CAPABILITIES

Chinese military modernization consists of certain elements that together represent integrated policies aimed at forming A2/AD zones. China tries to integrate advanced tactical missilery, combat aviation, modern surface and subsurface combatants, and reconnaissance capabilities to form a barrier to potential adversaries operating within the region.⁵⁹ China’s approach clearly involves the PLA Navy, the PLA Air Force and the PLA Rocket Forces (ballistic missile force), so it certainly is a joint military operation. Thus, China’s military advancements are far more important than just a regular modernization of technology on a limited scale would suggest. Current developments are

⁵⁵ Krepinevich, *Why AirSea Battle?*, 19–20.

⁵⁶ Krepinevich, 19–20.

⁵⁷ Krepinevich, 15–16.

⁵⁸ Krepinevich, 15–16.

⁵⁹ Erickson, “China’s Modernization of Its Naval and Air Power Capabilities,” 83–94.

more interesting from the RMA standpoint, as they indicate how the PLA implements new ways for using the military means. China certainly considers the significant impact of RMA on the international political-military domains due to ongoing advancements in long-range, precise, smart, stealthy, and unmanned weapons and puts considerable effort into taking an advantageous stance.⁶⁰

China does not publicly refer to its modernization efforts as an attempt to develop A2/AD zones. In fact, the concept of A2/AD is rarely used by the Chinese to describe their military advancement. Nonetheless, the Chinese concept of *shashoujian* or the assassin's mace, which describes the capability to overcome a far more powerful adversary, is similar to what Americans call A2/AD capabilities.⁶¹ At its core, the assassin's mace reflects some important ideas pertinent to the A2/AD concept. "Anti-access" and "area denial" are U.S.-coined-terms, occurring in official documents since the early 2000s and describing the PLA's operational objectives. The basic idea behind this concept is to deny the U.S. aircraft carrier battle groups access to the Chinese shorelines in order to prevent their air wing's attacks against the PLA forces.⁶²

From the Chinese perspective, A2/AD zones are inherently defensive formations since they represent a responsive operational concept. In that regard, A2/AD zones are an important element of China's Active Defense concept that views counterattack capabilities as critical in making sure that the state possesses the capability to counter-attack in case of foreign aggression.⁶³ A2/AD capabilities are designed to solve the key vulnerability that China had faced since the Opium Wars era: being unprotected from the coastline. Therefore, China wants to neutralize the possible threats it might face from the sea. The collapse of the Soviet Union gave China a chance to switch its strategic focus from land to the naval domain, as the threat of land invasion dramatically decreased. The 1996 Taiwan

⁶⁰ State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *White Paper on China's Military Strategy* (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2015), 6–8, <https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/China%E2%80%99s-Military-Strategy-2015.pdf>.

⁶¹ Hayton, *The South China Sea: The Struggle for Power in Asia*, 215–19.

⁶² McDevitt, "The PLA Navy's Antiaccess Role in Taiwan Contingency," 191–92.

⁶³ *China's Military Strategy*, 10.

Crisis further promoted China's incentive to refocus from land to naval capabilities. These two major developments played an important role in shaping China's contemporary security environment. Subsequently, the PLA has increased its attention to the naval domain and the naval component actually surpassed the land component in terms of priorities in 2004. China's 2004 Defense White Paper noted that PLA budget priority was being given to the PLA Navy, the PLA Air Force, and the Second Artillery (currently the PLA Rocket Forces) to increase the capabilities "for winning both command of the sea and command of the air," and to be able to carry out strategic counterstrikes.⁶⁴

China has developed two major layers of defense of the first and the second island chains, as hypothetical domains of operations. This segregation of areas makes it simpler to organize forces and plan future military advancements, based on the required means and characteristics of the systems, operating in the different areas. The first island chain encompasses the waters from the mainland to about 200 nm and spreads southwest from Japan, through the Ryukyu Islands, Taiwan, and Paracel Islands in the north of the South China Sea, while the second island chain involves the Philippine Sea and approximates around 1,300 nm.⁶⁵ These lines form the layers that China intends to keep inaccessible to the American forces in the event of regional conflict. The basic logic behind having these layers of defense is the difficulty of dealing with naval threats. If not defeated before they arrive in the objective area, it becomes extremely hard to defend against the approaching naval forces and prevent the invasion from ashore. Therefore, it is critical to find and destroy the adversary's naval capabilities in advance.

To achieve this goal of finding and destroying the adversary forces in advance, the PLA has put much effort into developing missile systems, naval capabilities, air power, and surveillance capabilities, as previously discussed. Thus, at the end, all of these different domains serve the common objective to form the A2/AD zones. In order to be able to track the U.S. naval forces, the PLA has made major advancements in its targeting capabilities

⁶⁴ State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *China's White Paper* (Beijing: State Council Information Office, 2004), http://www.gov.cn/english/official/2005-07/28/content_18078.htm.

⁶⁵ Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea: China's Navy in the Twenty-First Century*, 174–76.

as well, and it currently possesses several satellites in orbit, including radar satellite that can track ships as small as 20 meters in length.⁶⁶ China also uses conventionally propelled submarines to target the U.S. Navy. Naval capabilities and especially its submarine force are vital to China's A2/AD, since the force serves double purpose of finding and attacking the adversary forces. Today's GPS-enabled precision targeting makes Chinese ballistic missiles more effective for A2/AD purposes. Furthermore, the Chinese are developing special tracking technologies for anti-ship ballistic missiles, traditionally an extremely hard task to accomplish due to ship movement.⁶⁷ This capability in combination with increased air capabilities and the existing submarine force is said to be very hard for the United States to overcome in case of direct confrontation.⁶⁸

C. THE GRAY ZONE STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The gray zone strategy, practiced by China, amplifies the potential implications of the Chinese A2/AD capabilities. The cornerstone principle of the strategy is to achieve limited political goals using coercive diplomacy and threats without risking escalation to higher levels of violence. This is usually achieved by effectively staying below the stated red lines. China takes advantage of the U.S. risk averse policies and employs salami tactics to demonstrate regular, piece-by-piece progress.⁶⁹ The major advantage of a gray zone strategy is its ability to prevent great power intervention by creating ambiguity and keeping the stakes relatively low. This strategy enhances China's ability to obtain its goals through coercive diplomacy even in the unipolar system with the United States in the lead, creating considerable challenges to U.S. supremacy.

China employs commercial fishing vessels and provincial maritime militia forces as proxies, and backs them up with maritime law enforcements and naval forces to pursue its territorial claims in both the South and the East China seas. Using the permanent

⁶⁶ McDevitt, "The PLA Navy's Antiaccess Role in Taiwan Contingency," 206.

⁶⁷ McDevitt, 208–9.

⁶⁸ McDevitt, 208–9.

⁶⁹ Green and Hicks, "Countering Coercion in Maritime Asia: The Theory and Practice of Gray Zone Deterrence," 3–4, 19–22.

maritime presence of these forces as indirect means for pursuing territorial claims makes other regional powers more focused on presence competition. Yet another challenge is the unclear system of the command and control of such forces that makes the identification of the officially responsible sides extremely troublesome and time-consuming.⁷⁰ This, in turn, lets China change the status quo through consequential steps that are calculated to remain below the level that would trigger the armed response.

China's use of the gray zone strategy is particularly important in combination with its increasing military capabilities that provide a significantly larger number of coercive means. The effectiveness of the strategy is based on the absence of clearly defined red lines and interests of the existing hegemon in the region in regard to certain issues and is reinforced by the relative decline in the military power of the hegemon. It exploits the ambiguity to make systematic gains at the expense of other regional powers. This, in fact, could be viewed as a preamble to realization of the stability-instability paradox within the region. The paradox suggests that as the likelihood of nuclear or full-scale conventional conflict declines, the risk of limited conventional confrontation increases.⁷¹ Limited confrontations, in turn, could be realized in the form of proxy wars, frequently practiced by the United States and the Soviet Union during the period of strategic stability due to the nuclear deterrence capabilities secured by both parties. This trend, together with the Chinese A2/AD capabilities, challenges American supremacy in East Asia and puts other regional powers under threat, thus undermining the U.S. security guarantees to the regional actors. This, in fact, targets both the U.S. interests and the safety of the regional states, which rely on American security guarantees. Hence, increased U.S. involvement and presence in the region is critical to deter and block the ongoing changes to the status quo that America and its allies have long enjoyed.

⁷⁰ Scott Harold et al., "The US-Japan Alliance and Deterring Gray Zone Coercion in the Maritime, Cyber, and Space Domains" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), 3–4, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF300/CF379/RAND_CF379.pdf.

⁷¹ Rajesh Rajagopalan, "What Stability-Instability Paradox? Subnational Conflicts and the Nuclear Risk in South Asia," Research Paper (SASSU, February 2006), 4–5, <http://sassi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/What-Stability-Instability.pdf>; Paul Kapur, "Stability-Instability Paradox," *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Political Behavior* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2017), 799–801, https://my.nps.edu/documents/105858948/106279825/Kapur_Sage+Encyclopedia_Stability-Instability_OCt17/c7952c37-2f5d-4462-9630-5bff04f6cd8f.

D. THE U.S. PERSPECTIVE AND THE COUNTERMEASURES

From the American perspective, the PLA's main objective is to possess the ability to pose a destructive threat to the U.S. naval forces operating within the second island chain. In practice, it means holding at risk any aircraft carrier that operates within the region, as well as the two key targets of Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa and Andersen Air Force Base in Guam. The United States has long acknowledged the challenge of the Chinese A2/ADs and has developed several concepts to address the issue. The most important of those are the Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC), the AirSea Battle, the JAM-GC, and finally the JCIC.

The JOAC, developed back in January 2012, recognized that the U.S. interest to maintain power projection capability was threatened by the emerging A2/AD zones and proposed a cross-domain synergy as a possible solution.⁷² According to the concept, the integration of the domains would concentrate the power to make the penetration of A2/AD zones possible in some specific areas. This, in turn, would grant the U.S. forces the ability to conduct in-depth attacks without confronting the adversary through the whole perimeter. Overcoming China's A2/AD would eventually restore freedom of action for the American Navy.

The AirSea Battle concept, seated beneath the JOAC in the hierarchy of strategic documents, offered a more detailed plan on how to secure access. The key idea of developing "networked, integrated forces, capable of attack-in-depth to disrupt, destroy and defeat adversary forces" via "the application of cross-domain operations across all the interdependent warfighting domains (air, maritime, land, space, and cyberspace)" persisted.⁷³ According to the concept, America has to offset the PLA's military buildup by sustaining power projection capabilities in the region. The challenge of potential U.S. lock out of the region should be answered by recognizing the significance of joint operations

⁷² Department of Defense, *Joint Operational Access Concept* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2012), 14–16, https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/JOAC_Jan%202012_Signed.pdf.

⁷³ Air-Sea Battle Office, "Air Sea Battle: Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access & Area Denial Challenges," 4.

and integrating the naval, air, space, and cyber capabilities. Examples of such integration include: blinding PLA surveillance systems by Air Force to enable Navy operational freedom; assisting Air Force strikes by Navy submarine and carrier-based strikes; using Navy missile defense capabilities to defend the Air Force forward bases; and using the Air Force long-range strikes to destroy the PLA long-range missile launchers and expand Navy's freedom of maneuver.⁷⁴

The AirSea Battle has recognized a set of operational problems, posed by A2/AD, such as the erosion of forward havens in both physical and virtual domains, the decline of free access to the operational areas, and the handover of initiative on both the strategic and operational levels. The concept sets certain conditions that should be met in order to mitigate these problems. These conditions/goals include the reduction of the missile threat to the U.S. regional bases; the enhancement of the long-range strike capabilities; the improvement of undersea operational capabilities; the adjustment of the vulnerabilities of space-based command and control; the increase in emphasis on cross-service electronic warfare capabilities; and advancement in cyber warfare capabilities.⁷⁵ After reaching the conditions, the AirSea Battle campaign is supposed to successfully execute two relatively overlapping stages. The first stage includes withstanding the initial attack and limiting the damage; carrying out a blinding campaign against the adversary; running a suppression campaign targeting enemy's surveillance and strike systems; and taking over the initiative. The second stage consists of executing a protracted campaign for exploiting the initiative, carrying out a distant blockade, supporting the logistics, and increasing the output of the industrial sector.⁷⁶

AirSea Battle played a critical role in shaping the U.S. strategy toward China's A2/ADs and was subsequently renamed the Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the

⁷⁴ Jan Val Tol, "AirSea Battle" (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010), XII, 95–96, <https://csbaonline.org/research/publications/airsea-battle-concept/publication>.

⁷⁵ Tol, XIII–XIV.

⁷⁶ Tol, XIII–XIV.

Global Commons (JAM-GC) in 2015.⁷⁷ Eventually, the JAM-GC has developed as an independent concept, but it is built on the foundation of its predecessor and remains focused on addressing the challenges of securing American power projection capabilities in response to the spread of A2/AD zones. The new concept is more politically balanced both for domestic and foreign audiences. On the one hand, it focuses on more integration between the U.S. services and is not limited to the air and sea domains only. On the other hand, it introduces the global commons, defined as “areas of air, sea, space, and cyberspace that belong to no one state,” and frames the A2/AD problem as a global challenge to the freedom of navigation and economic activities.⁷⁸ This makes the U.S. intention to gain and maintain the operational access to any region more easily justifiable, as it is not viewed from the national interests’ perspective only, making it easier to rely on the engagement of the allied forces. Yet another difference between the JAM-GC and its predecessor is that the JAM-GC focuses on disrupting the initial intent of adversary forces rather than the A2/AD capabilities alone, which represents an upgrade from the tactical to the operational level. Moreover, the JAM-GC primarily relies on the current, rather than future capabilities.⁷⁹

After the release of the AirSea Battle concept, many experts still considered the U.S. response inadequate since the developed concept only represented the tactical-operational level and was detached from the strategy.⁸⁰ Moreover, AirSea Battle relied heavily on hypothetical future capabilities and certain conditions, which would be difficult to meet, especially considering anticipated defense budget cuts. The JAM-GC is focused more on current capabilities, but it too is not yet an overarching strategy. Rather, it represents a complementary concept that aims to enhance the strategic approach that still

⁷⁷ David Goldfein, “AirSea Battle Name Change Memo” (The Joint Staff, January 8, 2015), <https://news.usni.org/2015/01/20/document-air-sea-battle-name-change-memo>.

⁷⁸ Michael Hutchens and William Dries, “Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons: A New Joint Operational Concept,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 84 (2017): 136–37; Nicholas Reed, “AirSea Battle to Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons: Imperative for a Continuation of Crucial Warfighting Concept” (master’s thesis, Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2015), 23–24, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a625244.pdf>.

⁷⁹ Hutchens and Dries, “JAM-GC,” 136.

⁸⁰ Blumenthal, “The U.S. Response to China’s Military Modernization,” 320–25.

needs to be developed. Therefore, the major critique of AirSea Battle also applies to the JAM-GC. Consequently, neither AirSea Battle nor the JAM-GC has much to offer against China's gray zone strategy.

To address the challenge posed by gray zone strategy, the U.S. Department of Defense issued the JCIC on March 2018. In order to overcome the problem of operating below the threshold of a direct military confrontation, the document suggests shifting the outdated peace-war binary notion to the more relevant concept of competition, and coordinating the military capabilities with the aligning non-military assets of adequate scope across numerous domains.⁸¹ The idea is to describe the existing environment as competitive instead of peaceful and to promote non-military responses through inter-organizational and multinational engagement when operating under the threshold of war. Nevertheless, there are significant challenges to the new approach. First, referring to the international environment as competitive rather than cooperative and peaceful, contradicts the existing insight and the values of the U.S.-led liberal world order. It promotes rivalry between the major powers and provokes further polarization of the East Asian region, thus the chances of regional states accepting the notion are poor. Moreover, the major advantage of the gray zone strategy is to create and exploit ambiguity on different levels to avoid direct responsibility. The replication of the same principles would hardly be possible for the democratic and transparent government. Even the employment of non-military assets would require the government to state its objectives clearly and to charge oneself with direct responsibility over the actions. Therefore, without the explicitly declared redlines and the political will to act on the strategic level, the JCIC would still lack the capacity to address the challenges caused by the gray zone strategy.

All of the strategic documents discussed previously acknowledge the potential threat of the emerging A2/AD zones and gray zone strategy. It still has to be determined, however, whether the United States is willing to carry out much more significant steps to counter the threat. From the realist perspective, the ongoing changes are important, yet

⁸¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2018), 4–8, http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joint_concept_integrated_campaign.pdf?ver=2018-03-28-102833-257.

insufficient without a significant increase in military spending, a rise in the quality or quantity of military deployments in the region, and the increase in number or complexity of the mutual exercises with the regional allies. These are the most important indicators that the United States should display to manifest its willingness to prevent China from gaining A2/AD capabilities and challenging the U.S. primacy in the region.

There is little doubt that in the case of direct comparison the United States still outperforms China in key indicators of military power, namely in defense spending, technologically developed weapons and equipment, the quantity of aircraft carriers, the operational experience of the troops and the coordination among the service branches. Nevertheless, the geography of the hypothetical theater of war and the immense advancements in China's military capabilities put an additional burden on the U.S. armed forces, making it ambiguous whether the existing hegemon still enjoys supremacy and secure power projection capabilities in the East Asian region.⁸² Furthermore, the global trends in almost all of these indicators are not in America's favor. A little rise in defense spending in 2019 has further deepened the U.S. budget deficit, suggesting that future substantial increases are highly unlikely.⁸³ In terms of percentages, U.S. military spending has been steadily decreasing for the last decade from nearly 4.6% in 2010 to 3.1% in 2017.⁸⁴ So far, hardly any clear indicators show that this trend would change in the near future. The slow but persistent decrease in the number of the U.S. military deployments in both Japan and South Korea, the two major outposts for U.S. military presence in the Asia Pacific Region, suggests that America is not planning to engage in a full-scale regional war in the near future.⁸⁵ The recent withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP),

⁸² Montgomery, "Contested Primacy in the Western Pacific: China's Rise and the Future of U.S. Power Projection," 116–17.

⁸³ Jeff Stein, "U.S. Military Budget Inches Closer to \$1 Trillion Mark, as Concerns over Federal Deficit Grow," *Washington Post*, June 19, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2018/06/19/u-s-military-budget-inches-closer-to-1-trillion-mark-as-concerns-over-federal-deficit-grow/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.aa6c210a2654.

⁸⁴ "Military Expenditure (% of GDP): 2017-2010" (World Bank), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?end=2017&locations=CN-US&start=2010>.

⁸⁵ Steve Chan, *Looking for Balance: China, the United States, and Power Balancing in East Asia*, Studies in Asian Security (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 79–81.

viewed by many as one of the major balancing tool against China's economic rise, has formed a vacuum in the architecture of Asian commerce and created a possibility for other powers to propose alternative deals.⁸⁶ All of these developments undermine the global image of America's willingness to actively balance against China; furthermore, these developments necessarily prompt regional states to wonder whether they should still rely on the security guarantees of the United States.

To defend its interests in the Western Pacific, the United States has to restore the existing conventional military balance with China and demonstrate its commitments to the region. Therefore, America has to maintain its supreme power projection capabilities to back its commitments, make its security guarantees credible, and sustain regional alliances. In light of these objectives, internal balancing seems to be the most effective option for Washington. Uninterrupted U.S. military access to the region and U.S. commitment to defend existing allies are in question, making reliance on external balancing inefficient. Only by demonstrating that China's A2/AD zones are not effective against the U.S. power projection capabilities can America prove that it still has the will and the power to stand for its allies. At the same time, it is critical for the United States to maintain a balance between defending its national interests and promoting an adversarial mindset on a global scale. If not justified from the global security perspective, American responses could be viewed by many states as a signal of deformation of the existing liberal world order.

E. CONCLUSION

U.S. involvement in the Southeast Asian region has long been based on existing security alliances and partnerships with states that benefited from the security guarantees provided by the United States. These guarantees have all been based on the U.S. military primacy and its ability to project power in the region, making its commitments to regional actors solid and credible. China's military rise and its development of A2/AD capabilities, in conjunction with its gray zone strategy, pose a threat to the U.S. power projection capability and challenge its primacy within the region. This trend already calls into

⁸⁶ "TPP Collapse Leaves a Worrying Void," *Economist*, November 26, 2016, <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.nps.edu/docview/1851052712/fulltext/FB77FE359AB94DC8PQ/1?accountid=12702>.

question the U.S. capability to provide security for its allies, a problem that will likely worsen, making the existing alliances unreliable from the regional states' perspective. Weakening of the alliances thereafter will inevitably challenge U.S. engagement in the region.

The United States has developed several documents to formulate its strategy against the emerging threat; however, the credibility of most should still be questioned. The major U.S. response, known to the wider public as the AirSea Battle concept, relied on many conditions that had to be met in order for it to function effectively, thus making its success questionable. Moreover, its focus was primarily tactical-operational, making it less effective against China's gray zone strategy. Its successor, the JAM-GC, remains on the operational level, leaving the strategic outlook still undefined. This lets Beijing achieve minor, yet regular gains at the expense of the regional states, by exploiting American risk aversion.

The United States has not demonstrated the willingness to increase its hard power capabilities toward the region, sending a negative message to its regional allies and partners, who are highly vulnerable without U.S. security guarantees provided by the bilateral agreements or the American-led liberal world order. If the United States keeps its current stance, it might risk finding itself restricted from the region militarily, and forced to abandon its strategic interests of engagement in Southeast Asia. These developments can certainly affect the security architecture of the region and make hedging ineffective, suggesting that Southeast Asian states will have to shift their hedging strategies toward a more balancing or bandwagoning stance. The following chapter analyzes the cases of the Philippines and Vietnam in detail, to test the hypothesis and evaluate if and to what extent the shift of the strategic balance within the region has affected the strategic calculus of these nations and whether they still practice the hedging strategies that most Southeast Asian states are famous for.

III. CASE STUDIES

As discussed in the previous chapter, China has made significant military advancements and effectively developed its A2/AD capabilities, as well as gray zone strategy, thus notably weakening the U.S. power projection capability within East and Southeast Asia. This development leads to a considerable change in the balance of power and even questions the long-enjoyed American primacy. The ongoing shift from unipolarity to a more bipolar system inevitably affects the regional security architecture. This thesis suggests that these changes have consequently led to a significant shift in the foreign policy of Southeast Asian states and make them more likely to discontinue hedging as a major strategy in relations with China and the United States. Such a claim is reasonable when considering the nature of the hedging strategy.

A. INTRODUCTION

According to the definition provided in the first chapter, hedging is a rational strategy of practicing an engagement with the existing hegemon in security matters while at the same time maximizing economic benefits by approaching the secondary power. More specifically, it implies a close economic relationship with China and a security cooperation with the United States. The latter consists of providing base facilities and logistics support or participation in mutual military exercises for the U.S. military presence in the region. At the very least, according to this strategy regional states would not contribute to China's military rise, and thus they continue to support the long-existing status quo of American primacy. This definition, as do most of the other definitions by various authors discussed in the first chapter, implies that the system is unipolar. The key premise behind the successful hedging strategy for Southeast Asian countries is that states are able to avoid choosing sides between the great powers and to develop close relations with both sides in their own unique ways. If a power competition emerges between the major powers, however, the Southeast Asian states would be forced to choose sides; thus, they would shift to either a more balancing or bandwagoning stance.

China's military advancements and America's irresolute response, discussed in detail in the previous chapter, clearly demonstrate that the capability gap between the United States and China in the region shrinks considerably. Moreover, it suggests that the proposed shift is not only expected but almost inevitable. The only way to prevent this shift would be some tangible U.S. policies, driven by a strong will to counter China's military rise and regain robust power projection capability, thus restoring the unipolar system and the status of hegemon. So far, America fails to demonstrate such a willingness and only scratches the surface with a few mostly ineffective initiatives. Therefore, the key hypothesis of the thesis suggests that some indicators of abandoning the hedging strategy by the Southeast Asian states should already be visible. As the power of the emerging actor increases and the existing hegemon declines, it would be most reasonable to expect the Southeast Asian states to choose appeasement as primary policy towards the emerging actor and to start bandwagoning with China. At the same time, these states would likely weaken their security cooperation with the United States gradually to avoid direct conflict of interests with China. In other words, since the United States fails to demonstrate capable security guarantees for Southeast Asian states, these states would simply be forced to seek a new patron.

1. Testing the Hypothesis Using Quantitative Data

The easiest way to test the hypothesis of this thesis would be to look at the existing data on the military expenditures of both the Philippines and Vietnam. Does the data support the hypothesis? Does the data demonstrate balancing or bandwagoning behavior by the Philippines or Vietnam? Could we observe the shifts from hedging to a balancing or bandwagoning strategy through the significant changes in the data? In order to answer these questions, the data on the three most widespread indicators of balancing are analyzed: the military spending of the Philippines and Vietnam in terms of current United States Dollars (USD), the same data in terms of local currencies, and the military spending of both nations in terms of percentage of their gross domestic product (GDP).

The graph in Figure 1 demonstrates the Philippines' and Vietnam's defense spending from 2003 to 2017 in current USD.

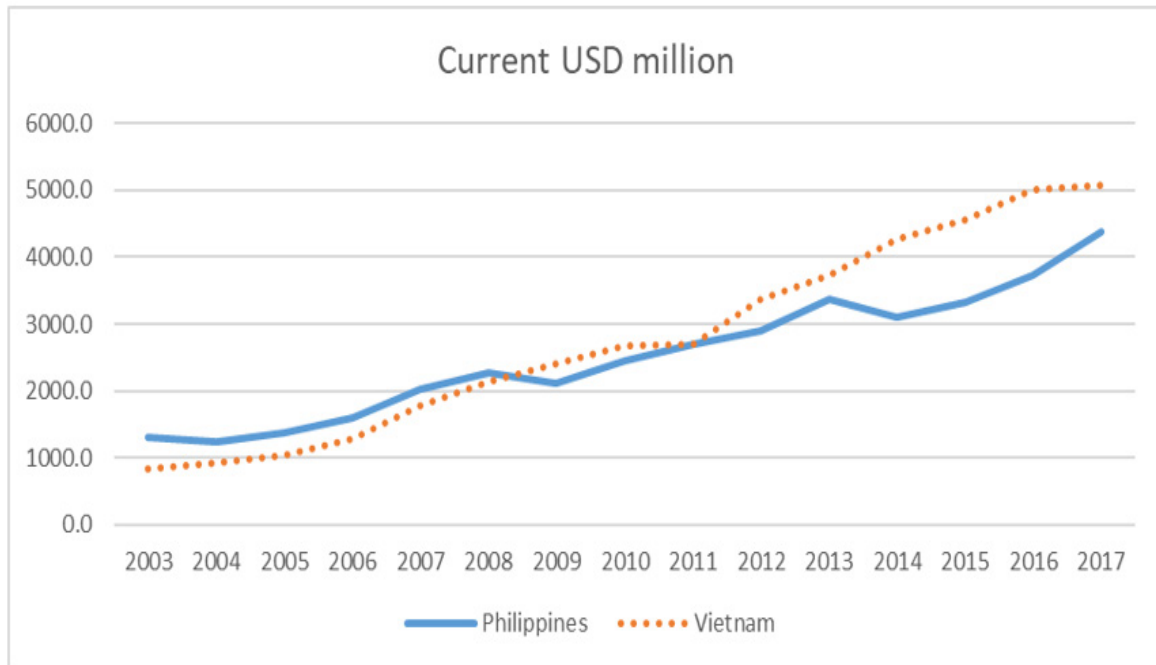


Figure 1. The Military Expenditures of Vietnam and the Philippines between 2003 and 2017 (in millions of USD at current prices).⁸⁷

According to the graph, both nations have consistently increased their defense spending, not considering some minor lags from time to time. The general trend is clear and it definitely demonstrates a persistent rise in the defense budgets. It does not display any significant differences between some periods or others. The data suggests that both states have pursued balancing behavior through the whole period between 2003 and 2017, by consistently increasing their defense budgets.

The next graph, shown in Figure 2 displays the same military expenditures, only this time in local currencies, to avoid possible misinterpretations caused by currency devaluations.

⁸⁷ “Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Military Expenditure Database” (SIPRI, 2018), <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.

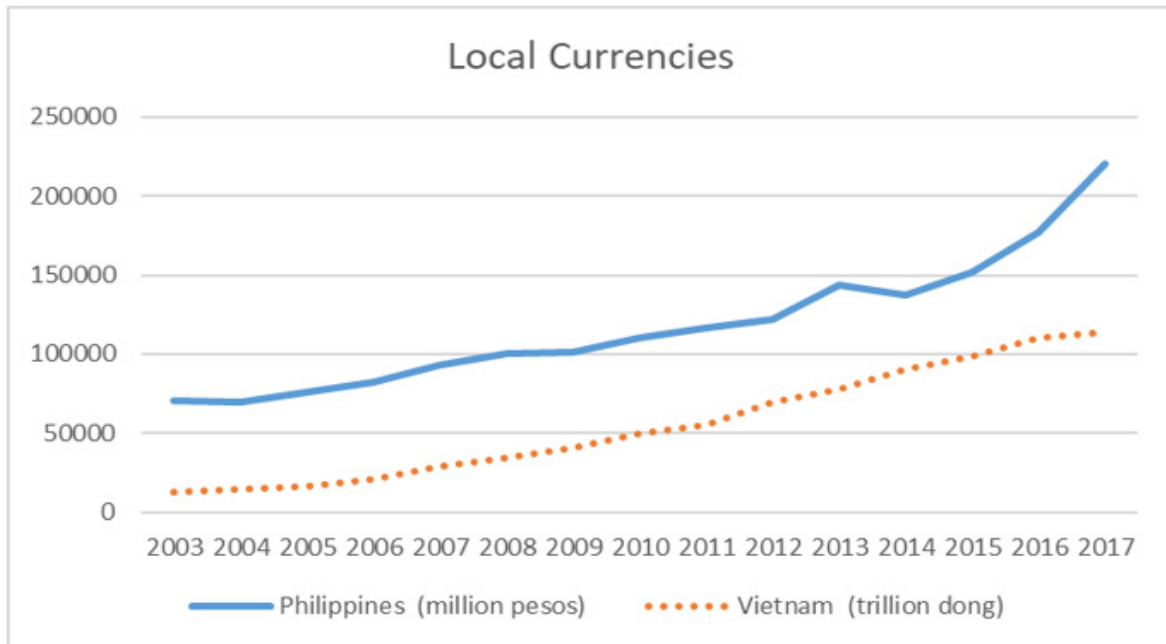


Figure 2. The Military Expenditures of Vietnam and the Philippines between 2003 and 2017 (in local currencies).⁸⁸

According to this graph, the broader trend remains the same. Both the Philippines and Vietnam have increased their military expenditures steadily, thus demonstrating persistent balancing behavior through the whole period between 2003 and 2017.

The next graph, shown in Figure 3, questions this conclusion by demonstrating a relatively steady relationship between the GDP and the military spending of these countries:

⁸⁸ “SIPRI.”

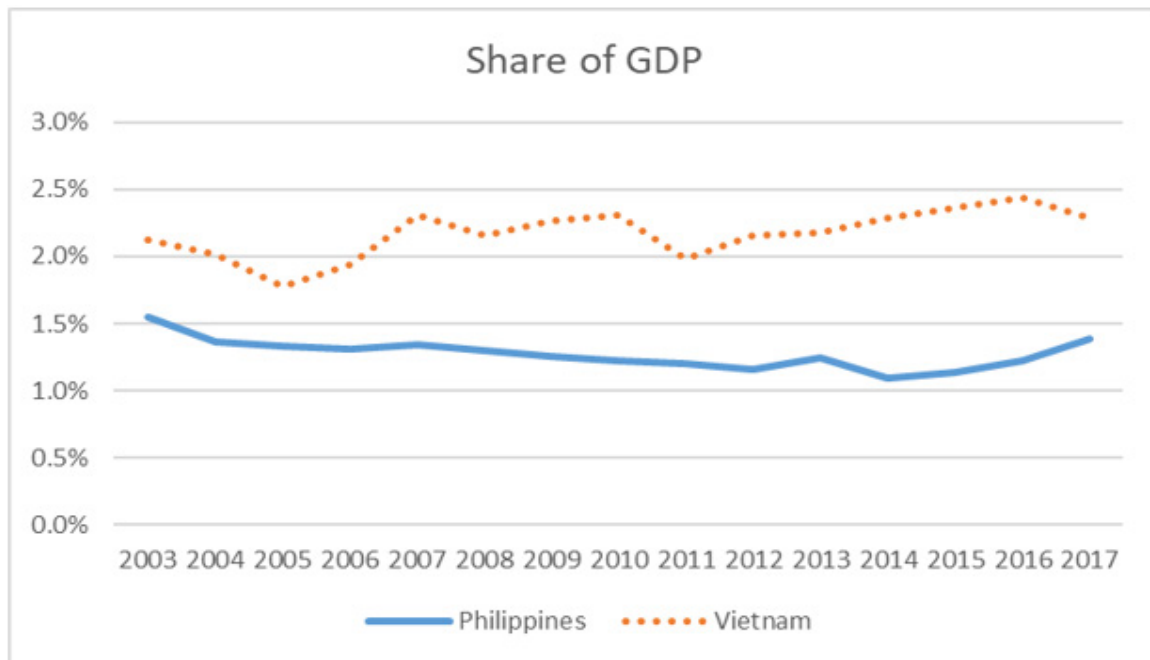


Figure 3. The Military Expenditures of Vietnam and the Philippines between 2003 and 2017 (in percentage of GDP).⁸⁹

According to this graph, the rise in the defense expenditures of both the Philippines and Vietnam has been closely related to their overall economic performance and mostly corresponds to the increase of national economic output in general. This graph demonstrates that through the same period of 2003 and 2017 both the Philippines and Vietnam maintained a quite steady and relatively low share of their GDP for their respective defense spending. The Philippines has mostly spent under 1.5% and Vietnam has stayed between 2% and 2.5% most of the time. This suggests that balancing behavior has not been pursued at all and looks like a proof for the major claim of David Kang and Xinru Ma, who say that the analysis of Southeast Asian states' defense spending suggests that these nations do not balance against China at all.⁹⁰ Yet, is it really the truth? Is this data enough evidence to promulgate such a claim?

⁸⁹ "SIPRI."

⁹⁰ David Kang and Xinru Ma, "Power Transitions: Thucydides Didn't Live in East Asia," *Washington Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (2018): 150.

2. The Challenge of Quantitative Data: Irrelevance of the Measurements

Why is the major hypothesis of this thesis not supported by the quantitative data? Is it that the hypothesis is wrong, or perhaps the data is wrong? Most definitely, neither of these statements is true; both the hypothesis and the data could be correct at the same time.

One way to explain the discrepancy between the hypothesis of this thesis and the quantitative data would be to argue that this type of economic indicator is less flexible and usually needs some time to reflect the changes in policy. Thus, there might be a need to wait in order to actually witness some changes. This argument might be true in general, but it is not necessarily relevant here. In fact, the type of quantitative data depicted in the preceding graphs is not relevant for the purposes of this thesis. The varying measurements of defense spending by countries have long been used to form a general understanding on states' behavior strategies, but this data does not display the full picture and using it comes with its own disadvantages. The major premise while measuring the defense spending dynamics of nations is that their balancing or bandwagoning behavior is closely related with the amount of resources/money they spend on defense matters. This is quite a reasonable premise for most cases, but not for all. This premise does not apply when the power asymmetry between the monitored countries and those against whom they are expected to balance is extremely high. In such cases, the internal balancing as an option becomes irrelevant; thus, measuring domestic indicators such as defense spending can hardly demonstrate an accurate picture. In such cases, the balancing is mostly done externally, by introducing a third party into equation, which cannot be traced by monitoring the defense budget changes of the countries who are adopting a balancing strategy.

To be more specific, these domestic indicators are not extremely relevant in the case of measuring whether the Southeast Asian states pursue a balancing or bandwagoning policy because of the existing imbalance between China and other regional nations. No matter how hard these countries try, the asymmetry of power keeps rising and it effectively kills the hypothetical success of these states to practice internal balancing against China. There is little chance for these states to pursue internal balancing successfully and their leaderships must have a clear understanding of that. The only tangible way for the regional states to balance against rising China is to appeal to another great power capable of

containing China. The United States is clearly the most credible candidate for the job. Therefore, the most important indicator to measure whether these states pursue balancing or bandwagoning policies is to analyze their relationship dynamics with the United States and China, the strategy that this thesis elaborates in the following case studies.

In order to test the hypothesis, the following sections are dedicated to the analysis of two independent cases of Southeast Asian states: the Philippines and Vietnam. These countries differ greatly, spanning a wide range of variables and making the generalization of the conclusions more robust. The Philippines, an island country representative of maritime Southeast Asia, appears an obvious example of the U.S. ally in the region, whose security is highly dependent on American power projection capabilities, especially in the naval domain. Vietnam, on the other hand, representative of mainland Southeast Asia, does not have a direct defense treaty with the United States. It is more self-sufficient in security regard. Nevertheless, the naval domain is critical for Vietnam's security as well, suggesting that any significant decline in America's long-enjoyed freedom of navigation in the region would definitely affect Vietnam's security environment.

The case studies focus on the occurring or expected changes in the existing defense treaties or other formal relations; the number and the magnitude of military bases or facility sharing agreements; the scale of joint military exercises; or changes in the military spending for each case. These indicators could potentially demonstrate the trend of weakening security ties with the United States or increasing security cooperation with China. Both of these tendencies would contradict the definition of hedging and would suggest that the anticipated shift is already taking place.

B. THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines effectively started its hedging policy after the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s. The Ramos Administration made some significant efforts to engage in and build close economic relations with China despite some emerging territorial disputes during the 1990s. The Sino-Philippines relations were further strengthened during the

2000s and eventually culminated under President Gloria Arroyo.⁹¹ The Philippines' foreign policy during this period best fits the definition of hedging since Manila maintained its status of key U.S. ally in the region in the security realm, while at the same time it developed close economic cooperation with China in many regards. The Philippines enjoyed a hedging policy until the late 2000s and early 2010s, when it gradually shifted to balancing against and later to bandwagoning with China under the Duterte Administration. To understand the causal factors and the rationale behind these shifts it is vital to analyze these periods separately in more detail. The following sections discuss the Philippines' historical experience with hedging, the first shift toward balancing, and the following reorientation toward a bandwagoning stance; and demonstrate how China's military advancements influenced the Philippines' foreign policy choices.

1. Historical Experience: Hedging as Historical Norm

The Philippines mostly developed its hedging policies after the end of the Cold War, as it was closely engaged with the United States in defense cooperation, and the end of bipolar conflict made it possible for Manila to pursue more independent economic policies and engage other powers in terms of economic ties. In the early 1990s, there were some alterations, namely the discussions in the Philippines on diminishing American influence. In fact, the Philippine-American Cooperation Treaty (PACT) was ended in 1991, along with the permanent American military presence after the closure of the two major U.S. military bases of Subic and Clark in the Philippines' territory.⁹² It is important to underline, however, that these developments were a response to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the vanishing existential threat, and were mainly orchestrated by Washington, rather than Manila. Thus, they have nothing to do with the Philippines already bandwagoning with China or any other power by downgrading its military ties with the United States. These alterations were soon revised after reaching the Visiting Forces

⁹¹ Richard Javad Heydarian, "Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy," *Asian Security* 13, no. 3 (2017): 234.

⁹² Renato Cruz De Castro, "Facing Up to China's Realpolitik Approach in the South China Sea Dispute: The Case of the 2012 Scarborough Shoal Stand-off and Its Aftermath," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 3, no. 2 (2016): 164–65.

Agreement (VFA) in 1998. The new agreement provided the U.S. military with the right to restore its posture and fill the security vacuum it created after withdrawing its forces from the region. This agreement played a significant role in reinforcing the U.S.-Philippine security cooperation including conducting large-scale military exercises and strengthening intelligence sharing.⁹³ Moreover, it effectively created a background for the Philippines to develop its hedging policies.

The Philippines further cultivated its hedging approach during the 2000s. This period became an explicit example of practicing hedging. The Philippines demonstrated its interest in gaining a profit from China's economic advancements, but at the same time, it did not want to sacrifice its security ties with the United States. The Arroyo Administration put a major emphasis on engaging China both politically and economically. During this period, the Philippines signed the largest number of bilateral agreements with China in its history and promoted significant economic projects like the ones with Zhongxing Telecommunications Equipment (ZTE) or North Railway initiative.⁹⁴ Furthermore, Manila developed the Joint Maritime Seismic Understanding (JMSU) during 2005–2008 and refused to join other Southeast Asian states in criticizing Beijing based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS); the Philippines even protested against Vietnam and Malaysia for submitting their claims to the continental shelf in the waters of the South China Sea.⁹⁵ During this period, the Philippines developed economic cooperation with China, while at the same time secured its defense ties with the United States.⁹⁶ This reflected essential elements of the hedging strategy: being able to maintain its security cooperation with the existing American hegemon, while at the same time deepening economic cooperation with emerging China. The situation dramatically changed

⁹³ Heydarian, "Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy," 222–25.

⁹⁴ Ce Liang, "The Rise of China as a Constructed Narrative: Southeast Asia's Response to Asia's Power Shift," *Pacific Review* 31, no. 3 (September 2017): 285.

⁹⁵ Murphy, "Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages," 180.

⁹⁶ Heydarian, "Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy," 226–28.

since the late 2000s, when China's military advancements and coercive diplomacy were already affecting the foreign policy calculus of other regional states.⁹⁷

2. End of Hedging: Beginning of Balancing

In the early 2000s, when China's military rise was only beginning to gather its momentum, the Philippines enjoyed considerably different relations with China from those it had to face in the late 2000s and beyond. According to Renato Cruz De Castro, the Philippines' arrest of Chinese anglers within the waters near the Scarborough Shoal in the early 2000s resulted in a formal apology by the Chinese ambassador to the Philippines, rather than any aggressive behavior from Beijing.⁹⁸ Based on this example, De Castro demonstrates that China did not actively question the jurisdiction of Manila back then, but the situation drastically changed within a few years. Following the long phase of peaceful economic rise, China developed a more aggressive foreign policy since the late 2000s, when its military advancements were ultimately taking place.⁹⁹

In 2009, China reintroduced its nine-dash line and put forward its claims over the water and land within the South China Sea in 2009. This substantially changed its views of and behavior in the region. The next arrest of Chinese fishermen by Philippine officials resulted intervention by China's military vessels and eventually ended up as a Scarborough Shoal standoff in 2012. Furthermore, in 2013 Beijing began massive construction on the disputed territories. Several artificial features/islands were built, which the PLA exploited by deploying their facilities on them. Chinese military bases evolved near the disputed Mischief Reef and the Second Thomas Shoal within the Spratly Islands.¹⁰⁰ The rising military capabilities and formation of A2/AD zones provided China with more freedom of action in the South China Sea, since it ultimately restricted U.S. power projection

⁹⁷ Murphy, "Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages," 180.

⁹⁸ De Castro, "Facing Up to China's Realpolitik Approach in the South China Sea Dispute: The Case of the 2012 Scarborough Shoal Stand-off and Its Aftermath," 169.

⁹⁹ Stephen Burgess, "Rising Bipolarity in the South China Sea: The American Rebalance to Asia and China's Expansion," *Contemporary Security Policy* 37, no. 1 (2016): 117.

¹⁰⁰ Burgess, 119.

capabilities and thus undermined American pressure and constraints over China's aggressive behavior.

The Philippines initially responded by altering its hedging strategy and focusing more on balancing actions. As a result of China's military rise and accompanying growing territorial claims, the Aquino Administration developed an "Anything-But-Arroyo" campaign and put an emphasis on active balancing instead of engagement and hedging. This policy was ultimately based on the premise of American support along the way.¹⁰¹ With the hope of U.S. backing, the Philippines promoted clear anti-Chinese policies. Manila initiated an arbitration against China at an arbitral tribunal under Article 287 and Annex VII of UNCLOS at The Hague and effectively won the case by 2016, suggesting that most of China's claims in the South China Sea, including the Spratly disputes, were illegitimate.¹⁰²

Furthermore, the Philippines made considerable efforts to reshape its armed forces and change the initial focus on domestic security, putting more emphasis on territorial defense.¹⁰³ The Philippines initiated defense modernization programs to overcome critical challenges in terms of its military capabilities. The Aquino Administration allocated nearly \$400 million to modernization programs, almost eight times more than the average for the last 15 years.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, procurements increased to \$1.8 billion and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Long-Term Capability Development Plan was elaborated, aiming to significantly increase the Philippine Navy's capabilities by acquiring multi-role attack vessels, off-shore patrol craft, and both surface-to-surface and surface-to-air

¹⁰¹ Renato Cruz De Castro, "The Duterte Administration's Appeasement Policy on China and the Crisis in the Philippine-US Alliance," *Philippine Political Science Journal* 38, no. 3 (December 2017): 163–64.

¹⁰² Wei-chin Lee, "Introduction: The South China Sea Dispute and the 2016 Arbitration Decision," *Journal of Chinese Political Sciences* 22 (March 2017): 179.

¹⁰³ De Castro, "The Duterte Administration's Appeasement Policy on China and the Crisis in the Philippine-US Alliance," 160.

¹⁰⁴ Suisheng Zhao and Xiong Qi, "Hedging and Geostrategic Balance of East Asian Countries towards China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, no. 100 (March 2016): 488.

missiles.¹⁰⁵ Apart from that, the Philippines also increased its surveillance capabilities by obtaining patrol planes with surveillance radar and P-3C Orion reconnaissance planes.¹⁰⁶

Moreover, Manila attempted to strengthen its military ties with Washington by signing the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) in 2014. This executive agreement updated and enhanced the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty and granted the United States the right to deploy its military forces on the Philippines' territory on rotational bases.¹⁰⁷ The EDCA provided American military access to the Philippines' bases of Lumbia Air Base; Antonio Bautista Air Base; Mactan-Benito Ebuen Air Base; Base Air Base and Fort Magsaysay.¹⁰⁸ This provided a strong signal that the United States would regain a significant military presence in the Philippines.

Nevertheless, this policy was soon changed due to the U.S. failure to demonstrate the willingness to catch up with the ongoing changes in the regional security environment and focus on risk averse policies. Despite the anticipated American renewed attention to the broader East Asian region and the Philippines' hope for transforming the Sino-Philippines bilateral collision into triangular relationship,¹⁰⁹ the United States failed to take a more active role. America aimed to defuse potential escalations in any regional conflict, thus promoting some concerns over its willingness to back up its commitments to its allies.¹¹⁰ American support for peaceful resolution of conflicts aimed to restrict China from using its military superiority over smaller neighbors, but on the other hand, it was also a signal for the Philippines that the United States was cautious about becoming

¹⁰⁵ Zhao and Qi, 488.

¹⁰⁶ Evelyn Goh, "Southeast Asian Strategies towards the Great Powers: Still Hedging after All These Years?," *The ASAN Forum* (blog), February 2016, <http://www.theasanforum.org/southeast-asian-strategies-toward-the-great-powers-still-hedging-after-all-these-years/>.

¹⁰⁷ De Castro, "Facing Up to China's Realpolitik Approach in the South China Sea Dispute: The Case of the 2012 Scarborough Shoal Stand-off and Its Aftermath," 175.

¹⁰⁸ De Castro, "The Duterte Administration's Appeasement Policy on China and the Crisis in the Philippine-US Alliance," 165.

¹⁰⁹ Elaine Tolentino and Myungsik Ham, "The Entrapment of Asymmetry: The Philippines between the U.S. and China," *Bandung: Journal of the Global South* 2, no. 20 (2015): 11–12.

¹¹⁰ Burgess, "Rising Bipolarity in the South China Sea: The American Rebalance to Asia and China's Expansion," 121.

entangled in a direct confrontation with China over Filipino matters. Therefore, naturally, the Philippines followed Thucydides' famous teaching—*the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must*—and reoriented its foreign policy 180 degrees toward a more bandwagoning stance.

3. How and Why the Philippines Ended Up with Bandwagoning

Since 2016, the Philippines has demonstrated a sharp reorientation of its foreign policy from being U.S.-focused to becoming more China-focused. China's immense military advancements and increasingly coercive foreign policy, along with America's failure to provide credible security guarantees has pushed the Philippines to pick bandwagoning as a major strategy for its foreign policy calculus. Manila, on the one hand, has deepened its cooperation with China, including engagement in security matters; while on the other hand, it has downgraded its defense cooperation with the United States. By doing so, the Philippines has clearly demonstrated that it is far from the classical understanding of hedging and is on a finely defined path of bandwagoning with China.

a. Enhanced Security Cooperation with China

One of the first turnovers in the Philippine foreign policy was the decision to refuse the use of the victory gained at the UNCLOS Arbitral Tribunal to mobilize the international community and try to force China to follow the key elements of the arbitration. Instead of approaching the United States “to enforce key elements of the ruling” or using the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to promote multilateral leverage over China's activities within the South China Sea, the Duterte Administration has put an emphasis on “direct bilateral negotiations with China” and declared that Manila was not interested in raising the possibility of arbitration.¹¹¹ The reasoning behind this decision was actually rather straightforward. Beijing had long pressured Manila to reject a multilateral approach and legal attempts to solve the territorial disputes. During this period, China mobilized a growing number of military vessels and highlighted that it would not

¹¹¹ Heydarian, “Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy,” 229.

accept American intervention in the dispute; meanwhile the United States continued not to take sides and followed the peaceful resolution directive.¹¹² Beijing's successful experience with unilaterally imposing the Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the East China Sea and being able to make it function despite American and Japanese objections, demonstrated further possible threats for the Philippines: by following the same pattern and introducing a new ADIZ within the South China Sea, China could hinder the Philippines' supply lines.¹¹³ Consequently, the Duterte Administration raised reasonable concerns about the reliability of American security guarantees and made a rational choice to bandwagon with China. As a result, the Philippines arrived at a joint oil and gas exploration proposal with China within the disputed waters in the South China Sea.¹¹⁴

The Duterte Administration has also taken important steps toward deepening the Sino-Philippine security cooperation. This relation is still in an embryonic state, though it shows a potential to expand in the near future. Manila has granted Chinese ships access to the Philippine shoal, a sort of freedom of navigation, on the condition that they would not aggressively interfere with the Filipino Coast Guard.¹¹⁵ Moreover, the Philippines declared its interest in acquiring Chinese-made weapons for its military. The first deal amounted to around \$14 million worth of small arms and patrol boats; China also offered to the Philippines a loan of \$500 million to let it purchase more Chinese military equipment.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Burgess, "Rising Bipolarity in the South China Sea: The American Rebalance to Asia and China's Expansion," 112.

¹¹³ Murphy, "Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages," 174–75.

¹¹⁴ Jiao Claire, "Philippines Aggressively Pursuing Joint Oil and Gas Exploration with China," *CNN Philippines*, February 16, 2018, <http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2018/02/16/philippines-china-joint-exploration-oil-gas-south-china-sea.html>.

¹¹⁵ De Castro, "The Duterte Administration's Appeasement Policy on China and the Crisis in the Philippine-US Alliance," 174.

¹¹⁶ De Castro, 169, 174.

b. Downgraded Defense Cooperation with the United States

In addition to some efforts at deepening the security cooperation with China, the Philippines has demonstrated even more serious indicators of abandoning the hedging and balancing strategies by distancing itself from its major ally – the United States. Since 2016, Manila has effectively downgraded its military ties with Washington. The Philippines suspended joint patrols and key military drills with American forces in the South China Sea. The Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training Exercise (CARAT) and the joint U.S.-Philippine Amphibious Landing Exercise (PHIBLEX) have both been canceled since late 2016.¹¹⁷ Moreover, the bilateral military exercises, perceived to be directed against China, were modified so that they became focused on humanitarian assistance and risk reduction, anti-terrorism, and anti-narcotics operations, rather than a territorial defense.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, the Duterte Administration banned the United States from building a weapon depot on the Philippine territory and, even more importantly, banned America from launching its Freedom of Navigation operations from the Philippines territories.¹¹⁹

The Philippines and the United States have retained a fair number of joint military exercises so far; however, the number of war games has been reduced by nearly halved. In addition, Manila has asked the U.S. Special Operations Forces to leave Mindanao and canceled the procurement of 26,000 American-made assault rifles for the Philippine National Police (PNP), while at the same time initiating a discussion on modifying the EDCA with a clear aim of downgrading it.¹²⁰ Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana even declared that Manila was planning to review the Mutual Defense Treaty (MTD), based on the fact that, “it’s been a long time” since its approval and there is a need to find out whether it is “still valid or still relevant today,” to decide whether “to maintain it, strengthen it, or

¹¹⁷ Heydarian, “Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy,” 233.

¹¹⁸ De Castro, “The Duterte Administration’s Appeasement Policy on China and the Crisis in the Philippine-US Alliance,” 169.

¹¹⁹ Heydarian, “Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy,” 233.

¹²⁰ De Castro, “The Duterte Administration’s Appeasement Policy on China and the Crisis in the Philippine-US Alliance,” 167–69.

scrap it.” Additionally, Lorenzana mentioned that National Defense Act of 1935 should be reviewed.¹²¹ If successful, this process should be considered one of the strongest indicators for the breakup of U.S.-Philippine relations, as these documents represent the core foundation for the security architecture of the Philippines that for decades has been based on the security alliance with the United States.

c. Why Bandwagoning Instead of Balancing?

China’s military rise and coercive foreign activities have pushed Manila to abandon its hedging policy and come up with a more effective alternative. The emergence of China as a military power promoted the security competition within the region and polarized the environment, which have made hedging strategies less applicable. Since the late 2000s, the Philippines has abandoned hedging. Initially, however, Manila decided in favor of balancing. This seemed a rational option, based on the assumption that the United States would be willing to contain China’s military advancements and retain its global power projection capabilities, effectively securing the interests of its regional allies through broader East Asia. The lack of will from the American side to engage in more direct confrontation with China and the U.S. decision to focus more on risk averse policies made balancing by the Philippines irrational. Without the strong support of American military presence, the relatively obsolete force of the Philippines is in no way able to face the Chinese capabilities. The only way for Manila to balance against Beijing is by promoting an external balancing approach that relies on U.S. support. After the tremendous progress made by China’s military, the U.S. decision makers became more reluctant to draw clearly defined red lines and to commit to enforcing them.

Confident of its growing power, China has promulgated its territorial claims by augmenting its military posture and applying a coercive diplomacy toward others.¹²² At the same time, American officials have kept talking about Sino-U.S. relations as “the most

¹²¹ Jelly Musico, “Lorenzana Orders Review of 67-Year-Old US-PH Military Pact,” *Philippine News Agency*, December 28, 2018, <http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1057639>.

¹²² De Castro, “Facing Up to China’s Realpolitik Approach in the South China Sea Dispute: The Case of the 2012 Scarborough Shoal Stand-off and Its Aftermath,” 161–62.

important bilateral relationship of the 21st century.”¹²³ Therefore, America has clearly focused on accommodating China and that has contributed to the U.S. failure to prevent Beijing from building massive artificial islands within the South China Sea. The militarization of those islands has given China the ability to control the South China Sea “in all scenarios short of war with the United States.”¹²⁴ The Obama Administration chose not to make China withdraw from Scarborough Shoal after the 2012 agreement. The Philippines has fulfilled its part of the agreement, and hence, has lost the access to the territory that it previously fished in alongside Chinese fishermen.¹²⁵ These failures of its long-standing ally suggested to the Philippines that it was time to change sides and accommodate China without explicit U.S. security guarantees.

The Philippines’ shift was based on the judgment that America would not help it in the event of a direct confrontation with China, and was apparently a result of China’s military rise and creation of A2/AD capabilities. This signaled to the regional powers that they had to coexist with an emerging regional actor; it was time to make decisions on choosing sides, and actually look for a new patron. It is interesting that the Philippines under Duterte’s bandwagoning approach has still continued the defense modernization programs initiated by Aquino during his balancing policy. Manila has increased its defense budget by 15% in 2018 and has declared its intentions to continue acquiring the military equipment, including conventional submarines.¹²⁶ On the other hand, however, the Philippines clearly prefers China and Russia over other suppliers like the United States or its allies, thus making sure to pass the message that Manila is not intending to balance

¹²³ Heydarian, “Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy,” 231.

¹²⁴ Philip Davidson, Advance Policy Questions for Admiral Philip Davidson, USN Expected Nominee for Commander, U.S. Pacific Command, May 2018, 18, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Davidson_APQs_04-17-18.pdf.

¹²⁵ Murphy, “Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages,” 174.

¹²⁶ Renato Cruz De Castro, “Is the Philippine Navy About to Leapfrog into the Twenty-First Century?,” *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative* (blog), September 2018, <https://amti.csis.org/philippine-navy-leapfrog-twenty-first-century/>.

against China.¹²⁷ Moreover, the ever-growing capability gap between the Philippines and China clearly suggests that focusing on internal balancing alone would be a meaningless effort by the Duterte Administration. Internal balancing takes a tremendous amount of resources and capabilities. It is harder to hold the balancing posture, especially if one does not have a stronger ally. Hence, downsizing the military cooperation with United States ultimately puts Manila on the bandwagoning path with China. Without powerful external allies, small powers are usually destined to bandwagon, because of the lack of the resources to actually balance against the rising great powers.¹²⁸ The Philippines case once again demonstrates the truth of this postulate. Duterte's statements on the nature of the Philippines' foreign policy further reaffirm this logic. He has openly declared that he would never go to war against China and would not risk the lives of Filipino soldiers simply because winning would be impossible, thus making the choice irrational.¹²⁹

d. Counterargument - The Duterte Factor

The Duterte factor is essentially one of the most important counterarguments that can be applied to the key hypothesis of this thesis. Some might argue that the ongoing changes in the Philippine foreign policy are nothing more than a reflection of a particular leader's views. According to this claim, Manila's shift towards bandwagoning with China is a personal preference of President Rodrigo Duterte and would change as soon as he leaves office. Duterte is indeed the first president to call for downgrading the U.S. alliance and deepening security ties with China at the same time.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, is he the only one to push the Philippines to abandon hedging strategies? The previous sections clearly demonstrate that the Philippines' shift from hedging did not start when Duterte acquired power in 2016. On the contrary, it has much deeper roots and was initiated in the early

¹²⁷ Manuel Mogato, "We'll Buy Arms from Russia, Philippines' Duterte Tells Putin," *Reuters*, November 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-apec-summit-philippines-russia/well-buy-arms-from-russia-philippines-duterte-tells-putin-idUSKBN1DA1K7>.

¹²⁸ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 101–2.

¹²⁹ Alexis Romero, "Duterte: War with China Is like Committing Suicide," *Philippine Star*, June 7, 2018, <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/06/07/1822331/duterte-war-china-committing-suicide>.

¹³⁰ Heydarian, "Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy," 234.

2010s under President Benigno Aquino.¹³¹ Aquino's shift from a hedging to a balancing policy was a response to China's already growing military capabilities and coercive policy, and had less to do with his personal preferences, as in case of Duterte's anti-American policies. The fact that Duterte has long been known as an anti-American politician does not undermine the structural realist argument. In fact, it even strengthens its logic by highlighting that Duterte secured a decisive victory over multiple well-funded mainstream candidates, while the public was well aware of his anti-American sentiments.¹³² This suggests that Duterte was hardly the only Filipino who thought about abolishing ties with the United States and bandwagoning with China instead. Perhaps the domestic opinion was already mobilized around the need to bandwagon with China due to its growing military capabilities and America's relative decline in promoting security guarantees accordingly. Anyway, both Aquino and Duterte were acting to respond the changing international environment, which was mainly caused by China's military rise and the U.S. unwillingness to restore the previous balance of power and maintain the credibility of the U.S. commitments to its allies. All of these actually demonstrate that even before Duterte there were some shifts from hedging toward more of a balancing or bandwagoning approach. It is important to realize that even though Duterte has changed foreign policy 180 degrees, he has merely continued what was started before him as a result of China's growth and the rising great power competition in the region. The reason why the Philippines chose balancing but later ended up taking the bandwagoning stance is actually quite simple. Manila had hoped for U.S. support, but it soon perceived that America was not willing to escalate relationship with China to direct military confrontation for the Philippines, so it chose the option that was more pragmatic.

4. Conclusion

The detailed analysis of the Philippines' foreign policy strategy through the last decades demonstrated that Manila indeed started with hedging as a key strategy for its

¹³¹ Aileen Baviera, "President Duterte's Foreign Challenges," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 38, no. 2 (2016): 202–8.

¹³² Heydarian, "Tragedy of Small Power Politics: Duterte and the Shifting Sands of Philippine Foreign Policy," 229–30.

foreign decision-making calculus. Nevertheless, after the significant changes in the security environment, namely China's tremendous military advancements and growing coercive behavior, the Philippines was forced to abandon hedging policies and to choose sides with the emerging power, rather than the existing hegemon. The old formula of security ties with the United States along with economic engagement with China was no longer applicable. The Philippines, as a U.S. ally, envisioned American support as a given, which contributed to a shift toward balancing behavior in the beginning. Soon, however, it became clear for Manila that Washington was rather ambivalent about backing up its commitments to its allies due to China's A2/AD capabilities and increased risks in the event of direct confrontation. This resulted a dramatic change in the Philippine foreign calculus and the Duterte Administration has adopted bandwagoning policies directed at engaging China in terms of both economy and security, while at the same time downgrading the defense cooperation with the United States.

C. VIETNAM

Vietnam has effectively practiced hedging policies since the normalization of its relations with major great powers in the 1990s. Vietnam, as well as the Philippines, has focused on strengthening economic relations with China through the 1990s and the 2000s, while at the same time making some efforts to develop its strategic options by multidirectional foreign policy, one of the key aspects of which was forming the security cooperation with the United States. By the end of the 2000s and early 2010s, China's military advancements started to affect the regional security environment, forcing Vietnam to abandon its hedging stance and shift to a balancing policy. The shift was fortified by the expectation that the United States would take the lead in containing China throughout the South China Sea. The subsequent deviation in the U.S. commitments toward the region, however, made Vietnam pull back and reorient its foreign policy toward a more bandwagoning posture. To unpack in more detail the rationale behind these transformations, the following section analyzes these periods separately: starting from Vietnam's historical experience with hedging, moving to its shift to balancing, and finally addressing Vietnam's reorientation toward bandwagoning policies.

1. Historical Experience: Hedging as Historical Norm

Vietnam's historical experience was very different from that of the Philippines. While the Philippines enjoyed the status of major U.S. ally in the region for several decades, Vietnam's relations with the United States have changed dramatically, from being an adversary to becoming a partner. Vietnam's relations with China have not been linear either. Initially acting as a big brother and a good comrade, China became a major enemy during the Third Indochina War, and ended up as a significant partner afterwards. Vietnam's security environment has also drastically changed since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The country found itself isolated without major allies among the great powers. To address this challenge Vietnam developed a pro-active multidirectional foreign policy and diversified its relations with other nations.¹³³ This approach was further strengthened by Doi Moi, the economic renovation policy started in the mid-1980s, which implied the shift from a planned to market-oriented economy. The historical experience of non-linear and complex relationships with other powers pushed Vietnam to cultivate the formula of cooperation and struggle, meaning that with any particular state Vietnam could have points of cooperation and points of struggle simultaneously.¹³⁴ In terms of foreign policy, this approach was translated into developing close economic ties with China, while at the same time expanding security cooperation with other major powers, including the United States.¹³⁵ This, in terms used in this thesis, is essentially a codification of a hedging strategy. Thus, after the normalization of its relations with major great powers in the early 1990s, Vietnam effectively started to practice hedging policies.

The approach of leaving the space for controversies with friends and for cooperation with adversaries was maintained through the 2000s as well.¹³⁶ During this period, Vietnam's foreign policy was best described as hedging. On the one hand, Hanoi

¹³³ Carlyle Thayer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy in an Era of Rising Sino-US Competition and Increasing Domestic Political Influence," *Asian Security* 13, no. 3 (July 2017): 185.

¹³⁴ Hiep Le Hong, "Vietnam's Hedging Strategy against China since Normalization," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 35, no. 3 (2013): 342–44.

¹³⁵ Le Hong, 342–44.

¹³⁶ Thayer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy in an Era of Rising Sino-US Competition and Increasing Domestic Political Influence," 185.

was putting major emphasis on enhancing economic cooperation with China while on the other hand, it initiated closer security cooperation with the United States, especially since 2003.¹³⁷ In due course, Hanoi signed the treaty on Delimitation of the Territorial Sea, the Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf in the Gulf of Tonkin with China, and simultaneously announced its readiness to receive U.S. supply vessels at Cam Ranh Bay.¹³⁸ During the same period, Vietnam-Chinese relations were gaining momentum in both the political and economic domains.¹³⁹ The situation has changed since the late 2000s, after China's military advancements became an indisputable threat to the regional balance of power and brought the existing status quo into question, making the hedging strategy irrelevant and even troublesome.

2. End of Hedging: Beginning of Balancing

China's military rise facilitated Beijing's expansionist attitudes and aggressive foreign policy, evolved since the late 2000s. This development challenged the interests of several Southeast Asian countries. Vietnam occupies more islands in the disputed territories than any other Southeast Asian nation; therefore, it was inherently more sensitive to any provocations than others might have been.¹⁴⁰ As a response to China's rise and the threat it posed to the existing status quo, Vietnam shifted from the hedging described previously to more of a balancing policy. Although Vietnam's shift was not as clear-cut as that of the Philippines', much evidence of this shift was manifested in terms of Hanoi's increasing focus on military modernization, deepening its security relations with the United States, and undermining the one-sided view of China as an economic powerhouse.

China's military advancements and its increasing military posture in the South China Sea were key drivers in Vietnam's changing perceptions about its neighbor. China clearly transformed from being the source of economic opportunities for Vietnam to being

¹³⁷ Ruonan Liu and Xuefeng Sun, "Regime Security First: Explaining Vietnam's Security Policies towards the United States and China (1992-2012)," *Pacific Review* 28, no. 5 (2015): 766.

¹³⁸ Liu and Sun, 765.

¹³⁹ Daniel Kai Liu, "Seas of Change: The Effects of China's Naval Modernization on Southeast Asia" (master's thesis, The University of Sydney, 2011), 42-43.

¹⁴⁰ Kai Liu, 44.

the source of threat and aggression. If during the 1990s and early 2000s China was mainly associated with long-term economic benefits, after the 2010s, it demonstrated itself as a revisionist actor with expansionist intentions.¹⁴¹ Subsequently, Hanoi started to openly identify China as a threat.¹⁴² This radical change in perceptions negatively affected the close economic partnership of the two states. Vietnam started to prioritize security risks over economic benefits while making decisions about further economic enhancements with China. One example of this trend was the rejection of the Chinese offer to construct a high-speed railway connecting Phnom Penh and Ho Chi Minh City, based on security concerns of many Vietnamese, in view of the fact that China could later use the railway to deploy troops easily in the event of an attack against Vietnam.¹⁴³ Moreover, Vietnam started to favor economic cooperation with states other than China.¹⁴⁴ At the same time, Vietnam began to diversify its options, establishing strategic partnerships with 16 countries and comprehensive partnerships with ten other states.¹⁴⁵ Vietnam has put an emphasis on internationalization of the disputes within the South China Sea and balancing China's rising influence with the help of other great powers.¹⁴⁶ While doing so, Vietnam has primarily focused on fortifying its relations with five major powers: the United States, China, Russia, Japan and India.¹⁴⁷

Vietnam's multi-directional foreign policy gave it an ability to diversify its relations globally and helped greatly when the country focused on military modernization. Even though Russia has long been its major supplier of military equipment and technology,

¹⁴¹ Liang, "The Rise of China as a Constructed Narrative: Southeast Asia's Response to Asia's Power Shift," 285.

¹⁴² Liang, 279–81.

¹⁴³ Ian Tsung-Yen Chen and Alan Hao Yang, "A Harmonized Southeast Asia? Explanatory Typologies to ASEAN Countries' Strategies to the Rise of China," *Pacific Review* 26, no. 3 (2013): 278–80.

¹⁴⁴ Chen and Yang, 278–80.

¹⁴⁵ Thayer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy in an Era of Rising Sino-US Competition and Increasing Domestic Political Influence," 185.

¹⁴⁶ Chen and Yang, "A Harmonized Southeast Asia? Explanatory Typologies to ASEAN Countries' Strategies to the Rise of China," 278–80.

¹⁴⁷ Murphy, "Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages," 175.

Vietnam has managed to make procurements from several other countries too, such as the United States, Ukraine, Belarus, Romania, France, Spain, Canada, and others.¹⁴⁸ It is important to highlight that these procurements were far from being typical replacements of outdated systems and envisaged the more far-reaching goal of a new capacity building for the Vietnamese armed forces.¹⁴⁹ In 2010, Vietnam acquired six diesel-electric Kilo-class submarines from Russia.¹⁵⁰ It also made a deal to acquire DHC-6 Twin Otter Series 400 aircraft from Canada and obtained helicopters and army transport aircraft from France.¹⁵¹ With the emphasis on creating retaliatory capabilities through advanced weapon systems, Vietnam obtained 36 Sukhoi Su-30MK2 multirole aircraft, shore-based anti-ship cruise missiles, and surface-to-air missile batteries.¹⁵² As a result of these procurements, Vietnam was the eighth largest importer of arms worldwide from 2011 to 2015.¹⁵³ At the end, Vietnam also “greatly expanded its coast guard presence, fielding a force larger than those of the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia combined.”¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, due to the asymmetry between Vietnam and China, Hanoi’s efforts directed at internal balancing could hardly be considered a success without external support.

In addition to military modernization programs, Vietnam has also put an emphasis on deepening security cooperation with the United States, the only candidate capable of containing China in the South China Sea.¹⁵⁵ It was clear for Vietnam that American military presence in the region was the only effective tool against China’s military rise and its revisionist intentions in the sea domain, which are reaffirmed by viewing the United

¹⁴⁸ Le Hong, “Vietnam’s Hedging Strategy against China since Normalization,” 354–57; Liang, “The Rise of China as a Constructed Narrative: Southeast Asia’s Response to Asia’s Power Shift,” 285.

¹⁴⁹ Zhao and Qi, “Hedging and Geostrategic Balance of East Asian Countries towards China,” 488.

¹⁵⁰ Derek Grossman, “Can Vietnam’s Military Stand Up to China in the South China Sea?,” *Asia Policy* 13, no. 1 (January 2018): 117–19.

¹⁵¹ Zhao and Qi, “Hedging and Geostrategic Balance of East Asian Countries towards China,” 488.

¹⁵² Grossman, “Can Vietnam’s Military Stand Up to China in the South China Sea?,” 117–19.

¹⁵³ Thayer, “Vietnam’s Foreign Policy in an Era of Rising Sino-US Competition and Increasing Domestic Political Influence,” 186.

¹⁵⁴ Grossman, “Can Vietnam’s Military Stand Up to China in the South China Sea?,” 117–19.

¹⁵⁵ Le Hong, “Vietnam’s Hedging Strategy against China since Normalization,” 358–59.

States as the greatest ally and China as the greatest threat by the majority of Vietnamese.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, Vietnam made significant efforts to ally itself with the United States against China since the late 2000s and began to move “from token gestures” to “substantive ties.”¹⁵⁷ Consequently, Hanoi and Washington have focused on strengthening defense cooperation. In 2008, Vietnam and the United States established an annual strategic and security dialogue.¹⁵⁸ In the following year, Washington included Vietnam in foreign military financing (FMF) for the first time.¹⁵⁹ Soon, Vietnam started to host U.S. military vessels such as the destroyer USS John S. McCain and the aircraft carrier USS George Washington, sending an important signal on Hanoi’s willingness to intensify the military cooperation.¹⁶⁰ The parties also established a bilateral Defense Policy Dialogue in 2010,¹⁶¹ followed by technical joint naval exercises in the South China Sea in 2011.¹⁶² The Pivot to Asia policy by the Obama Administration was viewed by Vietnam as a confirmation of America’s long-term commitment and encouraged further enhancement of its partnership with the United States, such as upgrading the relations to Comprehensive Partnership status in 2013.¹⁶³ Hanoi welcomed U.S. support for peaceful resolution of conflicts in the South China Sea based on international law and avoidance of the use of force, since from the Vietnam’s perspective it was directed to restrict China’s leverage and undermine its claims.¹⁶⁴ In addition to strengthening defense cooperation with the United

¹⁵⁶ Pew Research Center, “Global Opposition to U.S. Surveillance and Drones, but Limited Harm to America’s Image: Many in Asia Worry about Conflict with China,” *Global Attitudes and Trends* (blog), July 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/14/global-opposition-to-u-s-surveillance-and-drones-but-limited-harm-to-americas-image/>.

¹⁵⁷ Kai Liu, “Seas of Change: The Effects of China’s Naval Modernization on Southeast Asia,” 51.

¹⁵⁸ Liu and Sun, “Regime Security First: Explaining Vietnam’s Security Policies towards the United States and China (1992-2012),” 755.

¹⁵⁹ Kai Liu, “Seas of Change: The Effects of China’s Naval Modernization on Southeast Asia,” 51.

¹⁶⁰ Zhao and Qi, “Hedging and Geostrategic Balance of East Asian Countries towards China,” 493–94.

¹⁶¹ Kai Liu, “Seas of Change: The Effects of China’s Naval Modernization on Southeast Asia,” 51.

¹⁶² Liu and Sun, “Regime Security First: Explaining Vietnam’s Security Policies towards the United States and China (1992-2012),” 768.

¹⁶³ Le Hong, “Vietnam’s Hedging Strategy against China since Normalization,” 357–58.

¹⁶⁴ Le Hong, 358–59.

States, Vietnam also focused on intensifying economic ties and joined the U.S.-led TPP.¹⁶⁵ The TPP was one of the key pillars of America's Asian Pivot policy, perceived by many as an economic containment initiative against China. By joining the TPP, Vietnam made an important step toward not only diversifying its economy and avoiding dependence on China, but also demonstrating its readiness to take part in economic containment and balancing against China.

3. How and Why Vietnam Ended up with Bandwagoning

Vietnam faces a high threat from China and has mainly negative expectations, making it a perfect candidate for maintaining balancing policies.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, naturally the Philippines' sharp reorientation since the 2016 from balancing against to bandwagoning with China has provided some with hope that Vietnam would take the lead in challenging the territorial claims of Beijing and becoming the key regional state balancing against China.¹⁶⁷ Despite these expectations, though, Vietnam's anti-Chinese sentiments weakened around the same period as the Philippines made its similar shift, as Shaofeng Chen puts it: Hanoi was "more inclined to weave closer ties with Washington and take a strong position towards China" before 2016.¹⁶⁸ Again, the shift in Vietnam's policies was not as sharp as the Philippines' reorientation. Nevertheless, a fair amount of evidence supporting this point has become available and scholars have begun to point to Vietnam's lack of balancing in recent years, wondering why China's capacity and intent to pursue revisionist goals has not provoked additional balancing behavior from Hanoi.¹⁶⁹ Some have even argued that Vietnam has never actually balanced against China due to its worries

¹⁶⁵ Shaofeng Chen, "Regional Responses to China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative in Southeast Asia," *Journal of Contemporary China* 27, no. 111 (2018): 359.

¹⁶⁶ Chen and Yang, "A Harmonized Southeast Asia? Explanatory Typologies to ASEAN Countries' Strategies to the Rise of China," 275.

¹⁶⁷ Huong Le Thu, "Vietnam Should Update Its South China Sea Strategy," SCIS blog, *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative* (blog), December 2018, <https://amti.csis.org/vietnam-should-update-south-china-sea-strategy/>.

¹⁶⁸ Chen, "Regional Responses to China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative in Southeast Asia," 359.

¹⁶⁹ Murphy, "Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages," 174.

about being entrapped in a great power competition and has exclusively practiced hedging policies by diversifying its strategic partnerships with other powers at the times when the U.S.-Vietnamese defense relations progressed remarkably.¹⁷⁰ These authors assess the current arrangement properly indeed; however, their judgment on the absence of balancing whatsoever in Vietnam's foreign policy is misleading. The analysis of Vietnam's policies during the late 2000s and the early 2010s, as shown previously, clearly displays the limitations of these views and demonstrates Vietnam's shift from hedging to balancing behavior during this period. The question then becomes, how and why did Vietnam end up with a more bandwagoning stance anyway?

The following section illuminates constraints on Vietnam's balancing and elucidates the shift to bandwagoning by focusing on Vietnam's efforts to soften its approach to China, the inadequacy of its internal balancing, and most importantly, the deficiencies in its external balancing. Vietnam has started to demonstrate its commitments to balance against China's military rise and its revisionist behavior since the late 2000s. These commitments were demonstrated by taking a hard-line approach to China, focusing on modernization of its own armed forces, and mainly, on emphasizing the deepening of the defense and security cooperation with the United States. These pillars, however, faded away as the United States failed to demonstrate its willingness to catch up with the growing Chinese military presence in the South China Sea and secure its ability to project power throughout the region without much struggle. This signaled to Vietnam that balancing against China was too risky in the absence of strong American commitment, while China's military rise has restricted its ability to hedge effectively between the two. Thus, Vietnam reoriented to bandwagoning with China.

a. Softening the Policies toward China

The first signs of Vietnam's evolving bandwagoning policies were demonstrated by softening its approach to China. Instead of maintaining its newly growing image of hard liner, Vietnam made its way to accommodate China by considering Beijing's interests

¹⁷⁰ Thayer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy in an Era of Rising Sino-US Competition and Increasing Domestic Political Influence," 184.

during its own foreign decision-making process, supporting Chinese until-now-ominous economic propositions, and making efforts to reassure China due to the high risk of potential escalation, the cost of which would be exorbitant after China's military advancements.

In 2014, China deployed its oil rig Hai Yang Shi You 981 (HD 981) within the Vietnamese claimed Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Vietnam placed its maritime law enforcement ships to defend its sovereignty and national interests; however, at the same time it deployed a special envoy to China in order to avoid deterioration of relations and provocation of escalation.¹⁷¹ China, in turn, placed more than a hundred vessels within the adjacent waters, aggressively interfering and using water cannons against the Vietnamese ships.¹⁷² At the same time, Beijing 'failed' to communicate with Hanoi through the emergency hotline, primarily designed for such circumstances.¹⁷³ The crisis continued for several weeks, but Vietnam could not decide to escalate counter-coercion because of the lack of formal alliances, among other reasons.¹⁷⁴ Vietnam neglected the option of turning to the United States for support or emphasizing international legal action.¹⁷⁵ It only partially attempted to internationalize the incident.¹⁷⁶ Vietnam was still struggling to make a hard decision when China declared that its mission was over and it was withdrawing its forces.¹⁷⁷ This crisis displayed the first signs of Vietnam's diminishing determination to practice a hard posture against China and demonstrated that Hanoi considered the accommodating policies in the absence of strong foreign assistance. This was a

¹⁷¹ Murphy, "Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages," 175.

¹⁷² Thayer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy in an Era of Rising Sino-US Competition and Increasing Domestic Political Influence," 193–94.

¹⁷³ Le Thu, "Vietnam Should Update Its South China Sea Strategy."

¹⁷⁴ Huong Le Thu, "China's Dual Strategy of Coercion and Inducement towards ASEAN," *Pacific Review*, January 2018, 7–8.

¹⁷⁵ Thayer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy in an Era of Rising Sino-US Competition and Increasing Domestic Political Influence," 193–94.

¹⁷⁶ Le Thu, "China's Dual Strategy of Coercion and Inducement towards ASEAN," 7–8.

¹⁷⁷ Thayer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy in an Era of Rising Sino-US Competition and Increasing Domestic Political Influence," 193–94.

considerable signal that without a major ally, Vietnam would rather practice appeasement than balancing in the case of a direct confrontation threat from China.

The relaxation of confrontational policies was followed by significant changes in the Vietnamese perceptions and priorities in regard to China's economic propositions. If during balancing Hanoi put major emphasis on security issues, after the shift, it clearly prioritized the economic benefits. For instance, shortly after the oil rig incident, Hanoi joined Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), proposed by China and viewed by some as a potential balancer to existing U.S.-led financial institutions.¹⁷⁸ Vietnam also changed its position on the Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI), developed by China in 2013 as a maritime complement for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Focused on the security challenges, Vietnam initially worried about the potential political costs of MSRI in regard to the status of the disputed territories within the South China Sea and pursued a healthy skepticism; however, this approach changed after the 2016.¹⁷⁹ At this period, Vietnam "found itself engaged" in the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, Vietnam recently announced its intention to open three special economic zones and lease the land to foreign investors for up to 99 years, with China being viewed by many as the most prominent candidate for the offer.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, Vietnam has agreed to work with China to construct highways and high-speed railways, projects increasing cross-border connectivity, despite turning down similar propositions previously due to security concerns.¹⁸² Beijing truly rewards those with conformist behavior towards its military rise

¹⁷⁸ Tran Truong Thuy, "Vietnam's Relations with China and the U.S. and the Role of ASEAN," in *Security Outlook of the Asia Pacific Countries and Its Implications for the Defense Sector*, NIDS Joint Research Series 14 (Japan: The National Institute for Defense Studies, 2016), 90, http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/joint_research/series14/index.html.

¹⁷⁹ Chen, "Regional Responses to China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative in Southeast Asia," 352.

¹⁸⁰ Jenn-Jaw Soong and Khac Nghia Nguyen, "China's OBOR Initiative and Vietnam's Political Economy: Economic Integration with Political Conflict," *The Chinese Economy* 51, no. 4 (July 2018): 346–47.

¹⁸¹ Keegan Elmer, "'Don't Give Our Land Away': The Clash of Interests in Vietnam's Anti-China Protests," *South China Morning Post*, June 23, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2152150/dont-give-our-land-away-clash-interests-vietnams-anti>.

¹⁸² Soong and Nguyen, "China's OBOR Initiative and Vietnam's Political Economy: Economic Integration with Political Conflict," 350.

and growing territorial claims. After softening its approach towards Beijing, Hanoi also received an appropriate donation: China's foreign direct investment (FDI) into Vietnam more than doubled in 2016.¹⁸³ Even if done ostensibly for economic benefits, Vietnam's formation of bonds with its greater neighbor should definitely be considered a "bandwagoning with security implications."¹⁸⁴

Yet another sign of the fading of its balancing behavior has been Vietnam's growing emphasis on considering Chinese interests in Hanoi's foreign decision-making calculus. An increasing number of current articles on the matter focus on Vietnam's attempt to reassure China during the development of bilateral cooperation with other nations, especially when those partners appear to be rivals of the China.¹⁸⁵ Clearly, Vietnam-U.S. relations are no exception. Therefore, Hanoi has made significant efforts to reassure Beijing that its partnership with the United States is not directed against "any third state," namely China.¹⁸⁶ Hanoi needs to appreciate Beijing's interests and positions about its own foreign policy decisions.¹⁸⁷ In 2017, Vietnam even suspended a gas-drilling project well within its own EEZ due to the Chinese concerns.¹⁸⁸ Consequently, this suggests that Vietnam is not inherently free in its own foreign policy decision making and China possesses a significant influence over Hanoi in that regard. Arguably, this type of relationship is unlikely to be perceived as balancing anymore. Furthermore, it could hardly be described as hedging either, because one of the key characteristics and an important advantage of hedging is the relatively greater freedom of choice in terms of foreign policy decision making. Vietnam, however, has to face increasing restraints from China due to

¹⁸³ Chen, "Regional Responses to China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative in Southeast Asia," 348.

¹⁸⁴ Le Hong, "Vietnam's Hedging Strategy against China since Normalization," 336–37.

¹⁸⁵ Le Thu, "China's Dual Strategy of Coercion and Inducement towards ASEAN," 4.

¹⁸⁶ Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "How Do Weaker States Hedge? Unpacking ASEAN States' Alignment Behavior towards China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, no. 100 (March 2016): 511–12.

¹⁸⁷ Le Thu, "China's Dual Strategy of Coercion and Inducement towards ASEAN," 4.

¹⁸⁸ Mike Ives, "Vietnam, Yielding to Beijing, Backs Off South China Sea Drilling," *The New York Times*, August 4, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/04/world/asia/vietnam-south-china-sea-repsol.html?module=inline>.

the China's growing power projection capabilities, which effectively present Hanoi with the only viable foreign policy option, bandwagoning.

b. Deficiencies of Vietnam's External Balancing Efforts

Vietnam's softened relations with China were accompanied by diminished momentum in the U.S.-Vietnamese relations. Vietnam made some efforts to downplay the cooperation with the United States. Clearly, the rationale behind this decision was to reassure China and avoid unnecessary provocation in order to minimize the risk of facing the Chinese threat alone. One of the latest examples of such developments was the cancellation by Vietnam of 15 "defense engagement activities" with the United States during the last year, including "army, navy and air force exchanges."¹⁸⁹ Moreover, Vietnam has refused to participate in the largest U.S.-led military exercise Cobra Gold, a signal of the slowing momentum of military-to-military engagement.¹⁹⁰ Vietnam also refused to upgrade its naval exchanges with America to naval exercises.¹⁹¹ Up until today, Hanoi avoids taking part in war games and prefers non-combat scenarios for mutual military activities.¹⁹² Furthermore, in order to avoid provoking China, Vietnam has developed a practice of "briefing" its giant neighbor after the military interactions with the United States.¹⁹³ These examples clearly demonstrate Vietnam's retreat from keeping the high pace of deepening the military cooperation with the United States.

The major reason for Vietnam's retreat was the U.S. failure to display the same level of readiness for balancing against China as Vietnam had demonstrated. Washington used the security dialogue with Hanoi mostly to criticize it over human rights violations,

¹⁸⁹ Hiep Le Hong, "Why Did Vietnam Cancel Its Defence Engagements with the US?," *Yusof Ishak Institute* (blog), December 2018, <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/medias/commentaries/item/8691-why-did-vietnam-cancel-its-defence-engagements-with-the-us-by-le-hong-hiep>.

¹⁹⁰ Liu and Sun, "Regime Security First: Explaining Vietnam's Security Policies towards the United States and China (1992-2012)," 756.

¹⁹¹ Thayer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy in an Era of Rising Sino-US Competition and Increasing Domestic Political Influence," 194–95.

¹⁹² Liu and Sun, "Regime Security First: Explaining Vietnam's Security Policies towards the United States and China (1992-2012)," 756.

¹⁹³ Liu and Sun, 756–57.

and even banned the arms sale to Vietnam because of these same reasons.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, the United States left the TPP after Donald Trump took office, sending a very negative signal to Hanoi and undermining the U.S. commitment to the region. Confidence in the American president significantly declined in Vietnam, from 78% believing in Obama to only 58% trusting Trump starting from his first year.¹⁹⁵ Hanoi has been gradually forced to reevaluate the reliability of its new partner. Trump's potential disengagement from Southeast Asia could have a negative impact on Vietnam's foreign policy priorities. Without clear U.S. support, Vietnam's balancing policies were fated to fail.

Vietnam has clearly understood that the United States was in fact the only nation that could effectively contain China's military advancements and actually balance against the rising Asian giant. From this perspective, Vietnam's interests closely overlapped with those of the United States.¹⁹⁶ Based inherently on this analysis, Vietnam made some significant efforts to develop and strengthen its partnership with the United States and signaled its readiness to follow the American lead in containing Chinese domination, which was a very different approach from Southeast Asian states' usual hedging policies. The United States, however, did not face the same level of threat from China's rise in the short term as the regional nations did. Thus, it could afford the luxury of self-restraint, while most of the Southeast Asian states had to deal with the rising Chinese threats on an everyday basis. By doing so, the United States failed to manifest its willingness to contain China's rising military capabilities and could not justify the hopes of regional states in terms of security.

Many scholars still mistakenly believe that Washington's failure to pursue tangible responses to China's military rise must have been positively perceived by Vietnam, due to the fact that Southeast Asian states have usually feared entrapment in a great power competition and avoided choosing sides.¹⁹⁷ These scholars fail to acknowledge that the

¹⁹⁴ Zhao and Qi, "Hedging and Geostrategic Balance of East Asian Countries towards China," 495.

¹⁹⁵ Chen, "Regional Responses to China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative in Southeast Asia," 355–56.

¹⁹⁶ Thayer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy in an Era of Rising Sino-US Competition and Increasing Domestic Political Influence," 194–95.

¹⁹⁷ Thayer, 196–97.

situation has significantly changed since the 2010s. China's impressive military advancements have weakened the U.S. power projection capability and undermined the existing security environment, making hedging policies impractical. Beijing has actually succeeded in recent years in limiting the freedom of maneuver of other nations within the South China Sea.¹⁹⁸ The increasingly powerful revisionist China has continually asked for significant concessions, especially demanding regional states to choose sides by pressuring them over evolving cooperation with other nations, particularly the United States.¹⁹⁹ As a result of increasing Chinese pressure and diminishing U.S. commitment, Vietnam was forced to alter its clearly developed balancing behavior and limit further elaboration of external balancing.

c. Inadequacy of Internal Balancing

Strengthening of U.S.-Vietnamese relations certainly was the flagship, but hardly the only tool in Vietnam's balancing toolset. Hanoi had also put considerable emphasis on modernizing its armed forces and increasing its own military capabilities. Internal balancing, however, does usually have its own limitations for small powers. Despite the impressive advancements in modernization efforts, Vietnam's armed forces are still inadequate in comparison to China's PLA.²⁰⁰ Taking into account the existing imbalance between the two, it becomes evident that Vietnam cannot compete with China in terms of its military modernization.²⁰¹ According to the analysis of Derek Grossman, Vietnam is incapable of carrying out a full-scale maritime war against Chinese forces, making it reliant on the U.S. military presence in the region.²⁰² He suggests that Vietnam's warfighting

¹⁹⁸ Bonnie Glaser and Gregory Poling, "Vanishing Borders in the South China Sea," *Foreign Affairs*, June 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-06-05/vanishing-borders-south-china-sea>.

¹⁹⁹ Thayer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy in an Era of Rising Sino-US Competition and Increasing Domestic Political Influence," 187.

²⁰⁰ Grossman, "Can Vietnam's Military Stand Up to China in the South China Sea?," 130.

²⁰¹ Le Thu, "Vietnam Should Update Its South China Sea Strategy."

²⁰² Grossman, "Can Vietnam's Military Stand Up to China in the South China Sea?," 114.

doctrine is not yet ready, trainings are not effective, there is a shortfall of awareness capacity, and a need for more compatibility in terms of weapon systems.²⁰³

Moreover, Vietnam has failed so far to successfully transform its armed forces into a capable naval power—even though the lowered risk of land conflict has long made it possible for Vietnam to focus primarily on naval capacity building.²⁰⁴ This shift in focus was obviously justified by China’s advancements in naval capabilities and an increase in its military posture in the South China Sea.²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the Vietnamese army still maintains its status of major service, and in fact, other services are often viewed as supplements to the land forces.²⁰⁶ This thinking is probably the legacy of close military ties with the Soviet Union and is justified by the historical experience of the army’s leading role in fighting adversaries, but there must be more to that as well. Vietnam clearly appreciates the importance of the sea domain; however, it must also acknowledge that without the U.S. military presence in South China Sea, Vietnam’s naval forces could never guarantee the peace and stability if directly challenged by the Chinese military. Therefore, without the clear support of a third party, Hanoi would always be determined to avoid direct-armed escalation with China in the South China Sea “at all costs” as it currently asserts.²⁰⁷

d. Why Bandwagoning Instead of Balancing?

The case of the Philippines demonstrated the U.S. failure to communicate its willingness to maintain its commitments to allies. This significantly affected the Philippines’ foreign policy. Obviously, the same applies to Vietnam. In fact, Vietnam is far more vulnerable in that sense, since it does not even enjoy a formal alliance with the United States. Vietnam’s push for more of a balancing approach was primarily based on the premise that America had the will and the power to maintain its power projection

²⁰³ Grossman, 114.

²⁰⁴ Le Hong, “Vietnam’s Hedging Strategy against China since Normalization,” 351–52.

²⁰⁵ Grossman, “Can Vietnam’s Military Stand Up to China in the South China Sea?,” 115.

²⁰⁶ Grossman, 123–24.

²⁰⁷ Grossman, 130.

capabilities throughout the South China Sea and to contain the expansion of Chinese military deployments within the territories. Even Hanoi's focus on modernization of the armed forces and defense capacity building could be viewed from the perspective of demonstrating itself as an asset for a potential U.S.-Vietnamese alliance. Vietnam has clearly tried to demonstrate its willingness to complement the U.S. efforts to restrain China in the South China Sea and while doing so apparently made some important steps, shifting from hedging to balancing behavior. The U.S.-Vietnamese partnership initially addressed the security concerns of Vietnam by highlighting the importance of solving the South China Sea disputes for both parties.²⁰⁸ As the effects of Chinese A2/AD increased, however, American determination decreased due to the risk averse policies of the United States, putting the U.S. will to back its commitments under question and placing Vietnam in a position similar to that of the Philippines. Therefore, it is no surprise that Vietnam also followed the same pattern and moved to bandwagoning policies.

The important question to ask is why Vietnam initiated its balancing policies in the first place. Unlike the Philippines, Vietnam has never enjoyed a formal alliance with the United States. In fact, it has not enjoyed a formal alliance with any other great powers for a long time. On the contrary, Vietnam has long practiced the policy of Three Nos, refusing to join the alliances; to host military bases of other states; and to prevent the use of its own territory by other nations to pursue military operations against third parties.²⁰⁹ These self-restraint principles are somewhat neutrality focused and limit Vietnam's space for practicing both balancing and bandwagoning policies, a deliberate choice of this medium power. How do these principles fit into Vietnam's foreign policy and occurring shifts? Some might argue that these restrictions have limited the U.S.-Vietnamese partnership building process in the first place.²¹⁰ This view implies that Vietnam actually failed to back up the promising relationship with the United States, not vice-versa. It is important to

²⁰⁸ Le Hong, "Vietnam's Hedging Strategy against China since Normalization," 358–59.

²⁰⁹ Murphy, "Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages," 173.

²¹⁰ Thayer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy in an Era of Rising Sino-US Competition and Increasing Domestic Political Influence," 194–95.

realize, however, that these policies are the result of Vietnam's unique historical experience and they should not be regarded as constants when evaluating the contemporary developments. By initiating the cooperation with the United States and enhancing the partnership in a relatively short time, Vietnam clearly signaled that it was considering making strategic adjustments to its foreign policy priorities. With the U.S. failure to meet expectations, however, Vietnam was left with no other option than to pull back. Hence, in the current arrangement, the Three Nos principles certainly contribute to Vietnam's bandwagoning policies.

e. Counterargument - Anti-Chinese Sentiments

One of the most important counterarguments against the claims of the thesis on Hanoi's ongoing bandwagoning with China is the growing anti-Chinese attitudes in Vietnamese society. Many scholars have pointed out that the public opinion in Southeast Asia is increasingly antagonistic towards China.²¹¹ This trend contradicts our finding that Vietnam has already relaxed its balancing behavior and has shifted toward bandwagoning. The growing anti-Chinese sentiments could be viewed as a reflection of balancing policies. Such a judgment, however, is misleading. These sentiments might really be provoked as a result of balancing policies, but they do not affect the current decision-making calculus to the extent they are often assumed to.

Many scholars have focused on the increasing role of the public opinion in the strategic decision making of Vietnam.²¹² Some have argued that without public approval for the state's foreign policy even the legitimacy of the government could be threatened, suggesting that Vietnam's government is almost a hostage of its own people's anti-Chinese views.²¹³ The supporters of these arguments point to the examples that demonstrate the

²¹¹ Vanessa Lamb and Nga Dao, "Perceptions and Practices of Investment: China's Hydropower Investment in Vietnam and Myanmar," *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 38, no. 3 (2017): 395–97.

²¹² Murphy, "Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages," 166.

²¹³ Thayer, "Vietnam's Foreign Policy in an Era of Rising Sino-US Competition and Increasing Domestic Political Influence," 183.

growing involvement of the society in the decision-making process. For instance, during the 2014 oil rig crisis, intense anti-Chinese protests brought harm to several hundred Chinese businesses on Vietnamese territories and pressured the government to follow a harder line approach.²¹⁴ Moreover, Vietnamese society openly challenged the government's decision to grant the Chinese the right to bauxite mining and forced it to modify the project.²¹⁵ These examples reflect the increasing importance of public opinion, but we have to acknowledge its limits. Even in these examples, public opinion was not decisive. As discussed earlier, during the oil rig crisis, Vietnam pursued a relatively soft approach to China anyway. Even in the bauxite mining case, the key components of the project actually continued after the government stated that bauxite mining was “a major policy of the party and state” and fired only a small number of the Chinese companies, mostly a symbolic gesture.²¹⁶

The trend of growing anti-Chinese sentiment is real, but it is a product of previously analyzed balancing behavior of Vietnam. It is not an independent variable whatsoever. Moreover, Vietnam is still a one-party state, with the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) in the leading seat. Thus, the system itself limits the influence of public opinion to a great extent. Even in democracies, public opinion is not necessarily the leading variable for foreign policy formulation. Therefore, the claims that the rise of anti-Chinese sentiments could lead to balancing behavior are exaggerated. This is especially evident considering the rational structuralist calculus. These attitudes are a product of Vietnam's previously practiced balancing policies and are unlikely to negatively affect the existing shift to bandwagoning.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of Vietnam's foreign policy has demonstrated that Vietnam practiced hedging as a primary approach during the 1990s and most of the 2000s. The immense

²¹⁴ Murphy, “Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Southeast Asian Foreign Policy: Exploring the Linkages,” 180.

²¹⁵ Murphy, 179.

²¹⁶ Thayer, “Vietnam's Foreign Policy in an Era of Rising Sino-US Competition and Increasing Domestic Political Influence,” 192.

advancement in China's military capabilities, however, challenged the existing balance of power within the South China Sea and posed a threat to Vietnam's security. Therefore, Vietnam was forced to alter its long-practiced hedging policy and pursue more active balancing against the rising power. Vietnam's shift to balancing behavior was reflected in its intense emphasis on the development of its own military capabilities and the evolution of close security and defense ties with the United States. Clearly, the choice in favor of balancing was made based on the assumption that America was willing to take the lead in containing China's military advancements in the South China Sea. Vietnam soon found that this assumption was somewhat inaccurate, and in the absence of U.S. leadership, Hanoi was doomed to suffer the same fate as the Philippines. The absence of a formal alliance with the United States made Vietnam's shifts in strategy less sharp than those of the Philippines'; however, in the end Hanoi also followed the same path as Manila did and has reverted to a policy more akin to bandwagoning with China.

D. COMPARISON AND ANALYSIS

The analysis of the foreign policies of the Philippines and Vietnam in recent decades has demonstrated that China's military advancements have affected those regional states' strategies and pushed them to search for new postures instead of long-enjoyed hedging practices. Hedging was their major policy during the 1990s and 2000s; however, both have been forced to reject hedging as a no longer viable foreign policy option after the development of China's A2/AD capability posed a challenge to the U.S. military posture in the South China Sea and effectively threatened the existing security environment of the region. This development called into question the decades-long primacy of the United States in the region and has signaled the possible emergence of a bipolar security environment. Consequently, the regional states found that practicing hedging strategies had become extremely hard, since the system itself pushed them to pick sides between the emerging coercive actor and the existing hegemon, a choice they could avoid while China was only an economic giant.

As the analysis demonstrated, in response to the ongoing changes in the security architecture of East Asia, both the Philippines and Vietnam abandoned the old practices

and shifted to balancing behavior. There were some slight differences in their shifts in behavior though. The shift of the Philippines was much more explicit, even though considerable evidence was promulgated for the Vietnamese case as well. The Philippines proclaimed active balancing and openly promoted anti-Chinese policies, including the case against China that Manila brought before the international tribunal court, its own military modernization, and most importantly, the strengthening of security ties with the United States. Vietnam also started to view China as a threat, put emphasis on defense modernization, and made some significant advances in regard to strengthening security ties with the United States. Its balancing behavior, however, was more modest compared to the Philippines. Based on the characteristic of the two, this variance was very much expected. While the Philippines had long enjoyed being a U.S. ally in the region and could always rely on American security guarantees, Vietnam's relations with the United States were mostly embryonic and undeveloped. Therefore, even though Vietnam made significant efforts to strengthen its security cooperation with the United States, it could not directly rely on American security guarantees and was naturally more limited in the extent to which it could take its balancing policies.

The first shift to more balancing behavior was soon followed by a reorientation, and both the Philippines and Vietnam have ended up on a more or less clearly defined bandwagoning path with China. Again, the reorientation of the Philippines has been much sharper and more easily noticeable; nonetheless, one could have observed some considerable indications in case of Vietnam as well. As a result of its shift from balancing to bandwagoning policies, the Philippines has put an emphasis on deepening its security cooperation with China, and even more importantly, has downgraded its military ties with the United States. By doing so, the Philippines has clearly demonstrated its willingness to not only abandon its balancing policies against China, but also to refuse to return to hedging practices, which implied security ties with Washington and economic cooperation with Beijing. Vietnam has also moved in the same direction, but with relatively less distinct transitions. Hanoi has softened its policies toward China and has downplayed its relations with the United States by reducing the pace of developments between the two nations. Unlike the Philippines, Vietnam has not performed a 180-degree turnaround, but has

nevertheless demonstrated significant changes in its foreign policy approach. The difference in the depth of the changes between the Philippines and Vietnam is consistent with the hypothesis and broader logic of the thesis. The key driving force behind the change from the balancing to bandwagoning policies was the relative decline of the United States as a reliable partner for the Southeast Asian nations in the case of hypothetical conflict against a militarily rising China. U.S.-Philippines relations were much more mature and the Philippines has been more reliant on American security guarantees than Vietnam has been, thus Manila has gone further in balancing against China and consequently its reorientation to bandwagoning has been more evident. Vietnam, on the other hand, has been relatively less reliant on the American military presence in the region and relatively modest in balancing against China, thus its reorientation has been more moderate. However, its security environment has also been significantly affected by China's military rise and development of A2/AD zones, thus it cannot afford to return to hedging strategies due to the same structuralist challenges facing the Philippines.

The definitions of balancing, bandwagoning, and hedging provided in the previous chapters help to clearly differentiate hedging behavior from both the balancing and bandwagoning behaviors and vice versa. Nevertheless, a visual demonstration would also be helpful in that regard. Thus, the graph in the Figure 4 displays both the hedging path as well as balancing-bandwagoning path for the Southeast Asian states and demonstrates the substantial differences between these approaches.

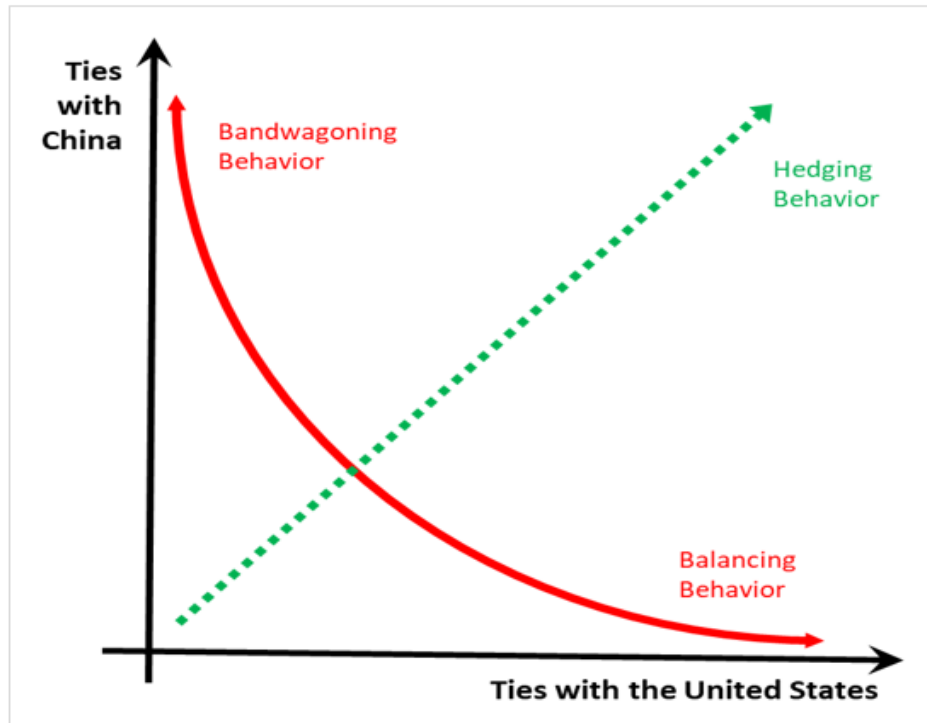


Figure 4. The Visualization of Balancing, Bandwagoning, and Hedging Behaviors

As the graph demonstrates, the balancing and bandwagoning strategies (the red curve) for Southeast Asian states are the opposite sides of the same type of behavior, while hedging is very different from both of them and does not simply aim to be the middle point between the two. As the red curve displays, in the case of both balancing and bandwagoning, increasing ties with one great power essentially leads to decreasing ties with other. While the green dashed line indicates that in the case of hedging, increasing ties with both great powers at the same time is possible.

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IV. CONCLUSION

This thesis has analyzed the responses of key Southeast Asian states, namely the Philippines and Vietnam, to China's immense military modernization and growth and the formation of A2/AD zones. The central hypothesis of the thesis has been that China's military rise has challenged the existing status quo in regional security, thus undermining the long-established hedging strategies of the regional states and pushing them to shift to more of a balancing or bandwagoning behavior.

In order to test the hypothesis, this thesis first analyzed China's military modernization through the last two decades and the effects of its A2/AD zones on the U.S. power projection capabilities. Then the thesis assessed the current U.S. responses to evaluate whether American counter-steps were enough to defend the long-enjoyed status quo of the U.S. hegemony in the region. Afterward, the thesis addressed the responses of the Philippines and Vietnam through detailed case studies of the foreign policies of the two over the last 20 years.

A. KEY CHALLENGES

This thesis had to face two major challenges during the research phase. The first challenge had to do with the nature of hedging practices. Since hedging comprises a very flexible strategy, it was difficult to distinguish whether the detected changes in the respective foreign policies of the Philippines and Vietnam were really indicators of moving away from hedging or if they were actually a part of the hedging strategy itself. In order to address this challenge, the thesis has used a clearly defined definition of hedging, based on Chien-Peng Chung's description.²¹⁷ The thesis has defined hedging as a rational strategy, directed at maximizing the security guarantees by engaging the hegemon's security policies in order to enjoy the stability of the unipolar system, while at the same time preserving the freedom of action to pursue own national interests of maximizing economic benefit. This has suggested that any significant movement toward downgrading the security cooperation

²¹⁷ Chung, "Southeast Asia-China Relations: Dialectics of 'Hedging' and 'Counter-Hedging,'" 35–53.

with the United States and forming security ties with China would be regarded as a bandwagoning posture. On the other hand, if these regional states put major emphasis on strengthening security cooperation with the United States or invited more U.S. presence in the region, and limited their interactions with China in the political-economic dimension would be regarded as balancing behavior against China.

The second challenge had to do with the quantitative data. Most of the data on the military expenditures of the Southeast Asian states does not indicate any form of balancing from the regional nations, while the detailed case studies demonstrated that the balancing behavior has actually taken place by both the Philippines and Vietnam for several years. On the other hand, this challenge with the quantitative data is not been new and was anticipated. The discrepancy posed by the data is attributed to the fact that this data can only demonstrate the internal dimension of balancing; however, due to the extreme power imbalance between China and other Southeast Asian states, internal balancing by those states is not a viable option, and thus is hardly practiced. The only form of balancing that these states can afford is an external balancing, which cannot be traced within domestic variables, such as defense spending. Instead, it should be discovered through a detailed analysis of these regional states' foreign policies, the strategy this thesis has applied.

B. MAJOR FINDINGS

Through the analysis of China's military advances, U.S. reactions, and the responses of the Philippines and Vietnam, this thesis has elaborated some major findings.

First, China's military rise and formation of A2/AD zones, in conjunction with its gray zone strategy, have undermined the American power projection capability throughout the region, which poses a threat to U.S. primacy and effectively erodes the long-enjoyed security environment of the region. China's success has ultimately weakened America's credibility in the region and has questioned the United States' reliability as an ally and security provider during a potential conflict with China from the perspective of the regional states.

Second, the United States has acknowledged the emerging threats and has developed several strategic concepts to address the challenge, such as the AirSea Battle,

the JAM-JC, and the JCIC. These concepts, however, are hardly adequate due to their lack of a strategic level overarching policy focused on increasing military spending, enlarging military deployments in the region, and enhancing military interactions with the regional states.

Third, these developments have contributed to an emerging bipolarity and power competition in the region, thus effectively pushing the Southeast Asian states to abandon hedging strategies and making them choose sides between the competing actors. Hedging, long enjoyed by most of the regional states, was only possible because the system was largely unipolar and the Southeast Asian nations were not forced to pick sides. Therefore, they were able to develop close relations with both the United States and China in their own unique ways. China's increased military capability and the relative decline of U.S. access capability to the region due to China's successful establishment of A2/AD zones, has introduced a substantially new reality, where the hedging strategy has become irrelevant and impractical.

Fourth, the initial responses from both the Philippines and Vietnam to China's rise were shifts to more of a balancing stance. They have both acquired balancing policies against China and tried to rely on the U.S. support to enforce these policies. The internal balancing options for the Southeast Asian states, on the other hand, are very limited; thus, they are highly reliant on an external ally to follow the balancing path for a long period.

Fifth, the lack of U.S. interest in directly opposing China's military aggression in the region and its unwillingness to escalate the tensions with Beijing by directly confronting China by force over the interests of allies and partners have led both the Philippines and Vietnam to overhaul their foreign policy preferences and make a reversal toward bandwagoning behavior. These changes were anticipated, as these states' respective balancing stance was doomed anyway without strong external support.

Sixth, even though both the Philippines and Vietnam share the same path in foreign policy shifts, they have faced some differences as well, namely the extent to which Vietnam pushed both balancing and bandwagoning policies was relatively weak compared to the Philippines. The reason for this was the difference in their relations with the United States.

The Philippines has long been a U.S. ally and has enjoyed the U.S. security umbrella. Consequently, it pushed much harder during its balancing phase and had to reverse course a long ways during its shift to bandwagoning. Vietnam, by contrast, had relatively small-scale defense cooperation with the United States and had been a more independent regional military power for decades. Thus, its reliance on U.S. security guarantees was limited. Therefore, its push toward both balancing and bandwagoning behavior was more moderate than that of the Philippines.

Seventh, both the Philippines and Vietnam have ended up on the bandwagoning path with China, and as time goes, their bandwagoning behavior seems only like to strengthen due to China's continued military advancements. The only possibility that could reverse this trend in the future is if the United States makes a political decision to take a more active stance toward the region and pursues more tangible containment policies against China.

C. IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The major findings of this thesis imply that small powers can hardly refuse bandwagoning with rising great powers without strong support from external actors. From the U.S. perspective, this finding is helpful in deciding on the wide spectrum of foreign policy decisions starting from isolationism and ending with deep engagement. According to the findings of this thesis, small powers cannot practice internal balancing against emerging actors for long without foreign assistance, even if they want to, as they usually have less or no capacity to do so. Thus, their balancing policies are doomed to fail without a reliable external ally. From the U.S. perspective, this suggests more active foreign policy and ends up on the deep-engagement side of the spectrum, indeed. From the American perspective, the findings of the thesis clearly argue against leaving security vacuums, since emerging actors have the opportunity to gather a great number of followers such as bandwagoning states in the absence of external (U.S.) involvement, potentially posing an existential threat to U.S. interests in the future.

D. RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This thesis has analyzed how Southeast Asian states have responded to China's military rise and formation of A2/AD zones. Nevertheless, the conclusions, developed as a result of the analysis, are hardly unique to a particular region. The thesis has elaborated sufficiently clear definitions to outline the basic characteristics of the researched phenomenon, in order to provide a functioning model. This creates an opportunity to generalize its conclusions and potentially apply them to other similar regions and actors. One particular relevant and interesting current example of similar developments would be Russia's military advancements and formation of its A2/AD zones within the Black Sea region, and the responses of other regional states to these actions. It would be interesting to test whether the major findings of this thesis hold and are actually transferrable to the case of Russia's military rise and the reactions of the Black Sea regional states

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