

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: COMMEMORATING PHILIPPINES-CHINA RELATIONS AT 45 AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Introduction

Though there were many landmark years in Philippines-China relations, the year 2020 was a great milestone in the two countries' bilateral ties for two reasons.

First, the year 2020 marked the 45 years of colorful bilateral relations between the Philippines and China. This volume contains papers describing new scholarly works examining the various aspects of Philippines-China relations after 45 years of the formal establishment in 1975. Though many studies have been published to examine wide array of issues affecting Philippines-China relations,¹ this volume adds value to the existing scholarly literature as it highlights new discoveries to understand the historical context of bilateral relations based on recently unearthed ancient Chinese sources that have never been used

¹ See for example De Ocampo (1982); Lim (1998); Baviera (2000); Banlaoi (2007); Banlaoi (2012); Ang See (2011); and Ang See and Sta. Romana (2013).

before for scholarly analysis. Publishing these new discoveries in a momentous year, where the two countries commemorate their 45 years of the formal establishment of diplomatic relations, is indeed a groundbreaking moment in the study of Philippines-China relations. This volume is therefore part of the celebration of this joyous occasion.

Second, 2020 was the year of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has enormously affected not only the Philippines and China but also of the entire world. Commemorating the 45 years of Philippines-China relations amidst the pandemic was an epoch-making experience as the crisis ushered in another important era in the two countries' diplomatic history.

The pandemic has tested the resilience of the Philippines and China on how to deal with recent developments and continuing concerns in their bilateral ties such as Chinese migration to the Philippines, Filipino migration to China, Chinese internal migration, Belt and Road Initiative, the West Philippine Sea/South China Sea disputes, China's international behavior, and Chinese-Filipino perceptions of the pandemic. The panoply of challenges facing the Philippines and China during the COVID-19 pandemic has tested the maturity of the two countries to handle the situation after 45 years of bilateral relations.

Their achievements in surmounting the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and their gains after 45 years of their bilateral ties provide strong foundations for the two countries to build their shared future for mutual benefits. Overcoming persistent challenges in their bilateral ties in the post-pandemic period will be their common task in the years ahead.

This volume contains chapters divided in three parts, presenting thought-provoking academic papers written by established and rising Filipino scholars studying various issues and concerns in Philippines-China relations. Most of the papers in this volume were produced during the Carlos Chan Lecture Series on Philippines-China Relations organized in 2019 by the Philippine

Association for Chinese Studies (PACS). PACS organized the Carlos Chan Lecture Series in honor of Ambassador Carlos Chan, the Philippines' special envoy to China and chairman emeritus of the Liwayway Marketing Corporation, the producer of the famous snack food brand Oishi.²

Other papers were written during the Benito Lim Memorial Lecture Series on Chinese Studies in honor of the late Prof. Benito Lim, a great Filipino scholar of Chinese origin who vigorously fought for Filipino citizenship of the Chinese in the Philippines through mass naturalization. PACS co-organized the Benito Lim Lecture Series with the Kaisa Para Sa Kaunlaran and the Filipino-Chinese Friendship Association.³ Some papers in this volume were delivered during the webinars or online forums that PACS organized during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴

The rest of the papers in this volume were solicited from rising Filipino scholars who studied in China and a Chinese scholar specializing in Philippines-China relations.

New Discoveries after 45 Years of Philippines-China Relations

Part One contains three chapters, describing new scholarly discoveries on Philippines-China relations that can provide alternative perspectives to grapple with the history and current developments in the two countries' bilateral ties based on fresh

² PACS organized a total of four lectures under the Carlos Chan Lecture Series on Philippines-China relations.

³ In cooperation with Kaisa Para Sa Kaunlaran and Filipino-Chinese Friendship Association, PACS co-organized a total of three lectures under the Benito Lim Memorial Lecture Series on Chinese Studies.

⁴ As of this writing, PACS has organized at least five webinars during the COVID-19 pandemic.

historical findings unearthed diligently by Filipino scholars studying China, the Chinese, and Philippines-China relations. These alternative perspectives present another narrative that can challenge our conventional understanding of China, the Chinese, and Philippines-China relations.

Part Two is composed of seven chapters, examining recent developments in Philippines-China relations covering migration issues, Belt and Road Initiatives, and China's international behavior. These recent developments have far reaching effects on the future direction of Philippines-China relations.

Part Three has five chapters, analyzing continuing concerns in Philippines-China relations during the COVID-19 pandemic. These continuing concerns are, in fact, spillover of the past and recent developments in the Philippines-China relations made more salient during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teresita Ang See's chapter disclosed new scholarly findings on the long evolution of Philippines-China relations based on current studies on pre-Hispanic Philippines, particularly accounts written by Fr. Martin de Rada and Fr. Miguel de Benavides, among others. For a long time, understanding of Philippine history was based largely on historical accounts of Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson in their 56-volume *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*. Blair and Robertson became authorities on Philippine history and served as major sources of information about the Philippines during the pre-Hispanic and Hispanic periods. But new findings and studies from Chinese sources, and even Spanish sources on China, provide new and exciting narratives on the history of the Philippines and Philippines-China relations. These new narratives have strongly demonstrated the shared history, heritage, and destiny between the Philippines and China.

In her chapter, See also discussed the relations between Beijing and the Balangiga bells. Based on her current studies, she found out that the American forces that suppressed the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900 and massacred the Balangigans of Samar in 1901

came from the same unit: the 9th Infantry Division of the United States Company C. After their missions in China during the Boxer Rebellion, the 9th Infantry Division returned to the Philippines to commit the same atrocities against the Balangigans. When the Balangigans learned about American atrocities against the Chinese during the Boxer Rebellion, the Balangigans developed an extreme hatred against the American soldiers. This led to the Balangiga town uprising that killed nine officers and 50 enlisted men of the 9th Infantry Division. The Americans retaliated in an incident now known as the Balangiga Massacre where American soldiers were ordered “to shoot, not to capture” with “no prisoners” and just to “kill and burn,” turning Samar into “a howling wilderness.”

These common historical experiences of sufferings and tragedies from American forces are the ties that bind the Chinese and Filipinos.

Aside from Boxer rebellion and Balangiga massacre, the Nanjing massacre in China under the Japanese Occupation also had strong bearing on Filipinos. In her research, See discussed two Japanese soldiers, Toshiaki Mukai and Tsuyoshi Noda, who killed more than 100 Chinese in Nanjing between December 1937 and January 1938. After the Nanjing massacre, Mukai and Noda got their next assignment to the Philippines as part of the 19th Infantry Regiment of the 16th Division of the Japanese Imperial Forces. Both Mukai and Noda got also involved in various atrocities in the Philippines during the Japanese colonial period until their eventual arrest in Leyte. Both soldiers were tried and executed in China after the Second World War. This common historical experience provides the shared narratives of pain and survival between Chinese and Filipinos.

Philippine studies from Chinese sources and Chinese-Filipino narratives of the Philippines and China also offer unlimited insights on the history of the Philippines and the evolution of Philippines-China relations. For example, the book *Libro Chino* by Fan Li Ben contains a lot of stories about the relationship between

Spain and China and China and the Philippines. *Libro Chino* was the first Chinese book ever translated into Spanish by 16th century Dominican priest Father Juan Cobo who was assigned at Manila's *Parian*. This book provides many narratives about the Philippines in the context of Spain's relations with China. Further examination of this book can yield more understanding about the Philippines and its relations with Spain and China. In his book, *China and Spain: Creating Global Culture*, published by Luis Francisco Martinez Montes in 2009, *Libro Chino* covered a variety of topics that can unravel more knowledge about the Philippines and its relations with China during the Spanish period.

See also examined the role of the Philippines in China's global maritime trade and its impact on Western nations. She explained that Spain established strong foothold in the Philippines in order to have a strong base to trade with China's Fujian province. She stressed, "Spain got its idea of being an imperial power from Fujian vis-à-vis Chinese traders in Luzon." She even quoted Legaspi's letter to the Spanish King stating, "If you want the sources of spices from Moluccas, then Cebu can become an important base and if His Excellency minds the China trade, then we have to choose Luzon as our base."

In other words, See's chapter underscored that new research findings about the Philippines and China offer wealth of wisdom and how these two countries were inextricably linked in history, culture, and destiny. She concluded that the Chinese and the Filipino people "have been historically and culturally linked through centuries of relations and shared history, heritage, and destiny."

Carmelea Ang See's chapter identified three major Chinese historical sources on the Philippines that have huge implications for the contemporary study of Philippines-China relations: 1) ancient Chinese maps; 2) culture and literature expressed through cultural practices and traditions and seen through stories, poems, and drama; and, 3) imperial records and dynastic annals.

Some ancient Chinese maps, particularly those produced during the 16th and 17th centuries, included many Philippines islands, especially from Luzon and Mindanao. These maps indicate robust interactions between Chinese and Filipinos that have not been fully disseminated to the academic community and even to the wider public both in the Philippines and in China.

Carmelea examined specifically the Selden Map of 1558, which indicated the “depth and breadth of relations between the Chinese and early Filipinos” during the pre-Hispanic Philippines. She argued that ancient Chinese records about the Philippines “give us new knowledge, valuable information, and significant developments hitherto unknown to the general public.” She further stressed that aside from maps, some Chinese dynastic annals, travel accounts, and customs records included many discussions and references on some provinces of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, particularly Mindoro, Pangasinan, Cebu, Butuan, and Sulu, among others.

According to Carmelea, official records from Song and Yuan dynasties produced 12 books that mentioned the Philippines. Ming Dynasty produced 39 books describing Luzon and Sulu and their surrounding areas. The Qing Dynasty, on the other hand, had a total of 58 books citing Luzon and Sulu and their surrounding areas. Examining all these books from different Chinese dynasties can give current scholars new insights and understanding of the history, evolution and recent developments in Philippines-China relations.

These sources can also provide more information of the interesting lives of Filipinos and their interactions with Chinese people during those periods. She gave special emphasis on Sulu’s “unique role” in Philippine history based on ancient Chinese records. She noted that the Sulu Sultanate had the longest tributary relationship with China having sent 16 missions to the Chinese emperor spanning two dynasties, from Ming in 1417 to Qing in 1763, covering a total of 346 years. This long history

of tributary relations can enrich present understanding on the history of Mindanao within the larger history of the Philippines and its relations with China. But the author emphasized that there are still treasure troves of documents still un-mined that other scholars can study and analyze in order to present new perspectives in the study of Philippines-China relations.

Jely A. Galang's chapter is an interesting historical account of how police authorities during the Spanish colonial rule of the Philippines treated the Chinese called either *sangleyes* and *chinos* during that time. The chapter opens with a strong observation that the Spanish colonial government in the Philippines had always considered the Chinese as "necessary outsiders," meaning, they were not considered part of the body politic; they were neither the colonizers nor the colonized (i.e., Filipinos). Galang contends that there was even a perception that the Chinese were just enriching themselves from the Philippines' bountiful resources and economic opportunities, and then return, retire, and live the good life in China.

Galang's historical analysis in this chapter is significant as it can partly explain why the current generation of Filipinos has this negative stereotypical view of the Chinese because of the past colonial experiences under Spain. Galang writes:

During the second half of the 19th century, this negative stereotypical view on the Chinese intensified because of their dominant economic position, growing population, and residence patterns in different parts of the Philippines. Also, the government was concerned about the increasing number of 'undesirable' Chinese – vagrants, drunkards, idlers, unemployed, pickpockets, undocumented, and the "suspicious" – who violated policies related to registration, taxation, and migration. The state regarded this particular segment of the Chinese population as a threat to the colony's political and financial stability. Hence, they were arrested, prosecuted, and punished through the state's judicial apparatus."

Galang's chapter is an eye-opener as it uses many underutilized primary materials from various archives in Manila and Madrid in

order to examine how and why the Spanish colonial government involved the Chinese community in some police enforcements by mobilizing so-called “Chinese agents.” This practice during the Spanish colonial period has current resonance in the light of the recent Chinese migration to the Philippines.

Thus, Galang’s historical study of the role of *tenientes mayores de Chinos* to run after “undesirable Chinese” during the 19th century Philippines presents many valuable findings that can help scholars understand contemporary issues of Philippine law enforcement against some Chinese migrants involved in various crimes. Galang observes that despite the generally negative view of the Chinese, Spanish colonial government relied on the *tenientes mayores de Chinos* to advance and maintain Spain’s colonial rule of the Philippines. Thus, Galang’s chapter is not only relevant for Chinese studies but also for law enforcement studies in the Philippines.

Recent Developments: Migration, POGO, BRI, and ODA

From historical accounts of three previous authors, Rommel Banlaoi’s chapter focuses on recent developments in the Philippines-China relations. His chapter examines law enforcement concerns and security challenges associated with the current Chinese migration in the Philippines under the Duterte administration before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like Jely A. Galang’s historical study, Banlaoi examines the policing of the Chinese but under the current situation arising from the massive influx of Chinese nationals in the Philippines from 2016 to 2019. Using government and non-government data, Banlaoi examines the economic, political, social, and cultural consequences of Chinese migration in the country. Banlaoi argues that Chinese migration in the Philippines dates back to the

ancient times. But, current Chinese migration in the Philippines is posing present challenges in Philippines-China relations because of economic, political, social, and cultural factors. Though Chinese migration presents some economic benefits to Philippine economy, it also creates political, social and cultural costs that have law enforcement and security consequences.

In his study, Banlaoi underscores that when President Duterte encouraged the Chinese people to visit the Philippines in order to boost Philippine tourism and to invest in the country, Philippines-China economic relations became very robust. China became the Philippines' top trading partner and the largest source of imports with a trade volume reaching close to USD 56 billion in 2018 alone. China served as the Philippines' largest foreign investment origin, reaching at least USD 67 million in 2018, and the largest source of net equity capital allocation of around USD 100 million in 2019. However, Banlaoi laments that amidst these economic benefits are social costs and cultural tensions associated with current Chinese migration in the Philippines. Social costs included human trafficking, sex trafficking and prostitution, kidnapping, torture, commission of major index crimes, labor disputes, and many forms of transnational organized crimes happening mostly in the Philippine offshore and gaming operations (POGOs).

Cultural tensions also occur among Chinese nationals and Filipino citizens in the workplace and social media exacerbating "anti-Chinese" sentiments and "Sino-phobia," with Chinese Filipinos suffering the unintended "collateral damages." Even the presence of Chinese workers in the Philippines also created disputes with Filipino workers. These issues have no doubt created law enforcement concerns and security challenges not only in the Philippines but also in China.

Aside from crimes mentioned previously, some of the main security challenges associated with POGO and illegal activities of Chinese nationals in the Philippines are espionage, interference in domestic affairs, and assault to Philippine sovereignty. To address

these law enforcement concerns and security challenges, Banlaoi recommends possible areas where the Philippines and China can cooperate in order to promote their common interests on the issue. These areas include the improvement and strengthening of the countries' tourism, trade, labor, law enforcement, and security relations.

While Banlaoi focuses on Chinese migration in the Philippines, Sidney Bata's chapter examines Filipino migration to China and its implications for Philippines-China relations. His chapter is based on his study in 2007 as part of his 2009 master's thesis at Fudan University. Bata conducted in-depth interviews and field observations in Xiamen, Guangzhou, and Shanghai. Using materials written in both English and local languages in the Philippines and China, the author discovered that Filipinos have been staying in China since 1500 as affirmed by William Henry Scott's research. Before 1967, Shanghai even had a road named Manila Road as most of the Filipinos worked there in the entertainment sector. During the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong forced the Filipinos to return home to the Philippines, but some still stayed behind to work. Filipino workers in China were professionals/senior managers, middle managers/supervisors/technical staff, teachers, service staff, and entertainers. There were also undocumented Filipino workers in China employed either as freelance musicians or domestic helpers.

Bata contends that Filipino workers in China were highly respected, particularly those professionals, engineers, and workers with high technical skills. Because of the reputation of Filipinos as hard workers, even rich Chinese employers hired undeclared Filipino workers. Filipino workers in China started to increase with the operation of Chinese-Filipino companies in China like Oishi, Yonghe King, The Asia Brewery Group, and other noted companies associated with Bench clothing, Figaro Coffee, Metrobank, Universal Robina, Quanzhou Footwear, and Daiichi Speakers. While Filipino workers in China have enjoyed their stay

in China, they continue to have concerns that the Philippines and the Chinese governments should address.

The chapter written by Charles Joseph G. De Guzman is very related with Sidney Bata's study. De Guzman examines Chinese internal migration and its contribution for rural development. Though De Guzman's chapter focuses on rural development in China, his study can provide useful lessons for the improvement of Philippines-China relations in the area of migration. De Guzman notes that the rapid surge of internal migration has been one of the most profound changes in China over the past two decades. He observes that rural-urban migration has suddenly become a new socio-economic phenomenon in China. Internal migration in China started to increase because of the gap between rural and urban developments. Chinese government prioritized the development of urban areas that resulted in the neglect of rural areas. Workers from the rural areas were encouraged to migrate to urban areas for more economic opportunities. De Guzman provided primary and secondary data describing these phenomena from 1998 to the present.

Interestingly, Chinese internal migration from rural to urban areas has contributed positively to rural developments because of remittances of migrant workers from urban to rural areas. Remittances from the urban areas propelled economic activities in the rural areas. As written by De Guzman,

Looking at today's internal migration scenario, the young rural migrants do contribute to raising the standard of living in the countryside. They usually send remittances back on a monthly or quarterly basis and bring their savings back home yearly. Remittances are mostly used to meet daily expenses and have clearly contributed to the survival of many poor families and local communities.

The author also states, "For local governments who are sending migrants to urban areas, they looked into migration as vital sources of investment, entrepreneurship and experience on their return.

Research on returned migrants has shown that they contribute positively to the economy of the home area.”

Because of internal migration, De Guzman says that it fills the poverty gap between urban and rural areas. He concludes that the positive impact that internal migration contributes for rural development will continue and it will further increase if proper policies will be implemented by the government in ensuring migrants’ welfare and development in the urban areas. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic where international travels are limited, De Guzman’s chapter provides useful lessons for the Philippines to strengthen policies on internal migration not only to promote rural developments but to overall national development of the country. China can share to the Philippines its exemplary experiences in dealing with international migration to strengthen Philippines-China relations.

From internal migration issues, Dai Fan’s chapter looks into the recent issue of Chinese migration in the Philippines in the context of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and POGOs. Dai’s chapter affirms the study of Banlaoi that the Philippines is one of the traditional destinations for Chinese immigrants. The growth of the Chinese economy and the rapid overseas expansion of Chinese companies with a China-friendly policy of President Duterte strongly contributed to the recent influx of Chinese migration in the Philippines. Moreover, Dai stresses that the conducive and political legal environments also facilitated entry of Chinese migrants to the country, particularly those working in POGOs. Politically, President Duterte warmly welcomed Chinese nationals to visit and invest to the Philippines. Legally, online gaming, though banned in China, is allowed in the Philippines.

However, Dai’s chapter has a very nuanced view of Chinese migration in the Philippines. He differentiates the phenomena of permanent migration and temporary migration. The phenomenon that is happening in the Philippines is what Dai calls as temporary Chinese migration that is based on “opportunistic” economic

activities happening largely in POGOs and in a few BRI projects in the Philippines. Chinese nationals, coming mainly from rural areas, were attracted to work in the Philippines because of employment opportunities in offshore gaming industry. Even those Chinese nationals with limited educational achievements could find work in the Philippines because online gaming companies only required mastery of the Mandarin language as a major requirement.

While temporary Chinese migration in the Philippines, through POGOs and BRI projects, provides huge benefits to Philippine economy because of many economic activities that it produces, Dai supports the study of Banlaoi that this migration phenomenon also creates political, social, and security problems. In fact, these problems are areas where chapters of Dai and Banlaoi overlap. This overlap, however, complements each other by presenting Chinese and Filipino perspectives of the same problems. Dai perspective is essential as the author can nuance the issue of Chinese migration in the Philippines from a Chinese point of view.

For example, Dai differentiates the old from the new waves of Chinese migration. The old wave of Chinese migration originated mainly from Fujian province of China. Most of the Chinese migrants have already obtained long-term residency in the Philippines through the amnesty program granted by the Philippine government in the 1980s and 1990s, or through an investment visa. Chinese migrants belonging to the old wave of migration have close contacts with the local Philippine society, with many of them acquiring Filipino citizenship having been integrated into the Filipino way of life. But the new wave of Chinese migration comes from many provinces in China and is temporary in nature as most migrants work in the online gaming industry. Because they could hardly speak English and the local language, Chinese migrants had limited interactions with the Philippine society. Chinese migrants working in online gaming had very closed lives that hampered positive people-to-people

contacts between Chinese and Filipinos. Thus, their presence in the Philippines created many misunderstandings between the two people. Dai concludes that while BRI projects can promote people-to-people contacts between Chinese and Filipinos because of the principle of connectivity, POGOs present the negative aspect on the future of BRI in the Philippines.

Ivy Ganadillo's chapter also examines the continuing influx of Chinese nationals in the Philippines. She focuses her study on the Chinese retirees in the Philippines using the program of the Philippine Retirement Authority (PRA) established in 1985. The Philippines' Department of Tourism (DOT) created the PRA to implement the program of the Philippine government to make the Philippines a leading destination of the world's retirees, seniors, and the elderly. The PRA manages the issuance of the Special Resident Retiree's Visa (SRRV), a special non-immigrant visa that entitles foreign nationals and natural-born Filipino citizens to reside in the Philippines indefinitely with multiple-entry privileges. Ganadillo argues that his kind of visa has become one of the attractions for Chinese migration to the Philippines.

Ganadillo reports that since 1994, "the PRA has been a self-sustaining government corporation. It has able to financially sustain its operations, and regularly remits dividends to the government. The foreign currency generated from its programs is its direct contribution to the Philippine economy. In 2017, PRA generated an amount of USD 49,242,556.86 visa deposits in foreign currency. With this amount, PRA's cumulative (1987 to 2017) net visa deposits reached USD 575,585,556.86."

However, Chinese retirees in the Philippine became controversial because their presence was associated with negative impacts of POGO's. Ganadillo says, "The PRA's visa policy for 35 years old has been questioned as they said it gives the possibility for these visa holders to be working at POGOs."

Senator Richard Gordon even raised "national security concerns" on the influx of Chinese retirees in the Philippines. But

Ganadillo identifies the following reasons on why some Chinese nationals want to move to the Philippines:

1. to explore possible economic opportunities
2. to obtain personal, professional, and career growth and development
3. to escape from social and academic pressures
4. to have a better physical environment
5. to enjoy religious freedom
6. to be reunited with family or relatives

Ganadillo also notes that Chinese nationals who decide to stay in the Philippines have the following reasons:

1. opportunities of making personal choices and decisions against the pressure of traditional norms and culture and government intervention
2. a sense of belonging with the ethnic communities and people with the same values and beliefs
3. ease of adaptation to the society's culture and norms
4. comfort of living in the new physical environment
5. access to health and education facilities

Amidst this phenomenon, Ganadillo gives the following recommendations: “The Philippines should continue to strengthen its cooperation with China on immigration policies and mechanisms for monitoring and preventing the recurring flow of illegal migrants and illegal activities especially those that create tensions in the local economy and industries. Continuous cultural and people-to-people exchange should also be encouraged to lessen the negative stereotyping between the nationals of the two countries.”

The chapter written by Lucio Blanco Pitlo III examines China's current role in the promotion of infrastructure developments in the Philippines, particularly in the context of China's BRI Project and of the Philippines Build Build Build Program. Pitlo argues that though the BRI may mean different things to different countries, its stated connectivity goal, it has clear convergence with

the Philippines' Build, Build, Build Program. However, Chinese-backed projects in the Philippines through the BRI have suffered from criticisms. Though some of these projects are not endemic to China, there are security concerns that make these projects under tremendous scrutiny in the Philippines. Pitlo describes some of these key projects that have become controversial.

Pitlo observes that due to unresolved territorial and maritime disputes between China and the Philippines in the West Philippine Sea and the concomitant threats of espionage, many Filipinos have expressed security anxieties about Chinese investments in the Philippines. He also underscores that aside from security concerns, political risk is another major hurdle for Chinese infrastructure investments in the Philippines. Such risk, Pitlo says, can "dampen interest for long-term big-ticket projects as policy swings that comes with leadership changes send jitters to investors. If the new government comes from a rival political camp, projects associated with the previous government are in danger of getting scuttled. This affects investor confidence in the country." Thus, Pitlo concludes that in its bid to revamp its infrastructure, the Philippine government "has to remain open to traditional and new partners, local and foreign, including China."

Like Pilot's chapter, the chapter authored by Joahna Pia A. Esquivias also examines the role of BRI in the Philippines. But Esquivias focuses her study on the role Official Development Assistance (ODA) in Philippine infrastructure developments based on previous experiences, particularly with Japan.

Supporting the arguments of Pitlo, Joahna Pia A. Esquivias argues that China's BRI Project can provide financial support to the Philippines Build Build Build Program, which aims to build 75 infrastructure projects including roads, bridges, airports, seaports, and railways in the Philippines. Key partners of the Philippines in the implementation of the Build Build Build Program are China, Japan, and Korea. China is supporting the Build Build Build Program through the BRI Project. According to Esquivias, the

BRI cooperation will be done on five fronts: policy dialogue and communication; infrastructure development and connectivity; cooperation on trade and investment; financial cooperation; and social-cultural exchanges. The means would be pursued through the following important modes: high-level visits, exchanges and dialogues among stakeholders; pilot programs, research and development, capacity building and training in key areas; and investment and financial support for projects and programs agreed to by the participants. From the BRI, the Philippines intends to receive ODA from China to finance its Build Build Build Program.

But Esquivias emphasizes that based on the Philippines' ODA experiences with Japan, the process was not without turbulence. She identifies implementation issues from the previous ODA experiences that the Philippines and China need to address: 1) site condition/ availability, 2) procurement, 3) government/funding institution approvals 4) performance of contractors/ consultants, and 5) project management office manpower/capacity.

Based on these issues, Esquivias concludes with a strong caution: the Philippines and the region should assess their laws in foreign investments to ensure the protection of national interests. Reviewing their policies on foreign acquisition of companies should be a priority in the legislative sector of the country to prevent unwelcome and unwanted consequences.

Continuing Concerns: China's International Behavior, the South China Sea Disputes, and COVID-19 Pandemic Challenges

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, PACS organized the fourth and the concluding event of the Carlos Chan Lecture Series on Philippines-China relations in October 2019. Delivered by Dr. Wilfrido Villacorta, the main topic was China's international behavior in the light of China's growing global presence and

influence. Villacorta wrote his chapter on the basis of this lecture. In his chapter, Villacorta begins his argument by highlighting his observation that “China has sometimes been regarded as an enigma especially when it emerged as a superpower. However, its actions are not necessarily inscrutable or shrouded in secrecy. Actually, its international behavior is predictable. We simply have to understand how the Chinese worldview has evolved.” Crucial to the understanding of China’s current international behavior, according to Villacorta, is a deep knowledge of China’s geographic position in the world and its long historical experiences as a civilizational state affecting the development of its worldview and strategic culture.

In his chapter, Villacorta pays serious attention on China’s concept of “century of humiliation” that informs China’s foreign relations, particularly with major powers and neighboring nations in the periphery. The concept of “century of humiliation” motivated Chinese leaders, specifically President Xi Jinping, to develop a foreign policy that advances China’s aspiration to rise as a major power so it can earn the international respect that China thinks it deserves. It is in this context on why, during the assumption into power of President Xi Jinping, he advances the “China dream” of the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” believing that “it is time for China to assume a high profile in international relations.” Thus, China’s response to the arbitral ruling initiated by the Philippines against China on maritime disputes in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea) was strong rejection and non-implementation because the arbitration process not only embarrassed China but it also challenged China’s sovereign prerogative as a major power “to choose its preferred means of dispute resolution.”

Villacorta concludes his chapter with a discussion on China’s vision of a new world order that affirms China’s growing leadership role in the developing world. Though this vision of a new world order can challenge the current world order established by the

United States, China is determined to shape the “shared future for mankind” under China’s concept of “new normal” relationships among nations.

Paolo Villar’s chapter is solicited in order to have a better understanding of contemporary China based on the thoughts and outlooks of Chinese leaders, most particularly President Xi Jinping. In his chapter, Villar examines Xi’s volume 1 of the book, *The Governance of China*, a collection of speeches that the Chinese paramount leader delivered from November 15, 2012 to June 13, 2014, which according to Villar, “created quite a stir in the Chinese political world as well as in the international scene.”

Though this book “in its entirety deals with a multitude of topics,” Villar reviews the book on the basis of China’s two centenary goals, new type of revolution, and international and political reforms. Thus, Villar’s chapter reinforces the chapter of Villacorta in examining China’s international behavior. Villar argues that *The Governance of China* “is an essential reader for new scholars in the study of Chinese history, culture, and social system. It narrates the ‘story’ of China to the world.”

The book does not cover developments during the COVID-19 pandemic. But Villar’s review of the book makes it relevant to understand China’s view of the world in the post-pandemic period because of his examination of China’s centenary goals of celebrating the 100 years of Communist Party of China in 2021 and the 100 years of the People’s Republic of China in 2049. These two centenary goals are based on China’s dream of “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” that China intends to achieve amidst the new normal situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new normal situation took place during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Amidst, and even despite of, the pandemic, the Philippines and China commemorated the 45 years of the formal establishment of their bilateral relations. Banlaoi’s chapter takes stock of the 45 years of Philippines-China relations in the

context of the South China Sea disputes. The author observes,

Since the formal establishment of their diplomatic relations in 1975, the South China Sea dispute has been a thorny issue in Philippines-China relations. Maritime and territorial claims in the South China Sea are sources of enmities in their bilateral ties creating an impression of adversarial relations between the two countries. But the dispute is just one aspect of their overall bilateral relations. As a whole, the Philippines and China remain friends and caring neighbors as they have been since many centuries ago.

After 45 years, Banlaoi divides the development of Philippines-China relations in the context of the South China Sea disputes under three important periods: Normalization Period, 1977-1991; Turbulent Period, 1992-2004; Golden Age of Bilateral Relations, 2005-2010; Lowest Moment of Bilateral Ties, 2011-2016; and Greatest Heights in Bilateral Friendship, 2016-2020. Thus, commemorating the 45 years of Philippines-China relations in 2020 was a landmark year as both countries reached in that year “a new era of closer friendship like the blooming of a big and beautiful flower.” Banlaoi underscores that President Duterte’s policy of paradigm shift to China has “ushered in the new age of cooperation between the two countries.” He even cited President Xi Jinping, who formally opened another “golden age” of Philippines-China relations,” during his 2018 visit to the Philippines.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Philippines and China reaffirmed their commitments to pursue comprehensive strategic cooperation including the need to pursue bilateral cooperation in the South China Sea. In this context, Banlaoi describes the two countries’ achievements in the Bilateral Consultative Mechanism (BCM) in the South China Sea in order to manage peacefully their territorial disputes. Though the COVID-19 pandemic also saw the rising major power rivalry between China and the United States that affected Philippines-China relations, Manila and Beijing have committed to remain

friends despite inevitable differences on some aspects of their relations.

Though political differences between the Philippines and China persist, particularly on the South China Sea disputes and US-China major power rivalry, the two countries sustain their friendship, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Philippines and China collaborated in order to overcome the many challenges of the pandemic. One of the many areas of their collaboration was on COVID-19 prevention measures.

The chapter written by Jane Yugioksing and Dai Fan investigates the perception of Chinese Filipinos on China's measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors began their discussions by clarifying the concept of Chinese Filipinos. As used in their study, Chinese Filipinos "refer to all Chinese people in the Philippines regardless of nationality or place of birth. It can refer to Chinese people with Philippine nationality, and Chinese people with Chinese nationality but have legally resided in the Philippines for some time. The broad spectrum of being identified as Chinese Filipino in the Philippines can be attributed to the long history of interaction between the Chinese and the Philippines."

Based on their study from a total of 439 respondents equally proportioned among English language and Chinese language participants, the two authors found out that the survey exhibited a high level of confidence among Chinese respondents with measures and strategies done by China to fight COVID-19. Responses gathered from English respondents also indicated a parallel percentage. They reported, "The overall response from English participants created the impression of staying in safe ground, of wanting to have positive confidence with China's COVID-19 preventive measures yet not in total agreement that it should be level up to a high ground. Therefore, it can be said that unlike Chinese respondents who have a 100 percent confidence towards China's measures, English respondents measure between 80 percent to 90 percent confidence level to China's COVID-19

preventive measures.” They concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic has created a multitude of discussions and arguments around the world and “the Chinese in the Philippines are no exception” in these divided opinions.

Amidst these divided opinions, Sharlene May C. Cua examines the economic impacts of COVID-19 on the stock market performances of the US, China, and the Philippines, covering the period December 2019 to November 2020. She observes that the COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected economies around the world “presenting steep decline of the markets during the outbreak of the pandemic and a gradual recovery towards the third quarter of 2020.” She argues that the economic slowdown and even recovery efforts “can be attributed to first and foremost, the exponential rate at which the virus is spreading or decreasing; the decline in domestic consumption – decrease in Philippine imports and increase in Philippine exports; and the reduction in tourism revenue.”

Cua admits that her study has limitations in providing in-depth analysis of the economic impacts of COVID-19 on specific sectors and industries. Nonetheless, her paper remains significant as it serves the “purpose of reminding the business and government sectors to continue to be vigilant and prepared for post-pandemic challenges and future economic and social uncertainties that countries may face.”

Because of the various impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a felt need for the Philippines and China to continue joining their hands in order to overcome disruptions and challenges in the fast-changing world enormously affected by the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ambassador Huang Xilian’s chapter highlights the importance of building a stronger foundation for Philippines-China relations against the backdrop of COVID-19. He underscores that despite some disruptions caused by the cold-war mentality of a superpower, alluding to the US, the author also argues,

China and the Philippines are close neighbors across the sea sharing time-honored bonds of kinship and friendship. Under the leadership of President Xi Jinping and President Duterte, China-Philippines relations have been moving along the upward trajectory and ushering in the New Golden Age. Facing the common challenge of the COVID-19, both countries have spared no efforts to support and assist each other, nurturing a closer partnership in the new era.

Amidst all the disruptions and challenges in their bilateral ties made more complicated during the COVID-19 pandemic, the author urges both countries to continuously pursue the following efforts:

- Firstly, we should continuously deepen good neighborliness and friendship despite of external disruptions.
- Secondly, we should continue to manage maritime disputes through friendly dialogue and consultations.
- Thirdly, we should not allow external powers to roil the waters in the South China Sea, or waver our commitment to pursuance of independent foreign policy and China-Philippines friendly relations.
- Fourthly, we should explore new opportunities for common development under the new normal and in the post-pandemic era.

The author concludes with this strong statement: “Under the still raging pandemic crisis and the profound changes, the future of our two peoples are ever more intertwined. We should and we will heal, recover, and grow as one.”

Ambassador Jose Santiago L. Sta. Romana’s chapter complements many observations of Ambassador Huang. In his chapter, Sta. Romana admits that the COVID-19 pandemic “has unfortunately affected the pace of our bilateral cooperation to a certain degree.” However, the author expresses his strong optimism on the situation as the COVID-19 pandemic “has also opened a new dimension in the relations between the Philippines and China.”

He exclaims,

Our two countries helped each other in the early days of the pandemic and continue to do so today. For the Philippines, we were among the first to send medical aid to the Chinese people, especially those affected in Wuhan. On the part of China, a medical team was sent and visited the country for two weeks providing useful advice to counterparts in the health field. China also donated PPEs, ventilators, and testing kits, among others. There were also more than 50 Philippines Air Force flights that flew over SCS to Xiamen, Quanzhou, Changsha, Shenzhen, and Shanghai to pick up medical equipment and supplies. These were of great help to the Philippines and the Filipino people in the fight against COVID-19. This level of cooperation should continue, especially as the Philippines is currently experiencing a high number of cases after partially reopening its economy.

In his chapter, Sta. Romana agrees with Huang that current disruptions and challenges continue to affect the direction of Philippines-China relations, particularly on the South China Sea disputes. But Sta. Romana emphasizes,

The overall bilateral relationship is a positive one and there are many areas for cooperation and engagement that can be pursued. As in any relationship, however, there are a few differences. The West Philippines Sea is one such issue. There are contentious issues between the Philippines and China with regard to this matter, but there is a clear understanding between the two sides that the disputes are not the sum total of the Philippines-China relationship and should in no way be a hindrance to the continuing development of other areas in the bilateral relations. More importantly, there are mechanisms in place for the two sides to openly discuss and manage the differences.

The last chapter in this volume summarizes the importance this collection in advancing existing knowledge on Chinese studies in the Philippines and the study of Philippines-China relations. This volume covers a panoply of issues that highlight new discoveries, recent developments and continuing concerns in Philippines-China relations. This last chapter identifies persistent challenges in Philippines-China relations that the two countries need to

overcome in the post-pandemic world. These persistent challenges are the South China Sea disputes, US-China rivalry, and the low popularity rating of China in the Philippines. Though there are many persistent challenges in Philippines-China relations covering many aspects of bilateral relations from economics, politics and security among others, the last chapter focuses on these three key issues that current and future scholars should continue to study in order to produce knowledge that can inform the development of a foreign policy that aims to sustain friendship and enhance cooperation between the Philippines and China in the post-pandemic world.

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