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**MEDIA DIPLOMACY IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTES:
VIETNAM, CHINA AND THE PHILIPPINES
2012 – 2016**

A thesis
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of the requirements for the degree
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THE UNIVERSITY OF
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ABSTRACT

After shelving tensions for development until the 2000s, the South China Sea (SCS) issue re-emerged with three notable crises: the Scarborough Shoal dispute, the oil rig crisis and the SCS arbitration case. During the period of the crises (2012 – 2016), although the claimant states avoided conflicts at sea, they changed the status quo pertaining to the control and the nature of some of the maritime features in the disputed zone. More importantly, public perceptions about the SCS issues, especially the crises, have been reshaped as tensions occurred, due to the battle in the media between the disputants. In other words, the SCS issue became more complicated, not only because of the overlapping claims of the disputants, but also due to the conflicting media narratives of the claimant states. This situation raises questions as to how, what and why these claimant states released media narratives about the crises, and a need to inquire into the impact of these conflicting narratives on the SCS issues. Correspondingly, a significant area for research inquiry emerged, which provided the rationale for the current study.

This study is timely, significant and relevant to the states directly concerned as well as regional states. It uses a complex method including critical discourse analysis, framing and theme creating to collect media reports, and deployed the theoretical framework of media diplomacy to analyse the media tactics of the three claimant states, China, the Philippines and Vietnam, at the time of these three crises. According to Gilboa (2001), media diplomacy occurs when a government sends its diplomatic messages to its target audiences through speeches, press conferences, interviews, visits, media events, or even leaks. To succeed, the government needs to have the ability to predict how its message will be consumed by different stakeholders and how its target audiences are likely to respond. It was hypothesised that the governments in China, Vietnam and the Philippines utilised media diplomacy to affect public opinion, domestically and internationally, during the SCS crises. The research had two major objectives: examining how the states deployed media diplomacy in the crises and understanding how the SCS disputes have been complicated by the media battle between the states.

At the escalation stage, all three states projected principles and preconditions via the media. To manage the crises, the states then used the media to explain their policies and actions, to criticise the rivals' ones and to balance or counter the rivals' propaganda. The study showed that the media can impact on the moods of both government and the public, positively influencing the states' foreign policy decision-making processes of de-escalation (Mowlana, 1997). In particular, the media provided a channel to break

deadlocks between the states. Before and during bilateral meetings to resolve the tensions, the media were used to try to create a good atmosphere and support communication between the states until a consensus was gained to end the crises.

Less positively, since the SCS has a symbolic value for the peoples in the claimant states, during the crises, the governments utilised media diplomacy to recount the sovereignty claims and to turn the territorial controversy into violent protests. Consequently, the tactics led to a deterioration in bilateral relations, not only at the government-to-government level but also at the people-to-people one. This evidence clearly shows how the media narratives impacted on the SCS issue.

In the end, the research found that the states could not resolve the SCS disputes by relying only on media diplomacy. However, it is argued, the disputants needed the media to manage and resolve the SCS issue over the long-term. In this respect, deploying media diplomacy as a peace process is a collaborative effort that requires efforts from all the claimant states, third-party stakeholders and all audiences.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	x
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. THE STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH.....	3
III. HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS	4
IV. METHODOLOGY	5
1. Constructivism.....	5
2. Qualitative research	7
V. RESEARCH DESIGN	8
1. Case study research method.....	8
2. Data collection	9
2. 1. Data sources.....	9
2. 2. Keywords.....	11
2. 3. Data analysis	12
3. TRANSLATION	15
VI. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH	16
VII. THE ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS	17
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF MEDIA DIPLOMACY	19
I. THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE MEDIA AND POLITICS.....	19
1. Three basic functions of the media.....	19
2. Influencing policy: a single party system and democracy	20
3. Influencing policy: domestic policy and foreign affairs.....	21
II. THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	22
1. The media and foreign affairs.....	22
2. The rising role of the media in modern International Relations	23
3. Propaganda, public diplomacy and media diplomacy	25
4. Theoretical concepts of media diplomacy	27
III. MEDIA DIPLOMACY IN TERRITORIAL DISPUTES	29
1. Territorial disputes in International Relations	29
2. Media diplomacy in territorial disputes	31
2. 1. Media diplomacy in the conflict prevention and reconciliation phases.....	31
2. 2. Media diplomacy in the escalation phase	32
2. 3. Media diplomacy in the de-escalation phase	35
IV. MEDIA DIPLOMACY IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTES	37
CHAPTER III: BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH.....	42
I. INTRODUCTION TO THE MEDIA SYSTEMS AND MEDIA DIPLOMACY	42
1. The Philippines	42
1. 1. Information management.....	42
1. 2. Media diplomacy and the SCS disputes	43

2. Vietnam	44
2. 1. External information service.....	44
2. 2. Information strategy and Vietnam’s SCS strategy	45
3. China.....	47
3. 1. External propaganda and media warfare	47
3. 2. China’s media warfare and the SCS disputes	49
II. THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTES	51
1. The overlapping claims.....	53
1. 1. The Philippines	53
1. 2. Vietnam	55
1. 3. China.....	58
2. Gaps in perception and identities.....	62
2. 1. Clashes of histories and the perception of threats.....	62
2. 2. National identities and the SCS disputes	63
3. Regional structural changes	66
3. 1. The rise of China	66
3. 2. The US’ pivot to Asia.....	67
III. INTRODUCTION OF CASE STUDIES	68
1. The Oil Rig Crisis	68
1. 1. Stage 1: The oil rig entered disputed waters (1 – 10 May 2014).....	68
1. 2. Stage 2: The stand-off escalated (10 – 26 May 2014).....	70
1. 3. Stage 3: China moved the rig to a new site (27 May – 15 July 2014).....	72
1. 4. Stage 4: China withdrew the rig a month early (15 July – 31 August 2014)	73
.....	73
2. The Scarborough Shoal Stand-off	73
2. 1. Stage 1: The Chinese fishermen were detained, the stand-off ensued (8 – 26	73
April 2012)	73
2. 2. Stage 2: The Philippines internationalised the dispute, and China escalated	74
the tensions (26 April– 26 May 2012).....	74
2. 3. Stage 3: Discussion reactivated, starting the de-escalating stage (26 May –	75
30 June 2012).....	75
3. The South China Sea Arbitration Case	76
3. 1. Stage 1: The initiation of the arbitration (January 2013 – March 2014)	76
3. 2. Stage 2: The Hearing and the ruling on jurisdiction and admissibility of the	77
case (June 2014 – November 2015).....	77
3. 3. Stage 3: The ruling on the merits of the case and the aftermath (November -	79
July 2016)	79
CHAPTER IV: MEDIA DIPLOMACY IN THE OIL RIG CRISIS.....	80
PART I: VIETNAM’S MEDIA DIPLOMACY	80
I. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS	80
1. The first stage (1 – 10 May 2014)	80
1. 1. The MOFA’s media narratives	80
1. 2. The media outlets’ narratives.....	81
2. The second stage (10 – 26 May 2014).....	83
2. 1. The MOFA’s media narratives	83
2. 2. The media outlets’ narratives.....	85
3. The third stage (27 May – 15 July 2014).....	89
3. 1. The MOFA’s media narratives	89
3. 2. The media outlets’ narratives.....	94

4. The fourth stage (15 July – 31 August 2014)	97
4. 1. The MOFA’s media narratives	97
4. 2. The media outlets’ narratives.....	97
II. CONCLUSION.....	99
1. 1. What were the common media narratives in Vietnam regarding the crisis and how did these media narratives function?.....	99
1. 2. How did Vietnam conduct media diplomacy and what were the objectives?	99
1. 3. What were the effects of media diplomacy?.....	101
1. 4. Can the media be a new way to resolve the issue between the two countries?.....	104
PART II: CHINA’S MEDIA DIPLOMACY	106
I. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS	106
1. The first stage (1 – 10 May 2014)	106
1. 1. The MFA’s media narratives	106
1. 2. The media outlets’ narratives.....	106
2. The second stage (10 – 26 May 2014).....	107
2. 1. The MFA’s media narratives	107
2. 2. The media outlets’ narratives.....	111
3. The third stage (27 May - 15 July 2014)	112
3. 1. The MFA’s media narratives	112
3. 2. The media outlets’ narratives.....	114
4. The fourth stage (15 July – 31 August 2014)	117
4. 1. The MFA’s media narratives	117
4. 2. The media outlets’ narratives.....	118
II. CONCLUSION.....	119
1. 1. What were the common media narratives that the Chinese state-owned media outlets communicated and how did these narratives function in the stand- off?.....	119
1. 2. How did China conduct media diplomacy and what were the objectives?	120
1. 3. What were the effects of media diplomacy?.....	122
1. 4. Can the media be a new way to resolve the issue between the two countries?.....	126
CHAPTER V: MEDIA DIPLOMACY IN THE SCARBOROUGH SHOAL STAND- OFF IN 2012.....	128
PART I: CHINA’S MEDIA DIPLOMACY	128
I. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS	128
1. The first stage (8 – 26 April 2012)	128
1. 1. The MFA’s media narratives	128
1. 2. The media outlets’ narratives.....	130
2. The second stage (26 April – 26 May 2012)	133
2. 1. The MFA’s media narratives	133
2. 2. The media outlets’ narratives.....	135
3. The third stage (27 May – 30 June 2012).....	140
3. 1. The MFA’s media narratives	140
3. 2. The media outlets’ narratives.....	142
II. CONCLUSION.....	142

1. 1. What were the common media narratives in China and how did these media narratives function in the stand-off?	142
1. 2. How did China conduct media diplomacy and what were the objectives?	143
1. 3. What were the effects of media diplomacy?	144
1. 4. Can the media be a new way to resolve the issue?	146
PART II - THE PHILIPPINES' MEDIA DIPLOMACY	148
I. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS	148
1. The first stage (8 – 26 April 2012)	148
1. 1. The DFA's media narratives.....	148
1. 2. The media outlets' narratives.....	152
2. The second stage (26 April – 26 May 2012)	154
2. 1. The DFA's media narratives.....	154
2. 2. The media outlets' narratives.....	157
3. The third stage (27 May – 30 June 2012).....	161
3. 1. The DFA's narratives	161
3. 2. The media outlets' narratives.....	163
II. CONCLUSION.....	165
1. 1. What were the common media narratives that the Philippine media portrayed and how did these media narratives function in the stand-off?	165
1. 2. How did the Aquino government conduct media diplomacy and what were the objectives?	165
1. 3. What were the effects of media diplomacy?.....	167
1. 4. Can the media be a new way to resolve the crisis?.....	170
CHAPTER VI: MEDIA DIPLOMACY IN THE SCS ARBITRATION CASE	172
PART I: THE PHILIPPINES' MEDIA DIPLOMACY	172
I. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS	172
1. The first stage (January 2013 - March 2014).....	172
1. 1. The DFA's media narratives.....	172
1. 2. The media outlets' narratives.....	174
2. The second Stage (April 2014 – October 2015)	177
2. 1. The DFA's media narratives.....	177
2. 2. The media outlets' narratives.....	180
3. The third stage (November 2015 - August 2016).....	184
3. 1. The DFA's media narratives.....	184
3. 2. The media outlets' narratives.....	185
II. CONCLUSION.....	190
1. 1. What were the common media narratives regarding the case in the Philippines and how did they function in the arbitration?.....	190
1. 2. How did the Philippine governments conduct media diplomacy, and what were the objectives during the legal campaign?	191
1. 3. What were the effects of media diplomacy?.....	193
1. 4. Can media diplomacy be a new way to resolve the crisis?.....	196
PART II - CHINA'S MEDIA DIPLOMACY	197
I. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS	197
1. The first stage (January 2013- March 2014).....	197
1. 1. The MFA's media narratives	197

1. 2. The media outlets' narratives.....	198
2. The second stage (April 2014 – October 2015).....	200
2. 1. The MFA's media narratives	200
2. 2. The media outlets' narratives.....	204
3. The third stage (November 2015 - August 2016).....	207
3. 1. The MFA's media narratives	207
3. 2. The media outlets' narratives.....	209
II. CONCLUSION.....	213
1. 1. What were the common narratives in China, and how did these media narratives function during the legal case?	213
1. 2. How did China conduct media diplomacy, and what were the objectives?	214
1. 3. What were the effects of media diplomacy?.....	216
1. 4. Can the media be a new way to resolve the issue between the two countries?.....	219
CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION.....	221
I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	221
II. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	222
1. 1. What are the root causes of the re-emerging tensions in the SCS?	223
1. 2. The overlapping media narratives between the claimant countries	223
1. 3. How did the governments conduct media diplomacy in the selected cases of the SCS disputes?	229
1. 4. What were the effects of media diplomacy on the bilateral relationships between the countries?.....	235
1. 5. Can the media be a way to resolve the crises?.....	236
III. CONTRIBUTION TO THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	237
IV. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	238
1. 1. Recommendations for resolving the SCS disputes	238
1. 2. Recommendations for Vietnam's media diplomacy.....	240
1. 3. Recommendations for the Philippines' media diplomacy	241
1. 4. Recommendations for China's external propaganda and media diplomacy	241
1. 5. Recommendations for third-party states	242
1. 6. Recommendations for future research	243
BIBLIOGRAPHY	245
APPENDICES.....	317
Appendices of Chapter I: Introduction	317
Appendices of Chapter IV: The Oil Rig Crisis in 2014.....	321
Appendices of Chapter V: The Scarborough Shoal Stand-off.....	344
Appendices of Chapter VI: The SCS Arbitration Case	368

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADIZ	:	Air Defence Identification Zone
AFP	:	The Armed Forces of the Philippines
ARF	:	ASEAN Regional Forum
BFAR	:	Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
CCG	:	China Coast Guard
CMC	:	Central Military Commission
CMS	:	China Marine Surveillance
CNN	:	Cable News Network
CNOOC	:	China National Offshore Oil Corporation
COC	:	Code of Conduct in the SCS
CPC	:	Communist Party of China
CPV	:	Communist Party of Vietnam
DBOA	:	Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs
DOC	:	ASEAN-China Declaration of Conduct in the SCS
DFA	:	Department of Foreign Affairs
EAS	:	East Asia Summit
EDCA	:	Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement
EEZ	:	Exclusive Economic Zone
FLEC	:	Fisheries Law Enforcement Command
GOVCN	:	The government of China
GOVPH	:	The government of the Philippines
GOVVN	:	The government of Vietnam
IEC	:	Information, Education and Communication campaign
IR	:	International Relations
ITLOS	:	International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea
KIG	:	Kalayaan Island Group
MDT	:	Mutual Defense Treaty
MOD	:	Ministry of Defense
MOFA	:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Vietnam
NV	:	North Vietnam
OPS	:	Office of the Press Secretary
PCA	:	Permanent Court of Arbitration
PD Cn/En	:	People's Daily

PDI	:	Philippine Daily Inquirer
PIA	:	Philippine Information Agency
PLA	:	People’s Liberation Army
PRC	:	People’s Republic of China
PS	:	Philippine Star
ROV	:	Republic of Vietnam
SCS	:	South China Sea
SRV	:	Socialist Republic of Vietnam
SV	:	South Vietnam
UN	:	United Nations
UNCLOS	:	United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea
UK	:	The United Kingdom
US	:	The United States
VNA	:	Vietnam News Agency
VNFRS	:	Viet Nam Fisheries Resources Surveillance
VOV	:	Voice of Vietnam
WPS	:	West Philippine Sea

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

I. INTRODUCTION

This research seeks to analyse the use of the media by the Chinese, Vietnamese and Philippine governments in three major crises - the Scarborough Shoal stand-off, the oil rig crisis, and the South China Sea (SCS) arbitration case – through applying the theoretical framework of media diplomacy. In the oil rig stand-off in 2014, amidst a rare wave of anti-China protests which were rising across Vietnam, on 28 May, Vietnam’s Ambassador to the United States (US), Nguyen Quoc Cuong, participated in an interview with the Cable News Network (CNN) channel to criticise the illegal deployment and to counter the Chinese statement over the location of the rig (Chirstiance, 2014; Faulks, 2016). The interview was reposted widely in Vietnam, emphasising “the Vietnamese people’s determination to defend their sovereignty and territorial integrity” (Giap, 2014; Quynh, 2014a, 2014b). In the light of the fact that the anti-China riots rallies seemed to be out of the control of the government, with over 20 deaths reported (Cameron-Moore, 2014), questions might be asked about the ambassador’s actions, and whether they added fuel to the fire. In fact, by doing so, Hanoi gained many goals. First, in the interview, the ambassador provided a message that Hanoi wanted to send to the government and people of China. Secondly, this was a great opportunity for Hanoi to express its stance about protecting its autonomy and sovereignty in the SCS to international audiences watching CNN. Lastly, confirming the stance that the Party fulfils resolutely the Vietnamese people’s will in protecting its autonomy, the famous international news channel seemed to be an effective way for the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) to reassure Vietnamese people, particularly overseas based anti-Communists, who accuse the government of betraying the nation or kneeling to China (Hayton, 2014b).

In the SCS case, at the beginning, China completely rejected any participation. However, some weeks before the ruling, Beijing ran a massive media campaign in domestic and global outlets, designed to disparage the international arbitration, countering the Philippines’ legal movement and proclaim the Chinese arguments (Panda, 2016). Zheng Wang (2017) have argued that the ruling, which was overwhelmingly in favour of the Philippines, was “a huge moment of national humiliation” for China. If this was the case, it may be asked whether running such a massive media campaign meant disseminating China’s “loss of face”? Contrariwise, by doing so, Beijing rationally responded to international and regional critics over its rejection of the ruling, and gained

domestic support for its decision over the case and for the SCS policy (Jessica C. Weiss, 2016).

The Philippines, after losing control of Scarborough Shoal, filed a case to the international arbitral tribunal against China. In doing so, Manila became the first claimant state to bring the SCS to an arbitration (third-party stakeholder) to achieve a resolution to the SCS dispute. After successfully gaining a legal victory in the SCS case and achieving international and domestic support for the move, Manila shifted to a softer strategy to deal with China (Cabato, 2017). The dramatic change in the media strategy of Manila resulted from President Duterte's pivot policy towards China, which focused on reducing the tension and improving bilateral economic cooperation.

These observations on the media strategy are just the tip of the iceberg. In such a "media war" during the crises, the media become involved in the claimant states' national identity formation and perception processes (Wiser, 2015). The Philippines, as an island nation, considers the unity of the islands and the seas as an integral part of the country's identity, survival and future development. Meanwhile, both China and Vietnam regard the SCS disputes as "an important nexus" in forming "a modern national identity" (Tseng, 2016, p. 135). By exploiting the territorial disputes with China in the SCS to raise "nationalist identity" across the nation, the CPV can consolidate its ruling legitimacy, and maintain popular support and the unity of the nation (Hiep, 2012; Nhung, 2017). China's adjustments of national identity as a rising power have been underpinned by its foreign policy toward the SCS (Wenjuan, 2017).

Moreover, there are gaps in perception among the states over sovereignty in the SCS. During the crises, each disputant stated that the claimed waters, islands and archipelago were their respective homeland's inseparable parts, and criticised the others' activities and claims as illegal and a violation of their sovereignty and associated rights. While the Philippine and Vietnamese people tended to see China's recent activities in the SCS as coercion and assertiveness, Beijing portrayed itself as a peace-loving nation and a "victim" in the disputes (Jakobson & Medcalf, 2015, p. 25). Moreover, in these countries, there were strong waves of nationalism and patriotism witnessed via diverse activities such as boycotts and protests. In some cases, nationalist activities even turned into violent rallies (the case of Vietnam) (Kathy Chu, 2014).

Given gaps in identity and perception between the countries, the claimant states' media strategies aimed at constructing their national identity widened the gaps in identity and perceptions between the claimants, thereby complicating the disputes. Therefore, in

order to understand the disputes, to prevent escalation in the near future and to find a comprehensive solution to the issue for the long-term, there is a need to understand the media diplomacy that the governments have conducted to obtain their diplomatic goals and to shape national identity and guide public discourses in the crises in the short-term. To meet that demand, this study uses the theoretical framework of media diplomacy to examine the media strategies of three of the claimant states in the SCS (Y. Cohen, 2012; Gilboa, 2001; Hollihan, 2014).

II. THE STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The main goal of the study is to examine the role of media diplomacy in the territorial disputes with two major objectives. The first objective is to extend current literature on the role of the media in territorial disputes both in the escalation and de-escalation stages. The second objective is to further scholarly efforts to understand and suggest solutions to the SCS disputes by approaching the issue from the perspective of media diplomacy.

The SCS dispute has been considered a potential flashpoint in Southeast Asia, threatening peace and stability in the region and possibly the wider world. The disputes have escalated during the last decade, and observers fear that any misstep in political or military action could rapidly push the situation toward an accidental war. Although many approaches to ease the tension have been proposed, the problem is yet to be solved. This lack of resolution heightens the need to approach the issue from other perspectives. From the media perspective, the study will help to complete an overall picture of the issue. In addition, although there is research on how China, Vietnam and the Philippines use the media to manage public opinion relating to the SCS disputes, these studies focus on nationalism (Chubb, 2016; Gallardo & Baviera, 2012; Nhung, 2017). However, there is no research which brings together and compares the media diplomacy of the disputants in the battle of information. According to Gilboa's definition of media diplomacy, each of the claimant states will form, adjust and employ its media strategies according to changes in its political goals, audiences' characteristics and rival countries' media strategies, as well as in response to the political and social context. Therefore, it is essential to bring together and compare the media diplomacy that has been employed by the three claimant states in the same context, in order to explore comprehensively their strategies, motives, and the consequences over the short- and longer-term in their societies and the region. Correspondingly, analysing the governments' media diplomacy via the

case studies, can help to address this gap and offer a first step for future studies on regional perceptions of the SCS.

Moreover, Desch (2012) argues, the root causes of the disputes are the gaps in perception and identity among the claimant nations. Along with the education system, the media are one of the most influential tools in shaping public identity nowadays. Hence, examining the controversy from the media perspective will help to explore the disputes at the ground level.

After successfully exploring the role of the media in escalating the disputes, the study will suggest a new way of de-escalating the territorial disputes via the media; not only for the policy and decision-makers of the claimants, but also for Asia Pacific countries like Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Given the geostrategic and geopolitical significance of the SCS, any armed clash between the disputants, or military intervention from other external powers, will stir up and complicate the situation, posing threats to peace and stability in the region. Hence, a new approach of media diplomacy to the SCS issue, which based on perceptions of national sovereignty, historical legacies and national identity, could be an effective and appropriate mechanism for these major powers to play their roles in re-building stability and peace in the region. Lastly, in studies on the media, most research has focused on the media systems in the US and other Western countries. The thesis examines very different examples. By selecting three claimants, China, the Philippines and Vietnam, the research will be able to explore how the two Communist states deployed their media diplomacy. Furthermore, the research can examine how a Communist country, China, countered a democratic country, the Philippines, in the battle of information and the battle for hearts and minds. This study also offers an opportunity to examine whether the theory of media diplomacy is workable or not in the complicated social contexts of such a sensitive territorial issue.

III. HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The topic of the research is “Media diplomacy in the South China Sea disputes: China, the Philippines and Vietnam, 2012 – 2016.” The writer will use the theoretical framework of media diplomacy to test the hypothesis: media diplomacy affects public opinion and the media diplomacy of the governments in China, the Philippines and Vietnam has affected public opinion, domestically and internationally, about their political goals during the SCS disputes. The research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the different claims in the SCS and what are the root causes of the disputes?

2. What were the common media narratives that the states and the media outlets in China, the Philippines and Vietnam portrayed over the crises and how did these media narratives impact on the tensions?

3. How did the governments in China, the Philippines and Vietnam conduct their media diplomacy over the disputes and what were the objectives of their media diplomacy?

4. What were the effects of the media diplomacy on the bilateral relationships between China and Vietnam, and China and the Philippines?

5. Could the media have been used in a different way so as resolve the disputes?

IV. METHODOLOGY

1. CONSTRUCTIVISM

The thesis adopts an interpretive epistemology of human knowledge which resists the notion of an objective truth and reality, and contends that people construct the meaning of truth and reality only through engaging with their worlds (Bryman, 2015). This epistemology explains that reality is socially constructed through the multiple forms of language that are used, primarily in conversation and writing, and that these tools need to be resorted to in order to explain and understand reality (Barkho, 2008; Berge & Luckmann, 1967). Based on this epistemological belief, the writer recognises that the reality and the perceptions of truth in the SCS disputes that the public in the claimant countries hold are socially interpreted and constructed through forms of language, mainly through writing. These narratives are formulated mostly by their governments. In addition, the epistemological stance explains that conducting interpretive research includes multiple actors who may partly construct reality in diverse ways (Barkho, 2008). Each of these actors had their own interpretation of reality in the SCS leading to a diversity of understanding and positions in the social world (Crotty, 1998). This epistemology enables the researcher to interpret and uncover differences and contradictions in the media narratives of the three claimant states in the SCS disputes, instead of selecting and anchoring one of them.

Within this epistemology, the writer uses a constructivist approach that emphasises the socially constructed nature of agents and structure, as well as the relationship between them (Prabhu & Mohapatra, 2014). Constructivism can provide insights into a wide range of political phenomena, such as the nature of norms within states, the rise of sovereignty

in the International Relations (IR) arena, and the roles of political discourse in the media and communication areas.

Employing a constructivist approach to examine the media has a number of benefits. First, constructivism is one of the major approaches that facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the formation and influence of identity in IR and in a state's conception of its interests and behaviours (Prabhu & Mohapatra, 2014). According to Alexander Wendt (1992, p. 391), "anarchy (of world politics and international relations) is what states make of it", that is anarchy is a result of the processes through which states interact and interpret actions or problems between states. In such an anarchy, "states are the principal units of analysis for international political theory... a structure is a set of relatively unchangeable constraints on the behaviour of states, where state identities and interests are significant factors that are socially constructed by the structures, and the power of states is both material and discursive" (Hopf, 1998, p. 181). As distinct from other IR materialist theories which emphasise the distribution of material power in the balance of power between states, such as military or economic power, constructivists believe that "the fundamental power struggle (among states) is a battle for the construction of meaning in the minds of people" (Riley & Hollihan, 2012, p. 12). Prabhu and Mohapatra (2014) argue that states first shape and manage their concepts of national interests and identities, then alter their behaviour on the global stage during such influence struggles. In other words, in the eyes of IR constructivists, the foreign affairs of a state are a social construction of reality, and media diplomacy of the state is an integral part of foreign affairs through which the state shares its perceptions, ideas, beliefs, values and also receives those of others (Gilboa, 1998, 2002, 2008; Riley & Hollihan, 2012).

Secondly, as a sociological theory, constructivism allows the application of major indicators of culture, history and social background to the study. This is especially useful for analysing political discourse in the media and communication as well as uncovering the exercise of ideological power in IR (Barkho, 2008). In the IR arena, the constructivist approach considers language as discourse that is not only a means to convey information, but also a tool to generate "ideological power" in world politics (Fairclough, 2001; Van Dijk, 1989). The concept of "soft power" (Nye, 1990) is a form of ideological power. In addition, constructivists argue that political discourse is "a product in the formation of which many actors are involved" (Barkho, 2008, p. 15). Political messages are formed and delivered through "technologists of discourse" (Fairclough, 2013) and political goals are strategically embedded within the discourse practices (Gilboa, 2001). Hence, to

clarify the messages about ideological power that are hidden or implicit in the language, and to understand such political discourse, the text(s) and other social factors, such as culture and history, that may influence the discourse-producing process need to be taken into account (Barkho, 2008). For instance, in order to understand a news report an individual needs to look beyond the linguistic description and think about the interpretative processes, as well as the actors who participated in forming it (Barkho, 2008; Fairclough, 2013).

Thirdly, a constructivist analysis includes novel methods such as the interpretive method in IR and the framing theory of critical discourse analysis in communication and media. By combining the analysis of IR with interdisciplinary perspectives, the constructivist approach allows the writer to employ discourse analysis idioms and paradigms. Additionally, framing theory in discourse analysis provides a tool for understanding how a state deploys media strategies in conducting its foreign policies.

Lastly, in the case of the SCS disputes, the use of a social constructivist research approach allows the writer to accept multiple perspectives over the disputes that were explicitly or implicitly expressed via media narratives and then explore them within the relevant social contexts. Besides the texts, the writer relies on other literature in the SCS disputes, concerning the geopolitical context in which the dynamics and changes in the regional political structure and the disputes took place. These include the publics' perceptions and identity over the disputes that are generated from the way the education system teaches history in the claimant states, especially history textbooks, and the states' priorities which are apparent in their foreign policy.

2. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The methodology of this study is based on qualitative analysis. Qualitative research represents “a set of methods” and “a toolbox of procedures” (Liamputtong, 2013, p. xv) for collecting and analysing non-statistical material, aimed at creating understanding, making subjective interpretations, and conducting critical analysis on events and social phenomena, not simply describing them (McNabb, 2004, p. 341). Liamputtong (2013) states that in order to explore the multiple aspects of the social world and human behaviour, qualitative research is an essential tool for finding evidence from different actors and contexts. By subjectively interpreting and critically analysing the input of the study, qualitative inquiry is a suitable means to elicit evidence of political goals that are hidden behind what the disputants have described and claimed in the SCS disputes via their media narratives. While acknowledging the qualitative nature of social research, the

thesis uses a case study research method and a mixed method of critical discourse analysis to collect and analyse data. The chosen approach is aligned with the goal to test the hypothesis within the theoretical framework of media diplomacy.

V. RESEARCH DESIGN

1. CASE STUDY RESEARCH METHOD

As Simons (2009, p. 20) stated, a case study refers to “an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution or system in a real-life context.” The approach of case study research helps to understand processes and interactions within the entity of the case, but also enables the finding of evidence that is interpreted from the case (VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2007). These interpretations and translations can be applied to other similar cases (Liamputtong, 2013). In this thesis, the SCS disputes have been complicated by the three claimant states’ different claims and actions, which are driven by different perspectives and motivations. Hence, the case study approach is a suitable choice to explore the complexity of the general context and the disputes at hand from the three claimants’ perspectives. Furthermore, as Yin (2013) states, as one is interested in “how” or “why” questions about a contemporary phenomenon that relates to some real-life background, the case study approach is particularly useful in finding answers. By employing this approach, the writer can find answers to the research questions by focusing on understanding the political motivations and media strategy that the claimants employed in the SCS disputes.

The thesis uses an embedded single case study (Robert, 2013) in which a main unit is split into multiple sub-units and each of those is examined within other cases of the case. The case study context in this thesis is the disputes in the SCS. Three of the six claimant states, China, the Philippines and Vietnam are the embedded sub-units of analysis. These sub-units will be analysed within three “cases that are located within the case” (Robert, 2013; Stake, 2003): the Scarborough Shoal dispute in 2012; the oil rig crisis in 2014 and the SCS Arbitration 2013-2016. The subjects in this study are the governments in the three claimant states in the examined time frame, while the objects are media narratives, targeted audiences and media strategies.

In this thesis, the case is bound by a time frame, a specific social and geopolitical context, as well as the hypothesis and research questions that are stated in the Introduction. Moreover, the choice of the case is both intrinsic and instrumental. The SCS disputes are intrinsically interesting in terms of the geopolitical power balance and regional peace and cooperation. While the Scarborough Shoal dispute and the oil rig crisis

are the most dangerous armed clashes between China and the other claimants since the 2010s, the SCS case is the first legal case in the disputes. This means that, for the first time, the territorial claims of the disputants were judged according to the 1982 United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Moreover, there are practical reasons for “the cases within the case study” (Robert, 2013), as during the crisis periods, the demand for information relating to the issues became extremely high from both domestic and global citizens. Additionally, public reactions became highly visible in nationalist and patriotic rallies in the streets and on the Internet (Gallardo & Baviera, 2012). This public demand pressured the governments to, at least, articulate and explain their policies and reactions via media channels. Therefore, these events brought about the ideal conditions for testing the governments’ media diplomacy on the SCS issues in the period that the focus of this research. In addition to these practical imperatives, the case study is also of broader theoretical interest for what it can contribute to the literature on the role of the media and public opinion on escalating and de-escalating territorial disputes.

2. DATA COLLECTION

3. 1. Data sources

Primary data sources

To increase the overall validity and credibility of the interpretation and explanation of media diplomacy this thesis uses both primary and secondary data. The primary data sources are state materials; official speeches and statements of the claimant states’ leaders and key political figures; and, finally, the archives of major media agencies.

State materials

The state materials are sets of policy and guidelines regarding the SCS disputes from various government departments including the foreign affairs, the media and communication departments of the claimant states. The yearbooks and ministerial research projects conducted by foreign affairs academics in the claimant states are also useful for interpreting the frontline actors’ perspectives in relation to their actions in the disputes.

Official statements

In the three claimant states, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFA/MOFA/DFA) have the prime responsibility for conducting external information activities regarding SCS issues and integrating with other ministerial-level agencies such as the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) (China), and the Naval Forces (Vietnam and the Philippines). The governments’ stances were presented during the cases studies via the foreign affairs

departments' media statements, the leaders' speeches and interviews (Chubb, 2016; Zhu & Lampton, 2010). Analysis of the states' media diplomacy in the SCS disputes is grounded in online media archives collected from two main sources including state leaders' statements and remarks and official media coverage of authoritative media agencies. The first significant source of insight is the leaders' remarks because they are carefully edited before being published by state news institutions. However, since political leaders rarely release remarks and comments on international controversies, especially on sensitive territorial disputes, this kind of data source is quite scant (Godwin & Miller, 2013). The second source is the governments' responses to existing foreign affairs events through press meetings held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence (MOD). Such press meetings are also news and information sources for foreign and local media agencies since they talk about sensitive issues like the SCS disputes. Questions posed by the participating journalists mainly construct the agenda of press meetings; however, the contents of the governmental officers' answers are well vetted before being published on the MFA and MOD websites. When the governments want to emphasise some issues, the MFA spokesperson will make a separate remark, which is called a "spokesperson statement" with a higher level of authority than the comments announced in the daily press conference (Godwin & Miller, 2013).

Major news agencies

In each state, based on their large national circulation, two legacy news agencies were selected to collect data. This study examines news coverage of the Voice of Vietnam (VOV) and Vietnam News Agency (VNA) for the case of Vietnam, those of Xinhua and the People's Daily (PD) for the case of China. These outlets are selected because they have a very large audience and readership in the countries and the contents of media coverage are highly scripted and vetted by their general editorial and management boards as they are considered "mouthpieces" of the Communist Parties (Chubb, 2016; Danh, 2015; Nhung, 2017). The study examines news reports of the Philippine Star (PS) and the Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI), which are privately-owned and leading English newspapers in the Philippines (Kadrich, 2008).¹

Survey data

This study focuses on the relations between states and the media, excluding the relations between states, the media and public opinion. However, analysis of media diplomacy has been supplemented by public opinion data collected from some sources

¹ See Appendix of Chapter 1

including the Global Times' Global Poll Centre, the Pew Global Attitudes Project, Asia Barometer, and World Values Survey.

Secondary data sources

In order to support the writer's arguments, studies taken from the body of academic literature around the SCS disputes and the relations between media and diplomacy, especially the concept of media diplomacy, are also used in the research. These secondary resources include textbooks and academic articles, as well as lectures and seminars regarding the disputes since the 1980s. However, due to the dynamics and developments in the nature of the disputes, and the strategic objectives of the disputants and other stakeholders, the writer will pay more attention to those studies that have focused on the three case studies and which were published recently. The triangulation of information enables some method triangulation through a flexibly combination of the framework of media diplomacy with the framing method of critical discourse analysis to gather and analyse data.

2. 2. Keywords

The employment of keywords is an important tool in searching and collecting data in media analysis (Fairclough, 2013). The thesis retrieves media coverage using the non-case sensitive keywords, in different cases within specific time frames.²

Official statements were collected from the website of the foreign affairs departments in Vietnam, China and the Philippines. Meanwhile, all media reports from the outlets were retrieved from the databases of Factiva, or their websites. The thesis uses a title and content search covering the period of the case studies. In order to avoid the randomness of data selection (Widdowson, 1998), the writer followed the criteria, set by Wodak and Meyer (2009), including specific political units; within specific time frames; specific political actors and specific fields of political action. In addition, reports on the SCS which did not relate to the disputes, political actions and the field of politics, for example, weather forecasts or scientific observations, were excluded from the list. A process of cleaning data was applied including deleting duplicated items, skimming and rejecting ones that are less than 100 words and about irrelevant issues. In addition, articles whose focus on the SCS disputes or the claimant states' actions and reactions over the disputes which were less than fifty percent of the article were not considered as units for this analysis (Amy Mitchell & Elizabeth, 2017). The selected Vietnamese and Chinese

² See Appendix of Chapter 1

items were translated into English via Google translate before being skimmed, scanned and coded into the final results.

3. 3. Data analysis

The use of qualitative content analysis and framing theory

This study deals with news, reports and coverage which are constructed from text(s) and through framing processes. In order to fit the thesis's objectives and research questions most exactly, the thesis uses a mixed news analysis approach by flexibly combining a content analysis approach and framing theory within the theoretical framework of media diplomacy.

Qualitative content analysis is defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). It is “an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by steps models, without rash quantification” (Mayring, 2000, p. 2).

A qualitative content analysis approach is appropriate for this study for many reasons. First, the use of a qualitative content analysis approach can help the writer to move beyond counting words, themes and patterns to focus on uncovering meaning through the set of data (Weber, 1990). This approach allows the writer to focus on unique themes which indicate the diverse ranges of meaning of a phenomenon, not just the significance of the occurrence of the texts, and explain social reality in a scientific manner (Zhang; & Wildemuth, 2009).

The study also relies on framing theory to answer the research questions. According to Entman (1993), one of the leading researchers in the media and communication field, frames can help to define problems, diagnose their causes, make moral judgements and predict their possible impacts. Frames also raise awareness, encourage “stocks of cultural morals and values, and make moral judgements and create contexts” (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997, p. 47). In the media and communication field, media framing is defined as a process of choosing, inserting, excluding and highlighting, which “symbol handlers” construct discourse (Gitlin, 2003). Through such processes, multiple actors mobilise forms of language to construct interpretations on specific issues within a broader context. In political communication, political actors usually employ the framing processes by strategically and rationally selecting and highlighting some aspects of reality to promote their preferred ideas to citizens (Azpiroz, 2013; Entman, 1993, 2004).

The general process of the mixed news analysis approach involves (1) formulating research questions, (2) collecting text(s), (3) unitising the text, (4) coding the selected text, (5) conceptualising coding results, (6) checking for reliability and trustworthiness, and (7) writing results to answer the research questions (Zhang; & Wildemuth, 2009).

Coding process of qualitative content analysis

Three major elements in the coding procedure are sampling, coding and creating categories and themes. The sampling process identifies the units of analysis which in this study are news articles. During the initial coding step, codes are updated and revised to achieve a high level of consistency. Coding samples, checking the consistency of codes and altering the rules of coding are integrative procedures to be continued until consistency is gained (Weber, 1990).

The next step is to classify the codes into categories which will help to answer questions about what the text means (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). According to Krippendorff (2004), a category is a group of text excerpts that share a similarity. In addition, it is inconsistent if data can be placed into two or more categories.

Creating themes is the next step in answering the question as to how the data is described. Van Manen (1990, p. 87) describes a theme as “an aspect of the structure of experience” and explains that a theme cannot be an object or a thing. Because the concept of a theme conveys multiple meanings, researchers can link the underlying meanings together in categories by creating themes (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

Trustworthiness

The criteria of credibility, dependability and conformability are employed in this study to determine different aspects of trustworthiness for the selection of this interpretative approach (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The credibility of a study depends on how well the data and the procedure of analysis address the research objectives and associated issues including choosing the research focus or selecting a data survey (Creswell, 2014). To guarantee the credibility of this study, the criteria are applied not only in the data source as reported in the first part of this section, but also in the process of data collection and analysis. In addition, Chapters Four to Six discuss the definition of each category and theme as well as the details of the analytical procedure of frames and the framing processes in each disputant state.

According to Bradley (1993, p. 437), dependability refers to “the coherence of internal process and the way the researchers account for changing conditions in the phenomena”; that is the change that the researchers conduct in the analysis process. In

addition, Bradley defines confirmability as “the extent to which the characteristics of data, as posited by the researcher, can be confirmed by others who read or review the research results” (p. 437). To improve these two criteria, the thesis describes a general process for the data analysis and explains the framework of interpreting data in the subsequent sections.

Procedures of data collection and analysis

Analysis 1: Identifying the states’ frames and framing development

The procedure of data analysis includes three major steps, as reported in Figure 1. In the first type of analysis, the writer explores how the governments conducted their media strategies on their own during the disputes. All official media comments and remarks that the governments published during the different stages of the disputes are collected. From data collected in this step, the writer explores first how the governments constructed their political discourses and framing regarding the SCS disputes.

More importantly, by using the theoretical framework of media diplomacy, the writer is able to examine how the governments conduct media strategies on their own – through information sources, agenda setters, communication channels and propaganda (Y. Cohen, 2012). By examining these frames, the governments’ preferred identity and ideas about the disputes, which offer clues for interpreting their political objectives, are also indirectly discovered. The official comments and remarks then became information sources for domestic and foreign reporters. In other words, the governments become the information supporters and reporters are the consumers. How and to what extent these consumers react to the governments’ messages are discussed in the second analysis.

Analysis 2: Identifying the media’s common frames in each state

The second type of analysis is to examine how and to what extent, the dominant frames and discourses that the media disseminate, conform with, or differ from, those that the governments preferred. This is an analysis of media coverage of the SCS disputes, including news, features, editorials, columns, interviews, and transcripts of talk shows with participation by leaders and key figures in the nine selected news channels, within the three-year period of the SCS disputes (2012 – 2016).

The choice of time span is based on the actual period of the crises, conforming to the period of highest demand for information regarding the subjects from the mass media as well as policy makers in the relevant states. The starting point for each data set is the outbreaks of the disputes because crisis events are most newsworthy at their beginning (An & Gower, 2009). The end point is the month when the crises were resolved.

Since this study focuses on the perceptions and interpretation of the disputes, rather than the developments at sea, news coverage is the phenomenon examined here. Based on those primary and secondary topics from the three representative outlets in each claimant state, the writer first identifies and discusses the main themes of those media outlets and then highlights the dominant frames and discourses in the media of each claimant.

The last step of the analysis is to analyse the media diplomacy of each claimant by comparing the frames from the claimants' political discourse and those from the major media institutions. Questions about how these media discourses encouraged or discouraged, supported or criticised each state's preferred discourse, and how the governments mobilised the media systems for their political goals in the disputes, are then answered.

There is no doubt that during the period 2012 – 2016, China, Vietnam and the Philippines received massive attention from the media, public and policy makers. Hence, it is argued that the news coverage and the policy documents were written during this period in straight news style by directly reporting the main facts in each event. This allows this thesis to deal with both the news reports and the official policy documents by using a single coding system. This comparative strategy for looking at news coverage and policy documents has been used by Malek (1997), Nhung (2017), Danh (2015); Riley and Hollihan (2012).

Analysis 3: Comparing the SCS media frames in the three countries

A conclusion about the media diplomacy role in the SCS disputes is presented through comparing and analysing the three cases. Comparing the disputants' common media narratives not only helps to answer how they are different, but also to interpret ways and to what extent the media narratives and discourse have influenced the bilateral relations between the states from a perspective of national identity and perceptions. As a result, this analysis answers to what extent the differences in those common media narratives have affected the relationships among the three states in the longer-term, helping to understand the role of media diplomacy in the SCS disputes.

4. TRANSLATION

According to the theoretical framework of media diplomacy, there are three different groups of audiences including domestic audiences, the public audience and governments in rival states, and other foreign audiences. Hence, the thesis collected news reports in English, Chinese and Vietnamese according to the cases. With the procedure

of collecting and coding data mentioned above, the study does not rely heavily on word-by-word translations. For Vietnamese and Chinese news reports, before coding them in English, Google Translate, a translation tool which is used widely in media studies such as in the work of Chubb (2016), is used to translate them into English.

VI. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

This research is neither primarily about the armed clashes about the SCS nor the legal and historical claims of the disputants, although these will be mentioned to provide context. Instead, the research is an examination of the controversy over the disputes as it has played out in the media in China, Vietnam and the Philippines.

There are many approaches to explain the interactions between politics, the media and the public which will be mentioned in the literature review. In this study, in order to test the hypothesis and to answer the research questions, the writer will only focus on the ways that the governments, as players, have utilised the media as a tool to influence their target audiences. In China and Vietnam, it is not hard to understand that the media function as a tool or a mouthpiece of the governments because the media systems are fully controlled by them. In the case of the Philippines, a democratic country in the region, the research will examine the ways that the government has dealt with the domestic media outlets to convey its message, not the ways that the media, as an actor, has interacted with the government and the public. The research will not answer questions such as to what extent or in which ways the media and public opinion have affected the governments' foreign policy decision-making processes over the SCS issues.

Due to the constraints of time, data sources and technology, there are some important issues that the researcher had to exclude and leave for research projects in the future, which means that there are some limitations of the current research. For data sources, the research focused on the traditional media including television and newspapers, not social media. However, because most of the selected major news channels³ have established their own accounts on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, the research used some useful indicators from these platforms (for example, numbers of views, likes and sharing) to assist evaluation of the effectiveness of media diplomacy on the issue at it happened at a specific time. Public discussions on social media channels were not included in this study. For the time frame, the researcher focused on only a short period of time and on the SCS issues, which means she is not able to examine the claimants' media diplomacy comprehensively.

³ See Table 1, Appendix of Chapter 1

This thesis only examines the media diplomacy of three of the claimant states - China, the Philippines and Vietnam, with regard to the three crises. It thus excludes Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Taiwan. The three states selected were the main actors in the three incidents leading to fluctuating tensions in the SCS region. The governments in these countries have tried to manage both incidents and tensions through multiple approaches and strategies including media and public policies. For Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, their strategies of keeping a low profile over the SCS dispute would demand a different approach to collect and analyse data such as in-depth interviews or public opinion surveys. It would be difficult for the writer to conduct, at the same time as the method in the current project because of the constraints of time and labour. In the case of Taiwan, questions about what should be the official stance on the SCS or whether the choice of joining the People's Republic of China (PRC) in countering other disputants should be accepted, have not been answered by the Taiwanese people yet (Lin, 1997). Moreover, Taipei's SCS policy dilemma is further complicated due to its diplomatic isolation and inadequate power projection capability (Lin, 1997). Hence, it is not a wise choice to add the complicated case of Taiwan to this current research project.

The research examined media narratives from April 2012 to July 2016 concerning:

- The Scarborough Shoal dispute from April to May 2012,
- The HD981 oil rig stand-off from May to August 2014,
- The South China Sea Arbitration from February 2013 to July 2016.

During this period, the region witnessed a strategic shake up in political and regional relations. In China, President Xi Jinping came to power in 2012 and paid special attention to the SCS and media diplomacy resulting in a dramatic change in the media battle over the disputes. Moreover, in 2016, both Vietnam and the Philippines experienced changes in their leadership and, as a result, policies over the territorial issue were also altered to some extent.

VII. THE ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis is divided into five main chapters, and an introduction and a conclusion. The Introduction explains the researcher's motivations, strategies, and the objectives of the thesis. Chapter Two reviews the literature in relation to the role of the media in IR and the theoretical framework of media diplomacy. Chapter Three serves as a background to the entire research study. This chapter provides reviews on media systems in the claimant states, discusses the root causes of the SCS disputes, the overlapping claims between the claimant states and summarises developments in the three crises. Chapter

Four examines the media battle between China and Vietnam during the oil rig crisis, while Chapters Five and Six examine the media controversies between China and the Philippines during the Scarborough Shoal dispute and the SCS case. In the main part of the chapters, the writer assesses the media strategies that the two governments mobilised during the tensions. In the conclusions of the case study chapters, the research questions are answered for each protagonist. The Conclusion summarises the findings including differences and commonalities between the relevant sides and the media strategies employed by each side. Additionally, the researcher indicates the limitations of the thesis, and makes suggestions for the future, both in theory and practice.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF MEDIA DIPLOMACY

The primary mission of this chapter is to explicate the theoretical framework of media diplomacy and explain why the framework is applicable to the case of the SCS disputes. First, based on the studies of Volkomer (2012) and Mowlana (1997), which focuses on three basic functions of the media, the writer examines some major ways through which the media interact with the political world. The chapter reviews previous studies that examine the role of the media in the process of conducting diplomacy between nation-states (Y. Cohen, 1986; Gilboa, 1998, 2001, 2002; Hollihan, 2014). Then, the chapter focuses on the theoretical framework of media diplomacy in the context of antagonistic relations between states, especially over territory and maritime sovereignty. It is argued that media diplomacy is not only involved in the escalation stages but is also used for de-escalation phases.

I. THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE MEDIA AND POLITICS

1. THREE BASIC FUNCTIONS OF THE MEDIA

According to Mowlana (1997), there are three major actors in the complex intermingling and interdependence of the media and political journalists, a government and the public. In the media-government-public relations nexus (Katz, 2009), the media interact with the modern world of politics in three main ways: by reporting issues, setting the agenda, and investigating problems (Mowlana, 1997; Volkomer, 2012). As a primary responsibility, presenting news is the most basic way through which the media interact with the public and a government. Based on the information that the media present in a condensed and accurate form, the public can monitor the actions of government and make informed decisions over important political issues. This function is more significant in democratic states because constitution writers in those states believe that an informed public is necessary to maintain democracy.

Setting the agenda is another vital function of the media. The media and journalists not only focus on what a government does, but also point out what a government needs to do and should do about current public concerns. By drawing the public's attention to specific issues, the media can alter the agenda that a government sets, although this function is a "double-edged sword" in some cases.

The last major function of the media is as an investigator. In most democratic countries, their constitutions and laws protect the rights of the media in independently discovering and monitoring the behaviours and acts of state leaders and state officials.

Hence, on the one hand, the public relies on what the media transmit. On the other hand, the media are required to reflect what is behind the closed doors of the political world (Volkomer, 2012). The influence the media exert will vary depending on the nature of particular political systems as will be discussed in the following section.

2. INFLUENCING POLICY: A SINGLE PARTY SYSTEM AND DEMOCRACY

The different characteristics of political systems in the world orient the relations between the media and politics (Ebo, 1997; Mickiewicz, 1988; Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). In a single party system, national media systems become “political instrumentalization”, featuring “a quintessential party-press parallelism” in which the ruling party and state institutions organisationally affiliate to them (Yuezhi Zhao, 2012, p. 161). In this study, the governments in China and Vietnam demonstrate this relationship (Matthews, 2016). In these countries, the three main functions of the media that Volkomer (2012) stated are not fully applicable. The relationship between three major institutions, a government, the media and the public, is altered to adapt to the characteristics of the one-party system. The media become a mouthpiece of the Communist Party: “control of the media is absolutely paramount for the Communist party,” and “media control is central to their power in one fell swoop” (Scotton & Hachten, 2010, p. 113). For instance, in China, it is usual for Chinese leaders to use the media channels to enhance their stance and spearhead policy shifts (C. C. Lee, 2019).

In liberal political systems, for example, the United States and many Western democracies, the three basic functions of the media are fully employed thanks to constitutional protection (B. C. Cohen, 1963). Because of the enormous power of the media, the interaction between the media and the government tends to be adversarial. In conducting diplomacy and foreign affairs, in some scenarios, democratic governments often interact with media institutions discreetly so as to avoid being accused of violating the integrity of the media (Ebo, 1997). Moreover, in crises for example, wars or military conflicts, in order to guarantee political strategies, instead of suppressing the media, governments usually have to employ a “pool format” to deal with the media’s tactics (Oates, 2008, p. 122). For example, during the Gulf War, a very limited number of reporters were allowed access to soldiers and battlefields in order to acquire information, due to monitoring by the US government. In addition, information that these reporters gained would be shared with other media institutions. The “pool format” approach supports the government’s media strategies for those reporters who lack information and

are forced to rely on their official press releases (Oates, 2008, pp. 122-123). In this study, only the Philippines was in this category, which offered the opportunity to examine the pool format tactic. For instance, information regarding the stand-off at the Scarborough Shoal and the process of the SCS arbitration case at The Hague was mainly provided by the Aquino government. This could be considered as an example of Manila's pool format strategy.

3. INFLUENCING POLICY: DOMESTIC POLICY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

In the world of politics, there are certain entanglements between national and international affairs (Putnam, 1988). However, much of the existing literature on the relations between the media and politics show a distinct difference in the ways that the media and policy interact in these two realms (Malek & Wiegand, 1997). To manage domestic politics, a government often designs and employs policies to manage all issues and activities occurring within its national territory, while it structures self-interest strategies, called foreign policy, to guide actions in its relations with other state and non-state actors and to advance its national interests in world politics (Goldstein, 1994; Weisbrode, 2017). In the process of foreign policy decision-making, in order to communicate effectively with other state and non-state actors through the media, a government is required to have the ability to design approximated media policy and strategies according to its different political audiences, goals and national interests .

It would be inconsistent to make assumptions about the media's involvement in foreign policy based on data and studies of the media's covering of domestic policy (Malek & Wiegand, 1997). There is less political pressure for media institutions to report and cover issues regarding domestic policy than in the foreign affairs field (Graber & Dunaway, 2017). In addition, Berry (1990); Paletz and Entman (1981) argue that it is easier for people to understand and remember news covering domestic issues than stories about foreign policy and international relations.

Some of the studies of the SCS disputes mentioned in the Introduction show that the national and international affairs of the claimants regarding the disputes are somehow linked (Anderson, 2006; Chubb, 2016; Trung, 2016). However, for the purpose of the thesis, the writer will apply a theoretical framework to the media's role in diplomacy to examine the selected cases. Instead of excluding the roles of domestic politics from the study, the writer will examine them as one of the influential factors in determining SCS

strategy in each claimant state, which is also a widely used strategy in SCS studies (Chubb, 2016; Gallardo & Baviera, 2012; Nhung, 2017).

II. THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. THE MEDIA AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Before the 1920s, research on the media-foreign affairs relationship was limited (Malek, 1997). The media's role was rarely mentioned in the literature on IR, while there were not many media studies that focused on foreign policy, resulting in "a major gap in international mass communication and foreign relations research regarding the role of the press in diplomatic communication" (Bullion, 1982, p. 187). Topics and research methods that were mentioned in the literature in that period were not diverse, mainly focusing on the impact of the news media on public opinion (Lippmann, 1922; Walter, 1922) and the media's influence in the foreign policy decision-making process (Douglass, Bömer, & Dovifat, 1932).

Moreover, in practice, the public were less interested in information with regard to foreign policy, while governments neglected to invest in media technology, as well as to develop media expertise to support their foreign affairs and strategies. Furthermore, media outlets were limited in their access to information about diplomatic and foreign issues, and were not powerful social institutions as far as the realm of foreign affairs was concerned (Malek, 1997).

The electronic revolution of the 1960s dramatically enhanced the media's role in the foreign affairs realm resulting in new trends in the literature (Malek, 1997). Scholars started to pay more attention to multiple topics such as whether or not the three basic functions of the media are workable in the foreign policy realm and, if they were, how they perform by themselves and how governments mobilise them.

B. C. Cohen (1963), was one of the leading researchers in this new area of interest. The core ideas in Cohen's study are that the media are fully involved in the foreign policy process through their fundamental functions, and that the links between a government, the media, and the public are undeniable. Firstly, Cohen contends that among other roles, "the press in its collective sense is perhaps the single most important voice in the foreign policy field as informer, interpreter, advocate, and critic" (1963, p. 194). The media can help to define situations and grant legitimacy to an international event or personality through covering and reporting foreign affairs and foreign policy issues. In addition, with the ability to check, clarify or distort issues, the media are not only information sources, but also function as investigators to discover what happens behind the closed doors of

negotiations. Lastly, the media are one of the government's propaganda tools in forming and executing foreign policy thanks to their attention-getting capacity (B. C. Cohen, 1963; Mowlana, 1997). More importantly, Cohen emphasises that the media play the role of "a continuous and articulate link between foreign policy officials in the government and those people on the outside who follow world events" (B. C. Cohen, 1963, p. 194). According to Malek and Wiegand (1997), this argument provides an impetus for further research, reminding scholars that it is significant to recognize the interaction between these institutions, instead of only focusing on which institution has more influence. In addition, based on the understanding of a permanent linkage, scholars continue to explore the directions and degree of influence which flows between the media and a government and the impact of the media and/or a government on public opinion with regard to the foreign policy realm.

In the post-Cold War era, the literature on the media's role in the conduct of diplomacy appears to be more diverse and dispersed than in the previous era. According to Hollihan (2014), there are two important approaches in this period. These are the impact that media and communication technologies have on the conduct of foreign policy, and employment of the media as a political instrument to achieve diplomatic goals. The second approach is applicable to this study. Leading thinkers in this approach are Gilboa (1998, 2001, 2002), Ebo (1997) and Y. Cohen (1986, 2012) with the concept of "media diplomacy" that refers to the use of the media by a government in the conduct of diplomacy to achieve its political goals.

2. THE RISING ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN MODERN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In recent decades, people have witnessed dramatic changes in global politics: the revolution of global media systems, rising mass participation in politics and structural changes in international relations. These movements have influenced the nature of diplomacy and the media's functions in international relations, resulting in new types of interdependence and interactions between the media and diplomacy (Lim, 2017; Wolfsfeld, 1997).

Since diplomacy focuses on the management of relations between governments and between governments and other stakeholders (Barston, 2014), governments and other actors, including groups, organisations and individuals, use diplomacy as a communication system to "express and defend their interests, state their grievances, and issue threats and ultimatums. Diplomacy is a channel of contact for clarifying positions,

probing for information, and convincing another country to support one's position" (Farnsworth, 1988, p. 179).

Before the end of the Cold War, the conduct of diplomacy mainly depended on the formal diplomats and state leaders of sovereign nations. The process of diplomacy was highly secret. Diplomatic negotiations and agreements were only revealed to the public if state leaders and diplomats agreed that leaking or releasing such news was useful for political strategies and goals (Gilboa, 1998). Hence, the role of the media in diplomacy was limited, and mostly restricted to reporting those events and stories that were aligned with the national and cultural values of their home country, and rarely employing the investigative function of questioning governments' diplomatic narratives (Riley, 2014).

Nowadays, the nature of diplomacy has experienced structural changes in which the media play a significant role (Barston, 2014; Riley, 2014). The dramatic development of global media systems, like CNN, the BBC, Aljazeera and ABC, has partly supported expanding the conduct of diplomacy to the global agenda. The media and communication revolution helps to send international news to every home, connecting people and sharing the public sphere with all communities in the world. In the decision-making process, while the significant role of diplomats and official leaders has remained, non-state actors such as think tanks, scholars, and NGOs, with their perspectives and arguments that shape public discourses in global issues and foreign policy, are making an increasing impact (Barston, 2014; Riley, 2014). Hence, diplomats and foreign policy makers in the modern international relations and technology era are required to maintain a careful balance between secrecy and publicity by cooperating with journalists and the public (Barston, 2014).

With the participation of multiple actors in the international arena and the media and communication revolution, a new political environment has been created, where the value of a nation's reputation and placement in world politics may be as important as, or even more important than, those of tangible resources like land, sea, and territory (Gilboa, 2008; Riley, 2014). States are now required to develop comprehensive and sophisticated strategies and policies to exercise and improve their "power" in networked societies.

The term "power" refers to an ability to do things and to get others to do what they would not otherwise do (Bhargava, 2008). From a state perspective, before the Cold War, one could evaluate a nation's power with an emphasis on military force and conquest. In modern IR, as Manuel (2009) notes, "power relationships are constitutive of society because those who have power construct the institutions of society according to their

values and interests. Power is exercised by means of coercion and/or by the construction of meaning in people's minds through mechanisms of symbol manipulation" (p. 51). The proof of power is not only in resources but also in the ability to affect what other countries want: what Nye (1990, p. 155) has called "soft power." Accordingly, soft power, in contrast with the concept of hard power, is defined as "the ability to set the political agenda and determine the framework of debate in a way that shapes others' preferences" (p. 166). It can be generated from "intangible power resources such as culture, ideology, and international institutions" by using instruments such as effective communications, organisational and institutional skills and manipulation of interdependence (Nye, 1990, pp. 157-167).

When the sources and instruments of power change, strategies will alter in line with these developments. As Castells notes, "because networks are global, the state, which is the enforcer of power through the monopoly of violence, finds considerable limits to its coercive capacity unless it engages itself in networking with other states, and with the power-holders in the decisive networks that shape social practices in their territories while being deployed in the global realm" (Manuel, 2009, p. 51). Leaders and experts have started to recognise that a nation's ability to project its reputation and placement in global politics has become a necessary factor in the nation's capacity to achieve foreign policy objectives (Riley, 2014). According to Ebo (1997), the reputation, international image and stature of a nation are derived from its ability to project the preferred national identity into the international arena and acquire prestige in that domain. While most states are able to build national identity by managing and controlling domestic media institutions within their own territory, only states that have advanced media and communication technology will be equipped to influence the global political agenda and to construct their international reputation and image. In addition, governments have to rely on communication to achieve their strategic goals and resolve conflicts in international relations. Therefore, in the information age, the media have become a key tool in a nation's diplomatic campaigns and the conduct of effective media diplomacy is an indispensable part of the process of mobilising national power (Ebo, 1997; Riley, 2014).

3. PROPAGANDA, PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND MEDIA DIPLOMACY

Since the role of the media in diplomacy and international relations have become more important, new terms for describing the interaction between them have also been created such as public diplomacy, media diplomacy, populist diplomacy, instant diplomacy, teleplomacy and even photoplomacy. Except for the purpose of attracting

readers, creating such new terms has resulted in conceptual confusion (Gilboa, 1998). Media diplomacy, in many cases, is somewhat confused with public diplomacy because scholars argue that the media are an integral part of public diplomacy (Lim, 2017). Hence, there is a demand to distinguish between the concepts of public diplomacy and media diplomacy.

First mentioned by a former US diplomat, Edmund Gullion, in the 1960s, the term “public diplomacy” was defined as “the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies... with the transnational flow of information and ideas” (Nicholas, 2008, p. 19). Much of the existing literature in the IR field shows that the root of public diplomacy is in war propaganda, a popular strategy in World War I and II, which includes the mobilisation of “lies, distortion, deceit, manipulation, mind control, psychological warfare, brainwashing, and palaver” (Jowett & O'donnell, 2014, p. 2). The key characteristic that helps to distinguish public diplomacy from propaganda is that the idea of public diplomacy is to reduce manipulation and enhance communication, especially with foreign populations through “activities directed abroad in the fields of information, education, and culture, whose objective is to influence a foreign government by influencing its citizens” (Gilboa, 1998, p. 4). The ideas and practices of public diplomacy, including the communication activities of a country with the public in other countries, have developed as strategies to enhance a country’s image and reputation through informing and influencing the public in other countries. Consequently, public diplomacy can be conducted through multiple activities such as educational and cultural exchange programmes, advertising, TV broadcasting and entertainment supply (“What is Public diplomacy?,” 2018). In contrast with propaganda’s coercive nature of sending messages to audiences, public diplomacy emphasises persuasive strategies which a target audience can accept or deny (Zaharna, 2004).

From the above definition of public diplomacy, the media clearly constitute a powerful tool for reaching foreign audiences to promote foreign policy and influence public opinion. However, this does not mean that the media belong to public diplomacy as many scholars believe. There is a paucity of studies in this field, especially about the relationship and distinction between media diplomacy and public diplomacy.

By contrast, in the literature of media diplomacy, certain efforts to distinguish between media diplomacy and public diplomacy have been made by many scholars like Gilboa and Cohen. In his book, “Media Diplomacy”, Y. Cohen (1986) elucidates the distinction between media diplomacy and public diplomacy. Cohen argues that, public

diplomacy includes all public aspects such as information exchange and cultural activities, which not only supports current foreign policy but also helps to build up long-term national interests. Media diplomacy may participate in some aspects of public diplomacy, but also others that do not relate to the public: for instance, sending signals between governments through media outlets and being a source of information. While public diplomacy usually needs a longer period to complete one specific campaign, media diplomacy occurs even in instances such as a particular diplomatic event or in an interview with leaders of states.

Gilboa also distinguishes between the two concepts in several ways. First, media diplomacy tends to use only one channel - the mass media - which is different from the multiple channels of public diplomacy. Secondly, the primary purpose of media diplomacy is to appeal for conflict resolution, while public diplomacy focuses on promoting a nation's image through propaganda and public relations. Thirdly, media diplomacy is used in the context of negotiations, while public diplomacy is pursued in the context of ideological conflicts. Lastly, media diplomacy occurs in a shorter period to reflect and update the results of international negotiations, whereas public diplomacy requires a longer period to build up a friendly environment within target nations (Gilboa, 1998, 2001, 2002).

4. THEORETICAL CONCEPTS OF MEDIA DIPLOMACY

Most of the early studies on media diplomacy introduced the concept of media diplomacy through its functions in diplomacy and foreign affairs processes. In the article "News Media and International Negotiation", Davison (1974) was one of the early researchers who studied the roles of the media in the conduct of diplomacy and international negotiations. First, Davison indicated that the media play "a particularly important part in supplying information" (p. 174) for diplomats to accomplish their missions and gain access to the political situation of a country. Moreover, to provide support for negotiations between states, a government could express its willingness, conditions and ideas about disputed issues with relevant governments by incorporating its messages in media coverage. Media outlets then might contribute to the conduct of diplomacy by fostering informal discussions between the states. These contributions provide the context for negotiations among states. The media also have a positive role in coordinating agencies within a single government by informing them about each other's intentions and about the positions of their governments.

Yoel Cohen (1986, 2012) explained the concept of media diplomacy by mentioning the three functions of the media in the conduct of diplomacy. First, the media are a source of information for diplomats and also function as channels for policymakers to communicate among themselves, as well as achieve public support for their policies. As an information source, the media can provide information for diplomats who work abroad and their colleagues who serve in their home country. Furthermore, the media function as additional sources of information and “agenda setters” in the trilateral relations between foreign policymakers, interest groups and the public. As a communication channel, the media provide avenues for policymakers to communicate within a state, as well as with other states. While officials and ministers use the media to postpone or interfere in policy options at the policy formulation process, they also use the media in international negotiations to seek another government’s support at the policy implementation stage. As a propaganda tool, the media are mobilised to achieve support from the public for policy. The processes take place when diplomats build relations with the local media, and when officials interact with foreign press agencies in their country. While providing important insights into the nature of media diplomacy, these early definitions do not explain how a state mobilises media diplomacy to shape its national identity, to build its international reputation, and finally to promote its national interests and power in global politics.

Other insights into the role of media diplomacy were offered by Ebo (1997). Ebo suggested that “foreign policy must be examined within the role of media diplomacy in constructing a preferred national identity and a complementary international image that influences a nation’s global power position” (p. 44). Ebo argued that a state uses media diplomacy not only to promote national interests by articulating the preferred national identity and international image in the global political agenda, but also to counter its enemies’ strategies by undermining their preferred national consciousness and international prestige. One of the ways for governments to do this is to hire international and professional public relations firms, especially those located in the targeted regions. Through such processes, a government is able to shape its standing or to assert its own version of national identity on an international stage. For example, before the Gulf War occurred, the Kuwaiti government ran a comprehensive public relations campaign to portray a negative image of Saddam Hussein and to encourage the US public to support military action against Iraq (Ebo, 1997). According to Mowlana (1997), in order to succeed in promoting the expected narratives of national identity, a government has to have the ability to assure both its domestic and international audiences that the identity it

is projecting is legitimate and does not violate any international norms and laws in international relations. The acceptance and support from major international media institutions provide legitimacy for a nation's actions including promoting national identity. Ebo's arguments play an important step in building a theoretical framework for analysing media diplomacy. Scholars like Gilboa (2002), Wolfsfeld (1997), and Wolfsfeld and Mowlana (1997) have developed analytical frameworks of media diplomacy, analysing how media power is generated and transferred into political power in the international relations arena by mobilising media diplomacy.

In this thesis, media diplomacy is defined as governments' media strategies in conducting diplomacy and foreign affairs, including well-edited words, transcripts, pictures, media activities, to convey their strategic messages to target audiences so that they can achieve their political goals. For immediate objectives, governments use this form of strategic communication to achieve their strategic goals, resolve their problems, advance their policy priorities and mobilise public support for agreements. For longer-term objectives, these media strategies will be an important part of their efforts to establish influence or even control over the political environment, both at home and in foreign policy interactions with other states. Media diplomacy is deployed through diverse instruments such as meetings between leaders and diplomats, media interviews, public speeches, and carefully orchestrated photo opportunities designed to reach multiple audiences (Gilboa, 1998, 2001, 2002). Based on this definition, it is necessary to identify a theoretical framework of media diplomacy which uncovers and explains how media diplomacy is used in the context of territorial disputes. This is the subject of the following section.

III. MEDIA DIPLOMACY IN TERRITORIAL DISPUTES

1. TERRITORIAL DISPUTES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In IR, territorial disputes, which involve a state's territorial integrity and national sovereignty, have been one of the central issues in international conflicts. A territorial dispute occurs when two or more states make conflicting claims over the sovereignty or ownership of the same piece of land or territory (Fravel, 2014). Disputed land and borders have been the most common causes over which states go to war in history (Fravel, 2014). According to Vasquez John (1993), between 80 and 90 percent of all wars have been linked with or resulted from territorial disputes. Moreover, existing research has shown an association between territorial disputes and rivalry among states with frequent threats

or uses of force, in which disputes over territories sometimes cause the rivalries (Vasquez & Henehan, 2001).

Territorial disputes are integral to the conflicts examined in this thesis. The general context of this thesis is the disputes over territorial and maritime sovereignty in the SCS between the three claimant states. Because of the focus on territorial sovereignty over land borders and offshore islands, this definition of a territorial dispute is applicable for the disputes over the Scarborough Shoal and the Spratly Islands. However, this definition does not cover overlapping claims over maritime boundaries in the SCS. A maritime boundary dispute is defined as a conflicting or overlapping claim by two or more states over the EEZ or extended continental shelves (Fravel, 2014). Since maritime boundary disputes, especially in Asia, have grown in importance in recent decades, and in some of the SCS disputes, the states' sovereignty statements over offshore islands and rocks and their claims over maritime boundary are intertwined. Both the definitions of territorial and maritime boundary disputes are considered in this study (Fravel, 2014).

It is appropriate choice to use the theoretical framework of media diplomacy in the case studies of the SCS dispute, as there is a linkage between territory and armed conflicts, which can be explained through the lens of national interests and nationalism. Scholars argue that disputed territories are highly valued for material reasons, usually the land's underlying strategic or economic value (Huth & Allee, 2002). In addition, the territory of a state also has a symbolic value as it is usually understood as an inherent and integral part of the integrity of the state, or the integrity of territory is linked with a state's national identity and unity. In many cases, the material and symbolic natures of territorial disputes are intertwined, sometimes creating pressure for governments to use force. Fravel (2014) argued that in non-democratic countries, the relationship between territory, symbolic values and the use of force are even clearer since non-democratic regimes may have to rely on symbolic politics to protect legitimacy. Finally, since seizing or defending territory from an adversary is one of the main goals of the use of force, any movement or activity that violates national territory from external force can be countered by threats or uses of force (Fravel, 2014).

According to Gilboa (2009), a conflict in general is a dynamic process with four main phases: onset-prevention, where the primary goal is to stop armed violence from happening; escalation-management, where the objective is to manage and control armed violence; de-escalation resolution, which includes efforts to end armed violence and conflicts; and finally termination-reconciliation, characterised by efforts to construct and

promote peacebuilding and reconciliation steps, creating the foundation for a stable peace. Similar points are also made by Howard (2002); Jakobsen (2000); Spurk (2002). Since the phases have distinctive characteristics, purposes and outcomes, the media's roles in each phase are also different. Correspondingly, governments are required to have appropriate strategies to use the media in the different phases in conducting their diplomacy and foreign affairs.

2. MEDIA DIPLOMACY IN TERRITORIAL DISPUTES

2. 1. Media diplomacy in the conflict prevention and reconciliation phases

Onset-prevention is the first stage of a conflict, characterised by the beginning of disagreement and an increase in hostile verbal exchanges (Gilboa, 2009). The priority here is to prevent the conflict from escalating into violence by short, medium-, and long-term prevention strategies, including coercive diplomacy, soft diplomacy, co-operative administration and structural transformations (Aguirre, Ferrándiz, & Pureza, 2003).

The reconciliation or peacebuilding phase, one of the last stages of a conflict, is a comprehensive and continuing process that supports a transformation of the underlying structural, cultural and relational roots and causes of violent conflict. The primary goals of this phase are to amend antagonists' attitudes and transform them from hostility to amicability by "changing the motivations, goals, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions of the great majority of the society members regarding the conflict, the nature of the relationship between the parties, and the parties themselves" (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004, pp. 11-12).

There is no consensus as to whether media diplomacy functions constructively or destructively in these two phases of a conflict. Some scholars argue that the media and journalists play an active and constructive role in conflicts (Bratic & Schirch, 2007; Galtung, 1975, 1976, 2005). First, the basic functions of the media are workable in these phases including being an information provider and interpreter, a watchdog, a gatekeeper, a policy maker, diplomat, peace promotor, and bridge builder (Aguirre et al., 2003; Bratic & Schirch, 2007). The media can function in conflict conciliation and peacebuilding through official diplomatic channels, for example, establishing democratic media outlets in Iraq and non-official ones, such as support for operating new media institutions, programmes and campaigns such as OBN television in Bosnia (Bratic, 2008). The basic argument is that because the role of the media in strengthening cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural alters on a large scale is unique, peacebuilders can utilise the media for the most strategic impact in their programmes, especially in reducing the polarisation between groups (Bratic & Schirch, 2007). This strategy can be a reference for diplomats

and state officials if they want to use the media to prevent a conflict from escalating and build peace.

Wolfsfeld and his colleagues (2004) are some of the leading researchers who have critically analysed the role of the media in a peace process. Accordingly, the media are important catalysts that have serious impacts on the opportunities for successful peace building, including defining the political atmosphere surrounding the peace process, shaping the nature of the discourses about a peace process, altering disputants' strategy and behaviour, and managing the public standing and legitimacy of disputants. The authors conclude that the higher the level of elite consensus in support of peace policies and the lower the intensity of the crisis, the more chances there are for the media to play a positive role in a peace process.

Other scholars, argue that the roles that the media play in the prevention and peacebuilding phases are negligible because of both the media and governments (Jakobsen, 2000). For the news industry, media narratives and stories that cover peace or conflicts without visible violence or the use of force are less exciting than those with a number of deaths and casualties (Wolfsfeld et al., 2004). Correspondingly, media outlets and reporters pay less attention to exploring and developing stories of the pre-conflict and peacebuilding stages. Lastly, a peace process may last for years, and the media prefers more straightforward and up-to-date topics.

For governments, they usually follow a tendency to be non-interventionist, and call for preventive action through media coverage (Jakobsen, 2000). This is because decisions about war or peace are a choice driven by a state's core interests, not by the media's preventative role. Even in cases where governments mobilise the media for preventive diplomacy, there are few opportunities for the media to function fully: if their preventive diplomacy succeeds, nothing occurs and successes of preventive actions become hard to recognise (Wolfsfeld et al., 2004). In addition, for peacebuilding campaigns, governments need a longer-term and comprehensive strategy which combines media strategies with other cultural, economic and social policies such as public diplomacy rather than a short-term media event like media diplomacy (Gilboa, 2001, 2009).

2. 2. Media diplomacy in the escalation phase

In interstate conflicts if prevention strategies fail, then force at various levels may be used. According to Musa (2007), conflicts do not always cause negative results for society. Hence, during the escalation stage, parties can employ conflict management

strategies to “allow conflict to run its course and perform its beneficial functions in society without becoming destructive to basic structural relationships” (Arno, 1984, p. 3). The goal of this stage is to control and halt violence at relatively acceptable levels until a formal or informal ceasefire is achieved (Gilboa, 2009).

Most existing studies confirm the influences of the media on the escalation stage of political conflicts (Hume, 1997). World War I was the first time when the governments and ministries of the relevant nations used all kinds of media to engage in a war of propaganda and mass persuasion (Bratic, 2008). In World War II, as Taylor (2003) argues, people “witnessed the greatest propaganda battle in the history of warfare” because all the participants used the mass media to employ propaganda in order to create a hegemonic climate in which they could exercise power more readily. For instance, for the Soviet side, during the time of “The Great Patriotic War,” propaganda was a key tool to mobilise the Russian people against the Nazi invasion. Whilst for the Nazis, after taking power in 1933, the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda was established and headed by Joseph Goebbels, with the goal of creating a sense of unity among Germans and to advertise the strength of the Party. In all phases of the war propaganda, the media played a key role. The exploitation of the media, hence, is usually described as being for war promotion or war propaganda (Taylor, 2003).

In modern international conflicts, especially those that include unequal antagonists in terms of coercive resources, the role of media diplomacy is more important and complicated because competition over the news media between disputants is a major element (Wolfsfeld, 1997). Unequal political conflicts are considered the ideal environment for the media to exert their influence. To examine variations in the role of the media, Wolfsfeld (1997, p. 3) suggests two major dimensions including “accessibility to the media” and “media frames.” Each antagonist tries to promote its accessibility to media institutions and to assert its own framing of the conflict in an attempt to mobilise political support for its cause. If antagonists have a higher level of organisation and coercive resources over others, they will gain huge advantages in the quantity and quality of media narratives, thereby controlling political environments. For antagonists who have limited resources and organisation, they can control these disadvantages and employ the news media as a tool to promote their political influence.

An understanding of the way in which states use media diplomacy in antagonistic relationships is articulated by Gilboa (2001). His assumption is that in order to criticise other governments’ actions, or to take advantage in the battle for the hearts and minds of

people in countries with hostile governments, a government uses the media to explain its policies and actions. It can then use the media to persuade public opinion in other countries, including in its rival, to be favourably disposed towards its explanations. In turn, the public in the country with the hostile government will put pressure on its own government to change its hostile policy. A government is then able to balance or counter the propaganda of its rival. However, Riley and Hollihan (2012, pp. 59-77) has emphasised that stakeholders will consume messages from a government's media narratives differently "because they will be relying upon their own unique histories, cultural memories, social knowledge, notions of what constitutes good reasons, and normative rules for argumentative praxis." Hence, utilising the media for foreign policy objectives is considered a form of any nation's strategic communication where messages are created in order to advance particular goals. In this process, governments are required to have the ability to predict not only how their messages will be consumed and interpreted, but also how their partners and target audiences are likely to respond.

Since territorial disputes are a central topic in IR, research about the role of media diplomacy in territorial conflicts has been evolving (Chubb, 2016; Danh, 2015; Nhung, 2017; Riley, 2014). A shared idea in these studies is a recognition of the key role media diplomacy plays in modern territorial disputes. Firstly, as an information channel, the government of a state involved in a territorial dispute can use media diplomacy, to strengthen its arguments and policy, to criticise its rival's aggressive actions and counter its arguments, and to gain the support and understanding of the domestic audience for its policy. Secondly, a government can use media diplomacy as a tool to construct a state's soft power and global reputation, to spread its arguments and explanations for territorial dispute. By these means, a government can mobilise support from a global audience, especially from powerful countries which may have an impact on the disputes. Lastly, a government can use media diplomacy as a strategic means to manage nationalism which is a key factor in territorial disputes. Through media narratives a government can link national territory with core interests, describe its rival(s)' aggressive actions as threats to the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity, create a perception of the need to unite the whole nation and mobilise patriotism and nationalism (Danh, 2015; Nhung, 2017). As Riley (2014) explains, "narratives about territory include historical and diplomatic burdens...Media diplomacy can enlarge conflicts and reproduce nationalist identities that have been inscribed in textbook descriptions of historical truth and values, recorded in regional maritime laws and policies, and reinforced through social media conversations

for each of the countries evolved” (p. 237). In other words, media diplomacy can be a tool to transform nationalist or patriotic sentiments into protest voices and put pressure on targeted audiences, especially rival governments.

2. 3. Media diplomacy in the de-escalation phase

The de-escalation resolution phase is characterised by negotiations to attain an agreement to end conflicts between parties (Gilboa, 2009). Achieving a formal agreement may end violence and facilitate transformation processes. In contrast, failures to reach a final peace deal may see violence resume, revising the life cycle of conflicts. According to Galtung (2005), if actors cannot activate or re-activate connections in other areas, they are in “negative peace”. On the other hand, if they can establish cooperation in other fields such as trade, tourism and culture, they will achieve “positive peace” or “stable peace” (Boulding, 1978). Based on this significant distinction, the post-conflict phase is subdivided into two phases: resolution and reconciliation or “conflict resolution” and “conflict transformation” or “peacebuilding” as mentioned above (Gilboa, 2009).

According to Gilboa, there are three techniques that governments and officials should understand and have sufficient skills to use, if they want to mobilise media diplomacy successfully to promote negotiations and conflict resolution: basic communication, travelling diplomacy, media events (Gilboa, 1998, 2001). First, Mowlana (1997) and Gilboa (2001) state that because the media’s reporting function in many ways opposes that of the traditional pattern of diplomacy, the media in some cases can become an alternative source of information for decision-makers and leaders when official and diplomatic channels are blocked during crisis and conflicts. The establishment of diplomatic relations between states requires the mutual consent of both parties. During times of crisis or antagonistic relations, however, it is possible for one, or both, of them to shut down all official communication channels to express disagreements and confrontation. During such periods the media often become “conduits for official exchanges, reluctant publicists for the actors, and valuable sources of information for governments” (Mowlana, 1997, p. 39). By maintaining information linkages, the media can function as mechanisms for peaceful solutions to issues, reminding the antagonists that such channels are available.

Travelling diplomacy refers to the mobilisation of reporters who travel with leaders of states or high-ranking officials when they are on a diplomatic mission abroad. The strategy is that leaders and high-ranking officials will give journalists background reports, information and leaks with a hope to influence de-escalation negotiations and their

mediation efforts. For these reporters, besides covering the leaders' moves, they are able to "send signals, suggest proposals, make threats, and in general communicate with policymakers and domestic and global audiences" (Gilboa, 2001, pp. 12-13). Additionally, these journalists become instant information sources for local reporters, policymakers and diplomats as they want to know about the purposes and plans of rival states who are visiting their countries for negotiations.

The other technique of media diplomacy, according to Gilboa (2001), is to use media events through which directly impact on diplomacy: trivialising the role of ambassadors, breaking deadlocks in diplomatic channels between states and creating an atmosphere conducive to negotiations and finalising a bargain (Dayan, Katz, & Davis, 1993). Media events which are organised for diplomatic objectives are broadcast live, pre-planned, and presented with ceremony. Media events are jointly organised by two or more formerly antagonistic countries to mobilise domestic and world public opinion for amending their relations or for promoting agreements.

With these basic techniques of media diplomacy, based on the stages of de-escalation and a general context, governments can mobilise media strategies to gain their political goals. When one or both sides are ready for resolution through negotiations, media diplomacy can be mobilised to "express interest in negotiations, to build confidence and to mobilise public support for agreements" (Gilboa, 2002, p. 741). When states are not clear about another state's reaction to their proposals, especially in cases where there is no other communication channel, the media functions as a signalling channel. In this way, the media might provide the only channel for breaking diplomatic deadlock and then supporting communication and negotiations between rival actors (Gilboa, 2001). Moreover, through the agenda-setting and catalyst functions, media diplomacy can help to ensure that each side truly understands the other side's position. Instead of reporting criticisms of each other, leading to misunderstanding and distortions, governments can integrate empathy into their news reports (Mowlana, 1997).

During the preparation for negotiations, if state leaders or high-ranking officials travel abroad for diplomatic missions, the travelling diplomacy tool of media diplomacy can be used to support such missions. This requires very careful preparation and implementation of media ideas and actions for both the leaders and correspondents.

When a breakthrough has been achieved, as Gilboa points out, the involvement of the media in the very first step of a peace process can create an intermediary influence in which the media can be utilised to propagate and cultivate support from the public. At

that moment, leaders can use media systems and their relationship with media institutions as a key means to advance negotiations with other states. For instance, Henry Kissinger took advantage of his good relationship with American journalists in an effort to achieve an agreement between Israel, Egypt and Syria in 1973-74 (Gilboa, 2002). Such agreements can be also facilitated if each state is willing to affirm publicly that it understands the position of the other. In addition, states can use media events to cultivate public support and build confidence at the onset of negotiations or at the end of negotiations. The Arab – Israeli peace-making process is an optimum example to illustrate the functions of media events (Gilboa, 2001).

When meetings occur, media events can be used to achieve several intermediary effects. At the onset of such events, the media can be used to build confidence and facilitate negotiations. Or, when negotiations have finished, governments can use media events to mobilise public support for an agreement. Media events can also function as a way to cultivate sufficient support from the public in the relevant societies during transition periods forwards a final peace treaty.

IV. MEDIA DIPLOMACY IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTES

The theoretical frameworks of media diplomacy are widely used in many case studies, especially those looking at territorial conflicts or disputes such as the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands issues between Japan and China (Danh, 2015; Gilboa, 2001). The rising importance of Southeast Asia in global politics and the significance of the SCS in promoting peace and stability in an “ASEAN Community” are undeniable. Additionally, little work has been done on how the claimants communicate with each other through the media and how these communications are mediated and published to audiences which, over time, jointly affect and shape the identity and perceptions of the regional communities.

In these respects, the role of the media is critical. Beyond personal experiences, people usually explore the world through what they learn from the media (Hollihan, 2014). Contents and messages that governments and the media try to deliver to audiences and the ways in which they frame or embed specific issues in narrative contexts, help the audiences construct their beliefs and identities about themselves and their society, as well as the concerns facing their nation. Through the function of agenda-setting, the media have the ability to tell audiences “what to think about” (B. C. Cohen, 1963, p. 13). Among the many issues of concern in their daily lives, people in China, Vietnam and the

Philippines would rarely think about the islands, rocks and reefs and waters far from the coast, if the media did not set out to attract public attention.

It is not only that the media, by repeatedly mentioning one particular issue in news coverage, send their intended messages to audiences, but also by emphasizing or neglecting certain aspects of the issue, the media narratives shape the context and background for understanding that issue. This is called the “thematic and episodic frames” function. It is not too difficult to find both thematic and episodic framing in media coverage of the SCS. The cultural memories of the political systems and histories of fighting since ancient emperors and the contested memories of the Sino-Vietnamese conflicts of 1979–1990 all provide “the stuff” of stories about the importance of the seas and islands. Moreover, contemporary events or episodes that have occurred have kept the SCS issues alive; the artificial island-building, the oil rig deployment to sensitive zones and the resulting mass public protests were precisely the kinds of symbolic movements that were created and deliberately organised to attract media and then public attention to the significance of the issues.

Media coverage of political issues such as territorial disputes partly affect the public’s perception of the roles and prestige of their political leaders. Such functions of the media are usually called the “priming effect” (Hollihan, 2014). Iyengar and McGrady (2007) have found evidence that confirms the role of the media in guiding public opinion regarding political issues. They argue that “when asked to appraise politicians and public figures, voters weigh their opinions on particular policy issues in proportion to the perceived importance of those issues: the more prominent the issue, the greater the impact of opinions about those issues on the appraisal” (p. 248). Both in authoritarian and democratic regimes, political leaders are sensitive to public sentiment and opinion. In fact, information and references from the media can help to narrow the choices of political figures (Hollihan, 2014). For example, repeated media messages that proclaim that particular islands, reefs, and rocks are rightfully, and have long been considered to be, an integral part of the territory of their motherland will put a huge pressure on state leaders, if they make any decisions that involve compromise.

Whether in nations with a free press, or in a fully controlled press, governments have the motivation to create news and manage information flows to achieve their objectives (Hollihan, 2014). It is easy to see that the claimant states in the SCS disputes all have such motivation. For the public in these states, it is argued that during the disputes, analysed in this study, the people really wanted to know what happened and

how their governments acted and reacted, forcing the governments to use multiple channels including media diplomacy to communicate with their domestic and global audiences. From the governments' perspectives, as argued above, missing any opportunity to express and voice their opinion might affect their position in the battle of words and for the hearts and minds of people.

Governments also have their own resources in these mediated controversies. The states manage to communicate their official positions to multiple audiences, including the political leaders in the rival states, the political leaders of other states which might not be directly influenced by the outcome of the disputes but who might suggest some solutions, the domestic public of each nation, the public in other affected nations, and finally the regional and global public. The targets of such media activities are also the reporters, editors, community leaders, or key decision-makers in government ministries or other organisations, which, in turn, have the ability to orientate or re-orientate public opinion in the antagonist countries. If their positions are accepted widely by the public, then the political environment might be shifted and opportunities might be created for each state to gain its foreign policy objectives (Gilboa, 1998, 2001, 2002).

In instances when governments change their priorities and attempt to de-escalate the disputes for reasons such as economic pressure, media diplomacy is also a good tool for peaceful negotiations or conflict prevention. According to Gilboa, one of the three variants of media diplomacy can support several direct effects on diplomacy: "breaking diplomatic deadlock and creating a climate conducive to negotiations and creating a favourable climate for a contract or to seal a bargain. Media events can be used to build confidence and facilitate negotiations at the onset, or mobilise public support for an agreement that has already been achieved at the end of negotiations" (Gilboa, 2001, p. 13).

Public audiences rely on multiple sources of information and on their own unique histories, cultural memories and social knowledge in order to judge and value facts in the complex media environment. Therefore, such media and communication controversies over political issues between states can be understood as the battles "for the construction of meaning in the minds of people", through which political power can be generated (Manuel, 2009; Nye, 1990, 2008).

The media's role in shaping national identity and perceptions can be explained by exploring the interrelation between the media and national identity formation processes and its influence on disputes among nations. An increasing body of literature agrees that

conflicts are socially constructed and indicates the need to do further research on external factors such as the social construction of state identities in order to understand conflicts comprehensively (Katzenstein, 1996). National identity refers to the “feeling that one has towards one’s imagined community, the fundamental features of which include a homeland, a common myth and historical memory and a common, mass public culture” (Jiang, 2006, p. 61). In the construction of national identity, along with the education system, the national media are regarded as one of the most powerful instruments (Akram & Rudoren, 2013). Nations can form and adjust national identities in different ways: one of them is the way in which nations portray the vision of the Other which differs from them and perceive themselves as the opposite of the Other (Connolly, 2002). In that process, media messages are created with “binary opposition” and strengthen the perception of distinction from others by describing them with negative qualities (Hartley & Montgomery, 1985).

In the case of the SCS disputes, except for local fishermen and sailors, very few people living in the countries bordering the sea and those around the world who have heard of the sea and the disputes will ever actually visit or see a picture of the rocks or islands there. Recent state-published media discourses, and longer-term strategies of education, social discourses and the domestic and foreign media, have jointly constructed citizens’ understanding, perceptions and interpretations about the disputes. In each country, the national media systems, including the legacy press and social media, have become useful platforms for decision-makers, politicians, scholars, and political activists to express their viewpoints and arguments as to the extent to which, if any, each country has the rights to the sea. These diverse arguments have constituted a divergence in information, knowledge and perspectives over the issue in the communities. This knowledge and these perspectives have not only mirrored, but also continued forming and strengthening alternative narratives of the historical relations among the countries, creating conflicting arguments in understanding the current issues and finding different ways to shape the future. The result is that the regional territorial disputes have become a much more complicated and potentially dangerous conflict over national identities and patriotic sentiments.

In the later chapters, the thesis examines the major media institutions in China, the Philippines and Vietnam so as show how the governments have used the media to communicate with multiple stakeholders, domestically and globally. These chapters pay more detailed attention to examining the uses of media diplomacy in the escalation and

de-escalation phases than those in the onset-prevention and conciliation phases of the selected disputes. This is because the escalation and de-escalation phases may be identified as occurring in a fixed period of time, starting at the moment that the conflict turned violent and ending at the time when an agreement was reached by both sides. Meanwhile, the onset-prevention and peacebuilding phases may last for a long and unfixed period. As a sequence, strategies for collecting data to examine each phase are different. Due to the limitations of time and data sources, the thesis cannot use multiple strategies to explore all phases of the disputes in the thesis. This thesis examines the ways and the level to which the governments have linked the disputes with other symbolic values including national pride and patriotic sentiments, causing gaps in perceptions of national sovereignty and national identity among the nations (Ciorciari & Weiss, 2016; M. Taylor Fravel, 2016; Vuving, 2014c; K. Wang, 2014). Lastly, the thesis argues that, to some extent, media diplomacy can be used in bridging the gaps of identity and perceptions between the nations, de-escalating the disputes and creating longer-term peace for the region.

CHAPTER III: BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

This chapter provides background for the thesis in three parts. The first part briefly introduces the media regimes in the Philippines, Vietnam and China, and the states' information management of foreign affairs issues, particularly the SCS disputes. The second section reviews the literature on the SCS disputes, including the claimant states' claims, their perceptions of the others' behaviour and the geopolitics in the region to understand the causes of the tensions. The last part summarises the developments of the selected crises in preparation for analysis in the next chapters.

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE MEDIA SYSTEMS AND MEDIA DIPLOMACY

1. THE PHILIPPINES

1. 1. Information management

The media in the Philippines are considered to be the freest in Asia. Free expression and press freedom of the Filipinos is guaranteed by the Philippine constitutions⁴ and is rooted in the country's long tradition of respecting free expression, particularly during the American period of administration (Teodoro & Widiastuti, 2005). In addition to its obligation to respect the freedom of the press, the Philippine government uses three basic functions of the media to achieve its broad objectives. For the state's foreign affairs objectives, the DFA is the executive department of the Philippine government tasked to manage information in order to: enhance national security and protect territorial integrity and national sovereignty; enhance the Philippines' competitive edge; connect with Filipinos overseas, protect their rights and promote their welfare while mobilising them as partners in national development; project a positive image of the Philippines; and build international understanding of the Philippines (DFA). During the Benigno Aquino presidency, the Office of the Press Secretary (OPS) handled political matters with the newly established Philippine Information Agency (PIA) taking care of the other realms (Tuazon). From 2010, the OPS was divided into the Presidential Communications Operations Office to handle the dissemination arm of the President's policies and programmes and the Presidential Communications Development and Strategic Planning Office. Its role was to create content for the President's messages, provide strategic communication leadership and lead the strategic communication of the government through the enforcement of a National Communications Policy (GOVPH, 2010).⁵ The

⁴ Article III, Section 7 and Article VI, Section 16 (4) of the 1987 Constitution

⁵ The PCOO absorbed the functions of the PCDSPO under the Duterte leadership (Valente, 2018)

PIA serves to guarantee the free flow of timely, relevant and accurate information to the people via its services including communication training, infrastructure development, creative services, and communication research. With 16 regional offices and 29 information centres across the country, the PIA became the advertising and public relations tool of the government (Tuazon).

2. 2. Media diplomacy and the SCS disputes

Studies on the Philippines' SCS strategy argued that the Aquino government deployed a three-track approach, including legal, political, diplomatic, and defence approaches in order to handle the West Philippine Sea (WPS) issue and media diplomacy contributed to the overall SCS strategy (Castro & Cruz, 2014b, 2016b). For instance, during the Scarborough Shoal dispute, as a part of its tactic of internationalising the dispute, the DFA's communication and media activities supported both Manila's multilateral cooperation with regional stakeholders via ASEAN, the political track, and bilateral discussions with Beijing, the diplomatic track (Amador & Ibarra, 2016). The media also played a role in Manila's strengthening relations with its allies and the other claimant states, such as Vietnam, while modernising the armed forces of the Philippines. Scholars have argued that the apparent failures in the diplomatic track (with a deadlock in bilateral consultations with China after the Scarborough Shoal crisis), and in the political track (with the failure of ASEAN to release a joint communiqué on the SCS issue) pushed Manila to start the legal track in 2013 in order to handle Beijing's salami-slicing strategy (Amador & Ibarra, 2016).

During the SCS arbitration case, the legal team joined with the DFA on the diplomatic, political, academic and legal fronts. In particular, Philippine ambassadors around the world played a key role in the efforts to internationalise the WPS issue (Robles, 2015). Domestically, the DFA, in partnership with the PIA and the PCOO, launched a nationwide information, education and communication (IEC) campaign on the WPS issue. The goal was to bring the WPS issue to the attention of the grassroots level (DFA, 2015b). The DFA conducted multi-sectoral fora, initially the Special Kapihans, including conducting fora, campus tours and press conferences around the country. The department also launched a series of documentaries regarding the WPS issue on the state-run PTV4. The state also collected maps and historical documents regarding the Philippines' sovereignty claims over the WPS and presented them via multiple forms including presentations at exhibitions and publishing digital pamphlets on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The IEC campaign suggested adding the WPS

issue to Filipino history and geography textbooks (DFA, 2014a; Dor, 2015). The government sought the advice of academe for making policy and drafting documents such as a White Paper on the WPS and invited them to give lectures and participate in media and information events under the IEC campaign (DFA, 2015b; Morales, 2019). Moreover, the DFA officers intensively mobilised academic channels to promote the WPS narratives domestically and internationally.

A few studies have focused on the role of the Philippine media in the SCS disputes. Pagulong and Serafica (2016) and Freeman (2017) used the methodology of critical discourse analysis and the theoretical concept of framing to examine media reportage of the WPS/SCS issues by the main media channels in the Philippines. They argued that the major Philippine media outlets managed to set the agenda of the media in ways that favoured the Philippines, for instance their preference for the use of the term “West Philippine Sea”. Additionally, Salazar (2017) examined the DFA’s employment of digital technologies and social media platforms to achieve its foreign affairs objectives through digital diplomacy. This has three components: public diplomacy and nation branding, constructing information for diplomats and constituents, and information collecting. Salazar’s study provided initial knowledge about the role of social media and other digital technologies in the DFA’s public diplomacy efforts but did not examine the role of the traditional media, including the state’s press conferences. As a result, the government’s management of relations with the media was omitted. Dor (2015) examined the government’s media statements to understand the ways in which Manila managed nationalism during the WPS crises, but did not examine the other functions of the media. Consequently, there is a gap in research on the role of the media in foreign affairs issues in the Philippines, especially on the SCS issue. The current study aims to help to address this gap.

2. VIETNAM

2.1. External information service

In Vietnam, after reunification in 1975, the media came under the control of the CPV and the government. Volkomer (2012) has argued that under the control of the single party system, relations between the government, the media and the public have been changed and that three main functions of the media in the modern world of politics are not fully applied in Vietnam.

With a tradition of and experience in using propaganda against external invaders in the past, since the 1990s, besides being an information source, the CPV considers the

external information service as “an important part of the Party’s ideological strategies and the government’s foreign affairs, and an integral part of strategies serving the national interests and development” (“Vietnam’s External information,” 2018). Accordingly, the external information service allows the state to pursue its foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, openness, diversification and multilateralisation of external relations, and active international integration. Furthermore, the external information service enables the state to mobilise the international community’s support and overseas Vietnamese communities’ contributions; to attract foreign investments, international financial and money institutions, and the attention of other governments (Khiem, 2007). In terms of protecting the communist regime and nation-building, conducting an external information service effectively can help to prevent perceived false information about Vietnam, the conspiracy of “peaceful evolution” conducted by opposition parties, and activities aimed at undermining national security conducted by dissenters (*External information activities*, 2015).

To construct a long-term orientation for its management of external information service, in 2012, the CPV published “Strategies for external information development for 2011-2020” (“Vietnam’s External Information,” 2013). In 2015, the government issued a Decree No. 72/2015/ND-CP on the management of external information activities (Article 7, GOVVN, 2015). The Central Propaganda Department is the standing body for external information strategies. Meanwhile, the Party Central Committee’s Commission for External Information Service is responsible for advising the Secretary Committee of the Party’s orientations, supporting the government’s unified management, inspecting the country’s external information activities, and coordinating with other departments to develop the country’s external information strategy which is approved by the Secretary Committee. As the central state institution charged with leading the foreign affairs of Vietnam, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) plays major roles in conducting and managing external information (GOVVN, 2015).

2. 2. Information strategy and Vietnam’s SCS strategy

Accordingly, before 2009, Hanoi relied on bilateral diplomatic channels, especially those involving high-level leaders, to manage the crises. The Party refused to reveal information about the SCS disputes to the media and the public (Nhung, 2017).

From 2009, by using a hedging policy of combining direct and indirect engagement and both soft and hard balancing, this strategy of Vietnam has succeeded not only in dealing with China in facing China’s possible territorial encroachment, but also the SCS

issues including the 2014 oil rig crisis (N. X. Thuy, 2014b; T. T. Thuy, 2015, 2016). Vietnam's hedging strategy has also helped to defend its national interests in the SCS, enhancing its role with ASEAN, and promoting its relations with other major powers including the US, Japan and other SCS relevant countries (D. T. Thuy, 2017). With the employment of this hedging strategy, Vietnam's information strategy was altered. The CPV's Central Commission for Publicity and Education (CCPE) issued special instructions to develop its information policy on the maritime sphere. It instructed that "increased publicity of sea and island issues is to boost awareness of and actions of all party executives, state agencies, and people from every walk of life with regard to the strategic importance of the country's seas and islands" (GOV VN, 2009). Accordingly, publicity about the country's maritime sphere was integrated into the operational plans of all central departments and agencies and was placed under the control of the State Steering Committee on the SCS and Islands.

There are two major components of Vietnam's revised SCS information strategy. First, the CPV deployed a more active posture mobilising information to promote the populace's patriotism, build national unity on the maritime front and educate people on the need for mindfulness to protect national sovereignty and territory (B. A. Dung, 2011; Hai, 2016a). The government aimed to rely more on the power of public opinion and national unity to protect the nation's maritime interests. News media outlets in Vietnam have been allowed to increase coverage of the sea and island topics in terms of both quantity and quality. Reporters and academics have been allowed to raise many critical questions on China and Sino – Vietnamese relations issues. Although space for the SCS coverage has been increased, the CPV has kept tight control on public discourse over the SCS disputes. The CPV has attempted to mobilise public discussion to enhance the legitimacy of the regime as well as serve its pragmatic policy. Editors in chief are required to obey strict guidelines on what should be reported and how far their discussion should go (Thayer, 2011). The second component is international, and occurs primarily through Track II dialogues including think tanks, scholars, and academics in regional fora (Hai, 2016a). By internationalising the issues, Vietnam uses a so-called virtue of righteousness to gain the higher moral ground to strengthen its position and challenge China's weaknesses, aiming at winning the battle for hearts and minds globally.

A few studies examining the role of the media in Vietnam's SCS policy have been published internationally, partly because of media control in the country. Freeman (2017) conducted a preliminary study that examined English language press in the region

including Vietnam News Agency Bulletin, looking at the amount, patterns, and tone of coverage given to the SCS disputes to identify what the reports state, and how this shows the regional countries' stances on the SCS disputes. This study used content analysis and the theoretical lens of framing. Other scholars have used newspapers as a means of tracing public knowledge of the SCS disputes in Vietnam and the efforts by the state to affect public opinion (Cotillon, 2017; Yaping Wang, 2018). The key issue examined in these studies is the link between public policy and foreign affairs, particularly territorial disputes. Of note is that, Nhung (2017) is one of the first Vietnamese researchers who published a study internationally on how the CPV deployed propaganda to manage Vietnamese nationalism during the oil rig crisis.

3. CHINA

3. 1. External propaganda and media warfare

The use of information in utilising perceptions and psychology as tools to win the battle for hearts and minds has been a feature of historic Chinese military-strategic documents for a long period of time, especially Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* as discussed in study of Halper (2013a). From 1949, the Chinese Communist Party controlled China's media, and the three main functions of the media have not been completely applied in China (Volkomer, 2012). While the watchdog function is deactivated, the functions of reporting issues and setting the agenda are mobilised as a "mouthpiece" of the CPC (Scotton & Hachten, 2010).

To understand relations between the government, the media and public opinion in China in the modern era, scholars usually use theoretical frameworks of "soft power," "public diplomacy," and a general one of "comprehensive national power" (Chubb, 2016, pp. 263-266). However, studies on China's "media diplomacy" are still very limited (Yiwei Wang, 2008). Most of them focus on how the Chinese government has deployed the media to achieve its public diplomacy's goals targeted at a specific country or region (Y. Wu, 2016). Other studies have primarily discussed how the Chinese government has managed the media system to achieve the state's objectives regarding public opinion in the new era (Conceição, 2011). However, because of reliance on the theoretical concept of public diplomacy, these studies only focus on the role of the media in managing public opinion on foreign affairs issues while neglecting the other functions.

China usually deploys concepts of "propaganda" and "media warfare." In Chinese, "xuan chuan" (propaganda) refers to benign activities such as the release of news to generally shape ideology, comprising of "nei xua" (internal propaganda) and "wai xuan"

(external propaganda), which is the focus of this study (Yiwei Wang, 2008, p. 259). The external propaganda programme refers to media and information activities that are directed towards foreigners and the outside world in the political, economic, cultural and social sectors (Nip & Sun, 2018). China devotes considerable resources to these activities and has an extensive bureaucracy to operate external propaganda initiatives. The CPC Central Committee Foreign Propaganda Group decides on matters for the foreign propaganda agenda. The CCP's Central Office of Foreign Propaganda, or the State Council Information Office, oversees the external propaganda, and guides the foreign propaganda activities of the multiple government offices. The State Council Internet Information Office is in charge of policing the Chinese Internet. Meanwhile, the MFA is the first-ranked executive department of the State Council of the Chinese government, responsible for the communication of the CPC's positions to the world (Zhu & Lampton, 2010).

China's external propaganda programme projects two contradictory images: a peaceful image and a war-ready one. In most situations, the CPC identifies its peaceful intent as the primary image while the war-ready situation is the secondary one, to scope with the peace and cooperation trends in international politics and to maintain relative stability and peace for China to promote its economy and society in a "period of strategic opportunity" (d'Hooghe, 2007). In antagonistic relations, the second image would be activated (Chubb, 2016; Zemin, 2012). To calibrate effectively the relative salience of the two contradictory images, China relies on so-called "ambiguous signalling" depending on the situation. Ambiguity allows a state to pursue images that would be contradicted by the other signals it needs to send in some particular situations (Jervis, 1989, p. 130). China's ambiguous signals "must be plausibly deniable, but clear enough to attract sufficient attention to be studied by the receiver and interpreted as the sending actor intended" (Chubb, 2016, p. 267). The PLA's "hawkish faction" of media commentators and the Global Times channel are the most useful channels to create and send such ambiguous signals.

In 2013, the Central Military Commission (CMC) developed and adopted a concept of media warfare to detail principles for the CPC's management of media strategies on foreign policy and security issues (Halper, 2013a). Media warfare is the "use of various information channels including the Internet, television, radio, newspapers, movies and other forms of media in accordance with an overall plan and defined objective to transmit selected news and other materials to the intended audience" (Cheng, 2012, p. 3). In the

short-term, it helps to preserve friendly morale, generates public support domestically and internationally, while weakening adversaries' willingness to fight against China. In the long-term, it aims at influencing the perceptions and attitudes of the public in a way that advances China's interests (Cheng, 2012).

3. 2. China's media warfare and the SCS disputes

Media warfare and the crisis

According to Cheng (2012), there are four principles that media warfare must follow in a crisis. Firstly, media strategies must be consistent with the overall national strategy as oriented by the Central Party Committee and the CMC and must obey high-level guidance on contents and time for releasing. Secondly, media warfare is required to dominate the airwaves to set the frame for the debate of the media and the parameters of subsequent coverage over the issues, taking opportunities to "underscore the justice and necessity of its operations, accentuate national strength, and exhibit the superiority of its forces" (Cheng, 2012, p. 4). Meanwhile, media warfare also has to undermine the enemies' will to fight. Thirdly, a media warfare strategy should be flexible and responsive to changing conditions. In addition, specific operations must be tailored to deal with specific audiences with particular goals. Lastly, all available resources can be mobilised and exploited to conduct a media warfare campaign. It means a combination of peacetime and wartime operations to integrate civilian and military functions, so that both civilian and commercial assets can be used in a comprehensive media diplomacy campaign for national political goals (Cheng, 2012). These four principles allow the Chinese government to conduct its media strategies both in offensive and defensive contexts.

In offensive circumstances, the government focuses more on the second principle so as to take advantage of a controversy. By contrast, China's adversary may use media warfare offensively against China. In that case, a media warfare campaign from an incident-specific perspective can be deployed. The goals include rejecting criticisms, preventing the domestic population from exposure to the rival's narratives and messages that do not find sympathy within the public psyche, and protecting China's image (Cheng, 2012).

Accordingly, at the beginning of each crisis, the state releases its official statements to establish its position on what has happened. Secondly, the state issues statements on principles for possible resolutions. Prior to a meeting, the principles for negotiation are not only discussed between the parties to set out the parameters for the discussion to come, but also published in the media to set the standards for minimally acceptable

solutions that accord with the Chinese government's commitments to its domestic audience. Thirdly, when the state seeks control over information flows and dominance over the media airwaves to frame and shape the agenda of the debate continuously, the government may shut down unofficial information channels. Lastly, the government shows its commitment to its bilateral relationship with rivals. In this way, China implies that the rivals are not seriously attached to the relationship. As a result, the rivals may be in a disadvantaged position, forcing them to de-escalate the crisis or accept conditions for negotiations which favour China (Halper, 2013b).

Media warfare and the SCS disputes

Under Hu Jintao's leadership, the ideals of the "harmonious sea" were projected to emphasise the importance of strengthening international cooperation in the maritime field. In 2008, the State Council approved the "Planning Outline for the Development of National Maritime Activities", detailed plans to build China into a "maritime power" for the period of 2007 – 2012 (GOVCN, 2008). At the 18th Party Congress, Hu Jintao called for the party to focus on strengthening the country's capacity to exploit and to develop the marine economy, to defend the nation's maritime rights and interests, and, especially, to develop the country into a "maritime great power"⁶ (Jintao, 2012).

Under the leadership of Xi Jinping, the strategy was re-affirmed at the 19th Party Congress in 2017 and developed as a vital part of China's grand strategy (K. Zhao & Zhang, 2019). The President declared that China had reached a new era marked by the transition "from growing prosperous to getting stronger" (Jinping, 2017). By gradually enhancing public awareness of the SCS for the medium and long-term, the CPC can mobilise public support for the claims and ensure public attention and demand for their realisation at a high level (Chubb, 2014, 2016).

An increasing number of studies focus on the role of the media in the SCS disputes. Some examine the functions of the media in diplomatic tensions. Liaolei and Mengli (2014b) examine the CPC's use of the signal-sending function of the media to handle the SCS disputes in 2010-2011. Hayton (2018) examined the role of journalism in shaping public knowledge of the SCS issue and in China's efforts to affect public sentiments. The accounts by F. Y. Wang (2020) and his colleague, Womack (2019), analysed the Chinese propaganda efforts during the oil rig crisis in 2014 and the arbitration case in 2013 – 2016, as examples of the use of the media in managing domestic public opinion on China's foreign affairs, particularly the SCS disputes. Although examining and comparing the

⁶ China uses terms of "海洋强国" for "maritime great power".

media tactics of the relevant sides of the crises together, these studies employed different theoretical frameworks from those used in the current research inquiry, including mobilising propaganda campaigns, the (mis)Alignment theory and public opinion. Moreover, they had a different subject focus which is the link between public policy and foreign affairs, in this way considering the media as tools not actors. In summary, while some aspects of the media's role in foreign policy to handle crises have been examined, there are a number of areas that are not fully explored in these studies.

Other scholars' study China's overall SCS strategy by examining media reportage. These include Andrew Chubb (2014), Dixon (2014), and Yahuda (2013). It is widely recognised that China aims to control slowly and progressively more and more pieces of islands, reefs and waters in the SCS by stirring up a series of relatively small aggressions and provocations in contested areas - namely "salami-slicing" or "creeping expansionism" strategy - to make it politically hard for its rivals to use forceful resistance (Bak, 2019). After such small and individual struggles, a Chinese presence and de facto Chinese rights in those contested areas are gradually established. Precedents and, over time, norms have been collectively established in the region (Dutta, 2017; Vuving, 2014a). China's ultimate goal is to establish control of the target region. The strategy includes three steps to: (1) subtly change the status quo, (2) alter the facts in its favour and (3) raise its claim over the newly established status quo. It is argued that China used its salami-slicing strategy in the case of the oil rig crisis, in which media diplomacy performed its roles. This study will develop the work of this group of authors and clarify how China's salami-slicing strategy towards the SCS issue shaped its media warfare during the crises.

II. THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTES

Sovereignty disputes in the SCS occurred in 1946-1947, 1956, and the early 1970s. After the Cold War, China and the other claimant states agreed to put aside the SCS issue and pay more attention to economics alongside such traditional security concerns as geopolitics, military power and ideology (Hayton, 2014a). From the mid-2000s, China, Vietnam and the Philippines have all increased their aggressive activities in unprecedented ways prompting the attention of researchers from the three dominant theories in the study of IR: realism, liberalism and constructivism (Buszynski, 2012; Weissmann, 2010).

In the anarchic system of international relations, realists interpreted China's actions in the SCS as a function of its calculations to become a major power. Meanwhile, the

Philippines' balancing strategy and Vietnam's hedging strategy are seen as ways for them to defend their interests in the SCS (Stewart, 2018).

Focusing on the possibility of international cooperation between states and the benefits thereof, and the influence of international organisations and other non-state actors in shaping state policy preference, liberals have a different perspective. Liberals believe that interdependence and cooperation between the claimant states will help to manage tensions and ensure global security (Kipgen, 2020). Constructivist theorists argue that the disputes and the management of tensions in the SCS are intersubjective structures (that is, shared ideas and beliefs among the states), where Vietnam, China and the Philippines are the actors who have the capacity (that is agency) to change or reinforce their existing structure or relationship (Adler, 2013). From the constructivist perspective, the claimant states' behaviours are constructed by "a complex and specific mix of history, ideas, norms and beliefs" (Slaughter & Hale, 2011, p. 4). Thus, changes to or reinforcement of SCS tensions ultimately depends on the beliefs and ideas held by the claimant states. If these perceptions and ideas alter, the tension in the relationship among them can be improved positively. The constructivist view aligns well with the purposes of this study. According to IR constructivist views, the claimants in the SCS can have multiple identities which are socially built through interaction with the other claimant and non-claimant states under social and international norms and laws in international relations. The claimant states' national identities are representations of their understanding of who they are, what belongs to them, which in turn determines their interests, especially those in the SCS. Moreover, the claimant states' identities constitute their interests and actions, and the behaviours of a state should be aligned with its identity.

The following section demonstrates that the claimant states claim sovereignty over the SCS islands with a historical and legal basis, but they do not accept the others' narratives, causing perception gaps over their behaviours in the SCS, regardless of times of tension or peace. Moreover, evidence shows that after the Cold War, the SCS issues have been mobilised in building national identity in these countries for multiple goals, leading to a clash of identities.

During the mid-2000s, the rise of China and the Asia 'pivot' of the US have restructured the security dynamics in the region. Realities show that the gaps have widened when the geopolitics of the region changed (Brinton, 1995; Rozman, 2015).

1. THE OVERLAPPING CLAIMS

1. 1. The Philippines

Legal basis

The Philippines claims sovereignty over Scarborough Shoal (or Bajo De Masinloc) the major part of the Spratlys, known as the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG) and an EEZ and the natural prolongation of the continental shelf in the SCS to the west of the nation which is called the WPS (GOVPH, 2012g; Thao & Amer, 2009). The first clarification of the Philippines' national territory was in the 1935 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines. In 1956, the Philippines sent a note verbale to the United Nations (UN) which clarified the limits of its territorial seas. According to Republic Act No. 3046 (1961) and Republic Act No 5446 (1968), the Philippine baselines of the territorial sea were defined by 81 base points and the lines linking them; the territorial seas of the country are generated by all the waters beyond the outermost islands of the archipelago but within the boundaries stated in the 1935 Constitution. Additionally, the continental shelf and jurisdiction over the area were clarified in Presidential Proclamation No. 370 in 1968.

In 1978, the Philippine government issued Presidential Decree No 1599 which clarifies a 200 EEZ and the claims over territorial sea and the Continental Shelf. Presidential Decree No. 1596 was also issued, which provided three bases for the Philippines' valid rights to the KIG including contiguity with the Philippine archipelago, historical title, and the lapsing of others' claims. Correspondingly, the Philippines placed the group of islands enclosed by defined coordinates starting from the Philippine Treaty Limits, "including the seabed, sub-soil, continental margin and air space" as subject to Philippine sovereignty (Bautista, 2013).

In 2009, the Philippines issued Republic Act No.9522 and enacted the Philippine Archipelagic Baselines Law to adjust its archipelagic baselines and to reiterate that the Philippines exercises "sovereignty and jurisdiction" over the KIG and Scarborough Shoal, both of which are considered as "regimes of islands." Accordingly, Scarborough Shoal included "submerged features that are below sea level at high tide, which qualifies as rocks under Article 121(3) of the Convention and generate an entitlement only to a Territorial Sea no broader than 12nm." The DFA has stated that "the waters and continental shelves outside of the 12 nm territorial waters of the rocks of Scarborough Shoal appropriately belong to the 200 nm EEZ and Continental Shelf of the Philippine archipelago" (Boquet, 2017). The Philippines states that the Kalayaan are not part of the

Spratly Islands. The claims over the KIG are based on both the 200 nm projection of the EEZ from the coast of Palawan and a possession that occurred in 1956.

Historical basis

Historical arguments regarding the WPS are increasingly evident since Manila started its legal case in 2013. The DFA states that Philippine interests in the islands and waters of WPS date back to the early period of the history of the Philippines. During the Spanish and American colonial periods, Bajo de Masinloc has been considered Philippine territory. After independence, in the 1935 Constitution, Manila's historic title over the territorial waters was established based on three treaties: the Treaty of Paris, the Cession Treaty of 1900, and the Boundaries Treaty of 1930 (Shicun, 2013). Additionally, the DFA cites many Philippine and foreign historical documents that were published in the 18th and 19th century to support its historical claims. For instance, a map of 1784 and Spanish documents from the 19th century indicated the shoal was part of Philippine territory (Granados, 2019). The shoal was first named Scarborough in 1948 in a British document.

Economic development

Manila has argued that many documents from the early 19th century illustrated that the shoal was a traditional fishing ground for Filipino fishermen for centuries. In the early 1970s, the Philippines announced its discovery of oil and gas reserves and conducted exploration in 1976 in the Reed Bank area. From the 1990s, the Philippine government approved an US-Philippine plan to conduct an oil exploration exercise near Reed Bank.

Administrative jurisdiction

The Philippines has anchored its claim to effective control and occupation on two major arguments: Tomas Cloma's discovery in 1947 and non-illegal occupation after the San Francisco treaty in 1951. According to the Philippine narratives, when Tomas Cloma discovered it in 1947 and announced ownership over 33 maritime features in the Spratly Islands in 1956, no other state had a legitimate claim to them. Hence, the KIG reverted to the status of terra nullius after Japan renounced its title to the islands in the San Francisco Treaty of Peace in 1951.

The DFA stated that the Philippines' Coast Guard and other maritime enforcement agencies have exercised administrative jurisdiction over Scarborough Shoal for many years. The enforcement of fisheries laws was cited as evidence for the Philippines' apprehension of poachers and prevention of intrusions and illegal fishing activities in the area as well as search and rescue operations. In the 1960s, besides patrols against smugglers, the Philippines Coast Guard conducted hydrographic surveys without protests

by any other country. Moreover, the DFA recalled the Philippine government's approval for international cooperation for exploitation in the WPS, such as in 1994 when the Philippine government gave approval for a US company to conduct oil exploration near Reed Bank (Storey, 1999).

Since the 1950s, the Philippines has used the shoal for defence purposes with military outposts on eight of the KIG atolls since 1956. The government has also used note verbales to protest about China's incursions in the areas; for instance, those in the crisis in 1995, 1996, 1997 and in 1998 between Chinese and Filipino naval forces.

1. 2. Vietnam

Legal basis

Vietnam claims sovereignty over the whole of the Paracel (Hoang Sa) and Spratly (Truong Sa) archipelagos. In 1975, the Republic of Vietnam (ROV) issued "the white paper on the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa Islands" to reiterate Vietnam's sovereignty over the islands. Hanoi announced its claims to the territorial sea, the zone contiguous, the EEZ and the continental shelf of Vietnam in May 1977 (MOFA, 1975; Pedrozo, 2014; Thao & Amer, 2009). Several white papers were subsequently issued to prove Hanoi's sovereignty claims over the two archipelagos. These included: "Vietnam's sovereignty over the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagos" of 1979; "Hoang Sa and Truong Sa Islands, Vietnamese territories" of 1981; "Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagos and international law" of 1988. In 1982, Hanoi issued a statement "on the territorial sea baseline of Viet Nam," outlining the extent of Vietnam's claims to areas in the SCS. In 2012, Vietnam passed the Law of the Sea of Vietnam, which included the two archipelagos in its territory by means of domestic law.

Vietnam has also defined its maritime zones in government statements. In a 1977 statement by the MOFA, Vietnam claimed a 200 nm EEZ and continental shelf, 12 nm of territorial sea and a contiguous zone up to the 24 nm limit measure from the baselines (Shicun, 2013).

Historical basis

Hanoi states that its initial presence in the Paracels dates back to the 17th Century. The MOFA also provides many other maps, historical and official documents and publications of foreign countries from the 17th to 19th centuries in support of its sovereignty claims. For instance, it cites the 17th Century atlas "Toan Tap Thien Nam Tu Chi Lo Do Thu" (Route Map from the Capital to the Four Directions) to show that the two archipelagos were under the control of the Nguyen Dynasty.

Economic development

Hanoi states that Vietnam's systematic exploitation of the Paracels' maritime resources began in the 15th Century with the establishment of the Hoang Sa Company by the Nguyen family, and developed from the 18th to 19th centuries openly and peacefully without any protests from external states. Those economic activities were recorded in a series of historical works in Vietnam and abroad. For instance, a British publication from the 19th Century confirms that Vietnam exploited the resources of the Paracels from that time. South Vietnam resumed its economic exploitation in the Paracels in 1956. After the unification in 1975, Vietnam started to cooperate with a number of countries to explore and exploit hydrocarbons in and around the Spratlys.

Effective administration

Under the Nguyen Dynasty and French Colonial Rule

According to the MOFA's white papers (issued in 1979, 1981 and 1988), from 1802 Vietnam operated a series of activities to effectively control and administer the Paracels such as conducting surveys and mapping the sea routes. Hanoi cited a number of maps, historical and official documents that record administrative activities by Vietnamese Emperors in the areas. Vietnamese historians have suggested that a number of search and rescue operations undertaken by the Nguyen Dynasty (1802 – 1945) prove Vietnam's sovereignty claim over the two archipelagos, such as "Dai Nam nhat thong chi" (Unification records of Dai Nam), and "Dai Nam dia du chi" (Geographical record of Dai Nam) ("VN's History records," 2019).

The MOFA stated that France continued to exercise sovereignty over the two island groups as the successor state to the An Nam kingdom. France's administrative activities in the two archipelagos continued peacefully throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The French government started to protest over Chinese incursions in the SCS from the 1930s including, for instance, China's plan to invite bids from foreign companies to exploit phosphate reserves in the Paracels in 1931. In order to reiterate its control over the islands, France sent diplomatic documents to the relevant countries including China, Britain, the US, and Japan in 1933. Japan occupied the Spratlys in 1938 and announced sovereignty over the two archipelagos in 1939.

After Japan withdrew from the islands, France counted to engage in a series of acts of administration in the islands after WWII in order to substantiate its sovereignty claim over the islands until its final withdrawal in 1956. In May 1956, France protested at the

Philippines' statement of discovery of part of the Spratlys. However, the ROC military re-occupied Itu Aba island in June 1956 and has controlled the island ever since.

South Vietnam

After recognising the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam - SV) as "a Free State" in 1946, France turned over the control of the two archipelagos to South Vietnam in October 1950. SV assumed their defence and began to exercise sovereignty over them from 1956. In response to the Philippines' declaration of part of the Spratlys as a "Freedom land" in 1956, SV issued a statement confirming Vietnamese sovereignty over the Spratlys, reasserted its statement of sovereignty over the Spratlys at the San Francisco Peace conference, and placed the islands under the administrative control of Phuoc Tuy Province. However, in the same year, North Vietnam (NV) confirmed with the Chinese side that "according to North Vietnamese data, the Spratly Island were historically a part of Chinese territory" (Pedrozo, 2014). In 1958, North Vietnam's Premier, Pham Van Dong, wrote a letter to Zhou Enlai (the Chinese Foreign Minister) supporting the PRC's statement of sovereignty claims over the Spratlys.

Faced with growing Chinese and Filipino incursions into the Spratlys during the 1970s, SV sent diplomatic protests to these states and its naval forces launched a series of operations to re-assert control over the archipelago from 1964-1973. In January 1974, PRC forces invaded the Paracels. In response to this, SV issued a proclamation protesting against the Communist Chinese action and sent a diplomatic note to the signatories of the Paris Peace Treaty of 1973 calling for a special meeting of the UN Security Council.

Post-unification administration

Following unification in 1975, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) inherited the Paracels and Spratlys from South Vietnam and asserted sovereignty over the archipelagos, incorporating them into the territory of Vietnam and renaming the archipelagos Hoang Sa and Truong Sa. From 1989, the SRV started to build economic and scientific structures in the archipelagos. Vietnam also sent a series of diplomatic protests over the next 30 years to handle incursions from the other claimant states as a way of asserting its administration over the islands while continuing to conduct other activities such as building economic and scientific complexes there.

Right of cession

The MOFA has explained that Vietnam's claim of sovereignty is based, in part, on the right of cession from the French claims to the two archipelagos in the 1930s. International law recognises that a state may cede sovereignty over a particular territory

to another state. Vietnam claims that France validly exercised sovereignty over the SCS islands in the 1930s and that France ceded the islands to South Vietnam after it became an independent state. Based on that, Vietnam announces that it has an indisputable claim to the archipelagos by right of cession (Pedrozo, 2014).

International recognition

The MOFA states that Japan gave up all its rights, titles and claims to the SCS islands by Article 2 of the 1951 San Francisco Treaty, hence, Vietnam is the implicit recipient of the rights to those islands. Moreover, the Cairo Declaration and Potsdam Declaration, do not include any provision that prevents Vietnam from claiming sovereignty over both archipelagos (Shicun, 2013). Vietnam also collected a series of evidence of foreign recognition of its claims going back to the 17th and 18th centuries, including those from China. Vietnam's declaration upon ratifying the UNCLOS in 1994 reaffirmed Vietnamese sovereignty over the disputed archipelagos.

1. 3. China

Legal basis

China claims sovereignty over the Paracel (Xisha), Spratly (Nansha) and Pratas islands. China also claims the major parts of the SCS as its "historic waters" in a U-shaped zone marked by the so-called "nine-dash-line" (Shicun, 2013, p. 52). China's maritime legislation regarding the SCS was neglected in the early days and has only been looked at by the ROC. In 1931, the Chinese government declared three nautical miles of "territorial sea" and a 12 nautical mile special anti-smuggling zone (Shicun, 2013, p. 52).

To keep up with developments in the international law of the sea, in 1958, the PRC issued the Declaration on the Territorial Sea, claiming sovereignty over the Dongsha, Xisha, Zhongsha and Nansha islands and defining the straight baselines, including the baselines of the territorial sea and the 12 nm extension of China's territorial waters (measured from the baselines of the territorial sea). In 1992, China enacted the Law on the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone stating, in Article 2, that the SCS islands belong to China and that the extent of both territorial sea and the contiguous zone of the SCS islands is 12 nm, and reiterating that China enjoys all legitimate rights within these areas.

In 1996, China ratified the UNCLOS and issued four declarations relating to the Law on the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone and Baselines of Territorial Sea, setting forth the baselines of the territorial sea of the Xisha Islands. In 1998, China passed the Law on the EEZ and the continental shelf to assert sovereign rights in its EEZ and continental shelf (Shicun, 2013; Talmon & Jia, 2014).

In 2000, the MFA published a document titled “The issue of South China Sea” to claim sovereignty over the Paracel and Spratly Islands and their adjacent waters (Casarini, 2017). In its notes verbales of 2009, the MFA stated that “China has indisputable sovereignty over the islands in the SCS and the adjacent waters and enjoys sovereign rights and jurisdiction over the relevant waters as well as the seabed and subsoil thereof.” Accordingly, China asserted rights, jurisdiction and control over the resources in and under the water inside the nine-dash line. “Nanhai Zhudao” consists of four groups of islands. It was claimed that each group of islands should be enclosed within a system of archipelagic or straight baselines drawn by joining the outermost points of the group. The waters within would be internal waters of China and the island groups as a whole would generate a territorial sea, EEZ, and the continental shelf from those baselines (Diep, 2020).

Historical claim

According to the MFA’s statement, China was the first country to discover and name the SCS islands. References to the islands exist in a number of books dating as far back as the Han Dynasty in 110 AD (Dong, 2014). Moreover, hundreds of books and administrative maps published in the Jin, Tang, Song, Yuan, Minh and Qing Dynasties include the Spratlys and Paracels as China’s maritime territory (Pedrozo, 2014).

Economic development

The MFA states that China has continued to assert its exclusive resource rights in the SCS. According to historical documents, Chinese fishermen have been exploiting the SCS islands and waters since the period of the Jin Dynasty (265-420). Early Chinese fishing and other productive activities were approved and supported by the Chinese government. Documentation of these fishing activities can be found in a number of Chinese and foreign sources such as the 1868 “Guide to the South China Sea.” The fishing activities continued to be expanded under the Republic of China and have been developed under the PRC. Most exploitation activities occurred in the Paracels, rather than the Spratlys.

The MFA states that China’s exclusive resource rights in the SCS were continued and recognised internationally through its diplomatic statements. For instance, the MFA’s statements in 1976 and 1979 reaffirmed that “China has maintained indisputable sovereignty over the Xisha Islands and Nansha Islands and their surrounding sea areas, and the natural resources in these areas are China's property” (Pedrozo, 2014, p. 8).

Beijing also cited its diplomatic protests and military efforts to prevent foreign states from conducting exploration activities in its water in the SCS. For instance, in 1980, Beijing issued a statement criticising Vietnam and the Soviet Union's agreement to explore jointly and exploit oil and gas deposits on Vietnam's southern continental shelf.

Effective occupation and administration

The MFA has stated that since the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) China has exercised sovereignty and effective jurisdiction over the SCS islands without any protests from other states until the beginning of the 20th Century. The first citation for its claim is the presence of Chinese naval patrols starting from the 13th Century which has been noted in official documents published during Chinese dynasties. The second is about the exercise of jurisdiction. The MFA has cited a wealth of official state documents, books and maps that record its exercise of jurisdiction over the islands by successive Chinese governments and asserted that, until the beginning of the 20th Century, this occurred peacefully without any protests (Pedrozo, 2014). In particular, the Chinese empires' activities in charting and opening sea lanes in the SCS were cited to show China's jurisdiction. Other activities were building facilities for forecasting and navigation, fishing, and the rescuing of Chinese and foreign boats. From the time of the 1911 Revolution, the Paracels were under the jurisdiction of Hainan province which continued measures to demonstrate sovereignty such as surveys and mapping.

In 1946, the ROC took control of the Paracels and Spratlys and renamed islands, reefs, islets and shoals in the SCS, including the Nansha Islands. In 1947, the Kuomintang government of the Republic of China published a map containing a nine-dash line in the SCS to assert China's so-called "traditional boundary" in the sea.

After the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, it showed the nine-dash line in all official maps illustrating the SCS and asserting its claim of indisputable sovereignty over the islands in the SCS (the Spratlys, Paracel, and Pratas islands) Macclesfield Bank, and Scarborough Shoal and the adjacent waters. The PRC also stated that it enjoyed sovereign rights and jurisdiction over the relevant waters as well as the seabed and subsoil thereof (Z. H. Huang & Echo, 2016; Z. Wang, 2014a; Williams & Bokhorst-Heng, 2016). Taiwan left the SCS islands in 1950 and then returned Itu Aba in 1956 as the Philippines claimed the Spratlys while PRC controlled Woody Island (Pedrozo, 2014).

The MFA has cited China's resolute protests against all foreign claims to the SCS as a third group of evidence of its effective administration of the islands. The first protest

cited by China was in 1883, when the Qing government made a diplomatic protest over a German survey group operating in the SCS without China's permission. Later, China provided a series of objections to France's occupation of the two island groups during the 1930s and also protested against France's re-establishment of its claims to the SCS islands after WWII.

The MFA states that, since 1949, the PRC has maintained its stance as a persistent objector denying "each and every foreign claim to and invasion of...the SCS Islands...". China deployed troops to protest after South Vietnam replaced French forces in the Paracels and Spratlys and lodged a diplomatic note against the Philippines' claim to the Spratlys in 1956.

The MFA has also cited China's efforts to reaffirm its sovereignty claims over the SCS islands as another argument for its jurisdiction, including the law on the territorial sea and Contiguous Zone, the ratification of UNCLOS, the publicising of the baselines of the territorial sea over Xisha Islands and the Law on the EEZ and Continental Shelf (Beckman, 2013; Shicun, 2013). Beijing has also established new administrative bodies for the SCS islands such as Sansha City in June 2012 and issued new regulations, for instance, Measures to Implement the Fisheries Law of the PRC in November 2013.

Military intervention

Chinese scholars have argued that Chinese military forces have been used to advance its claims in the SCS. They cite, for instance, the clashes between the Chinese and South Vietnamese forces in Pattle Island in 1974 and another clash in Johnson South Reef in 1988. Since the mid-1990s, China has started to construct a series of structures and install equipment for military and monitoring purposes in the SCS islands (Beech, 2017).

International recognition

The MFA cites a number of events, such as the Sino-French Treaty of 1887 and San Francisco Peace Conference, to argue that the international community recognises its sovereignty claims to the SCS islands. Additionally, the MFA refers to a number of WWII and post-war documents treaties, statements and publications to support its sovereignty narratives over the SCS. For instance, the MFA has cited the 1887 Sino – French Treaty, the 1945 Potsdam Proclamation, the Cairo Declaration, the 1951 Treaty of Peace and the Sino – Japanese Treaty have been quoted by the MFA. China has also quoted statements by the Vietnamese side in the mid-1950s, including a 1958 letter from the North

Vietnamese Prime Minister to China's Premier and a letter sent by Prime Minister Pham Van Dong to Premier Zhou Enlai ostensibly supporting China's claims.

2. GAPS IN PERCEPTION AND IDENTITIES

2. 1. Clashes of histories and the perception of threats

It is argued that these claimant states have clashes over history relating to the SCS (Gacal, 2013). People in these countries are told different stories and, as a result, have quite different attitudes towards the clashes between them. Through these memories, each side portrays the other(s) as a "threat" to its national interests (Sokolsky, 2000).

In 1949, China informed the Philippines that it was occupying Itu Aba so as to prevent the trafficking of arms from Hainan to mainland China regardless of the Philippines' concerns. In 1950, China objected to Philippine President Quirino's reiteration of the Philippines' sovereignty over the islands and in 1971, Taiwan prevented a Philippine vessel from approaching Itu Aba. The Chinese occupation and enlargement of some structures on Mischief Reef in the Spratly Islands in 1995 was described as a strong indication of China's "creeping invasion" of the disputed SCS chain in the Philippines' domain (Banlaoi, 2003; Shicun, 2013; Solidum, 1982). In 1997, the Philippines prevented Chinese boats from landing on Scarborough Shoal, firing shots at and arresting the Chinese fishermen, resulting in the death of a Chinese captain (Shicun, 2013). In addition, as Velasco (2015) argues, the perception of China's threat subsequently motivated the Philippines Senate to ratify a new Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) in May 1999, allowing US troops back into the Philippines for training and other activities in accordance with the implementation of the 1951 MDT. It is argued that during 1990s, with limited support from the US, China just handled the tensions with the Philippines via bilateral diplomatic exchange. From 2000, China perceived the Philippines as a provocator who internationalised the SCS disputes by mobilising external states to become involved in the SCS disputes, threatening China's interests in the region.

In Vietnam's historical memory, feelings of victimisation from Chinese aggression during China's domination, invasions and border wars run deep thanks to education systems and the media engendering a deep and abiding political mistrust of China among the Vietnamese people (Ciorciari & Weiss, 2016; Sokolsky, 2000; Yee & Storey, 2004). For instance, when China seized Pattle Island in the Paracels from South Vietnam but North Vietnam took over the South Vietnam's position about sovereignty over the Spratlys, a battle of words occurred and perception gaps between Hanoi and Beijing widened during the period 1974-1990. White Books, for instance those issued in Vietnam

in 1979, 1981 and 1988, and the media and books in the two countries manifested the dispute by the reproduction of historical records, the creation and use of historical chronologies to illustrate that the SCS islands belonged to their country for a very long-time, and allegations that the other had violated its national sovereignty (GOVVN; Shicun, 2013).

Following the period in which discussing the dispute was shelved, China made further efforts to assert its jurisdiction in disputed areas of the SCS. For instance, the CPC began implementing a new maritime law enforcement strategy from 2000.

Vietnam and the Philippines have considered Chinese movements in the SCS to have taken multiple hostile forms such as aggression and the bullying of its neighbours and have responded to this growing perception of a threat by deploying military forces to protect their own claims (Z. Wang, 2014b). These countries are concerned about China's assertive actions such as the deployment of civilian maritime security forces to intervene in their fishing and resource exploration operations. They are also concerned about China's vague claim and broad justification for control over the SCS, the ambiguous nine-dash-line claim and its basis in history rather than international law. In contrast, China perceives the determination by Vietnam and the Philippines to defend their claims to disputed islands and the maritime rights generated from these claims as possible threats to its maritime periphery (Shangjun, 2014b). Moreover, China is concerned about Vietnam's and the Philippines' repeated criticism of China's SCS activities as a threat to China's image of peaceful power ("Vietnam condemned China's infringement," 2014).

2. 2. National identities and the SCS disputes

The clash of history and perception of threat regarding the SCS dispute became significant when the SCS disputes played a vital role in the claimant states' building of modern national identities. In those processes, these states consider the others' behaviours, particularly in the SCS, as a challenge to their goals in the future.

Vietnam

Studies about Vietnam's national identity show that after the 1986 reforms, the CPV played a strong role in defining modern Vietnam's national identity in order to unify the society. Firstly, the Party made use of the two goals of territorial preservation and economic growth to promote a common feeling of gratitude towards the government for preserving the nation and driving the country to catch up with the world. By these means the party was able to develop a strong nationalist sentiment (Salomon & Ket, 2007b). Secondly, to distinguish themselves from others, especially China, its giant northern

neighbour, in addition to instilling pride in their history using terms like a “thousand years of history” or “thousand years of culture,” the Party promoted the idea that the Vietnamese people share a common perception in the matter of the “threat of China” (M. Lee & Kim, 2017).

Straight after Vietnamese reunification, the MOFA issued a white paper on the SCS stating that “Hoang Sa (Paracel) and Truong Sa (Spratlys) were already and fully part of Vietnamese territory” and “these insular territories will live forever in Vietnamese hearts and will some days be restored to the Fatherland” (MOFA, 1975). Meanwhile, the significant values of the SCS in terms of economics, scientific research and security are widely shared in the media, painting Vietnam as a country with abundant natural resources and that managing these resources in the SCS well will benefit Vietnam in terms of economics and national defence.

The MOFA’s White Paper in 1975 states that “The Hoang Sa archipelago and some of the Truong Sa Islands have temporarily been invaded by troops of the People's Republic of China in January 1974. The Republic of Vietnam resolutely demands that all portions of her territory that are illegally occupied be restored to Vietnamese sovereignty” (MOFA, 1975). This type of narrative about the threat of China links the SCS issues with Vietnam’s nationalist sentiments and emphasises the necessity that leadership of the Party guide the country against external threats.

Based on the historical memories of revolutionary struggles with major powers, Vietnam has identified itself as the weaker party in its asymmetric relations with China and has tried to exert the levers of diplomacy, economic relations and military ties to maintain the country’s autonomy (M. Lee & Kim, 2017). One of the tactics used is that during the period when the SCS disputes were effectively shelved, Hanoi subdued anti-China protests in Vietnam in 2005, 2007 and 2011 (Ciorciari & Weiss, 2016).

The Philippines

Kumar and Vickers (2015) argued that the Philippines’s sense of national identity is relatively weak due to the failure to establish a strong state after the colonial period. Filipinos as a whole do not recognise the country as an essentially maritime nation more than a land-based one. Furthermore, the Philippine people do not hold a solid sentiment that the disputed islands in the WPS are a part of the Philippines’ territory (Macraig, 2015).

The Aquino administration ran a campaign to develop a national identity with two major goals: the pursuit of continuous development and the preservation of the

Philippines' archipelagic integrity and sovereignty. Manila emphasised values such as love of country and assistance in the development of the nation, which aimed to further nationalist and patriotic sentiment among the Filipinos (Almonte, 2003). The Philippines identifies itself as having a national value of internationalism by projecting, among others, an image of a democratic, and a rules-based, order-seeking country (Baviera, 2016b).

Stating in official statements that the WPS is an integral part of the country's territory and sovereignty, defending its claims, interests and rights over the WPS becomes part of the state's goals to preserve its archipelagic integrity and sovereignty. Moreover, to fortify the "archipelagic consciousness" among Filipinos, the Aquino government ran an education and media campaign to construct the perception that the disputed areas belong to the Philippines and build an unshakeable will to defend the nation's maritime sovereignty (Almonte, 2003).

As an archipelagic and maritime nation, the Philippines has long-standing interests in the WPS (Palma, 2009). The sea lines of communication through the SCS link the Philippines' and its economy with the rest of the world. Ocean resources, such as fisheries and other marine life and minerals, provide 5 million Filipinos with a major source of livelihood, nutrition and materials. The protection and preservation of the maritime environment in the WPS plays a key part in the Philippines' sustainable development goals in the future.

It is argued the Philippines perceives itself as one of the SCS littoral states and selects tactics that are considered as tools for smaller states to challenge China's coercive pressure at sea. These strategies include managing nationalism, enhancing its relations with other claimant states, using legal tools and strengthening its voice in the regional arena such as through ASEAN (Baviera, 2018).

China

Under the leadership of Xi Jinping, the PRC started a campaign to pursue the "China dream" of "the great revival of the Chinese nation". In that process, China's aim is to build a new identity of rejuvenated greatness, "reclaiming what it sees as its rightful position in the world" and ending China's "century of humiliation" in the past ("Chinese dream," 2012).

The SCS issue is seen as a part of a specific maritime component of China's "century of national humiliation" when foreigners invaded China from the sea because of China's weakness as a naval power. This sense of vulnerability is the driving force for China's wish to become a major maritime power and establish a so-called "ring of

maritime control” around its periphery. Hence, China’s SCS policy is part of its process of building the identity of rejuvenated greatness and emancipating itself from foreign bullying.

Within the “China dream” campaign, the CPC perceives itself as a global economic power and no longer as the leader of the developing countries. China publicly identifies that the natural resources and the strategic location of the SCS play a critical position in defending national security as well as in turning China into a global power (Casarini, 2017).

The CPC describes itself as the legitimate heir to historical Chinese territorial and maritime claims. In the SCS disputes, the CPC has asserted the concept of the nine-dash line and “historical rights”. The popular view in China is that the SCS is an indivisible part of China’s historical territory and that the islands are “our islands.” Painting itself as “peacefully risen” instead of “peacefully rising,” and beginning to reap the rewards, there is a common belief in China that the country no longer needs to bide its time and is ready to assert its global influence, including in the Southeast Asia region (D. Cohen, 2014). One of the CPC’s recent hard-line approaches towards the SCS has been its management of nationalist sentiments. Narratives such as “海域被瓜分” (water territories have been carved up), “岛礁被侵占” (islands and reefs have been occupied) and “资源被掠夺” (resources have been plundered) are popular in the Chinese media. In this way, it is argued that China ran a narrative that it has acted assertively and aggressively to regain its lost territories in the minds of Chinese audiences. Moreover, China has considered the SCS disputes as the balance of influence with the US in the region, rather than for a balance of power with the regional smaller countries (F. Ying & Shicun, 2016a). In other words, China perceives relations between the US and the other claimant states in the SCS as an obstacle on the path to rejuvenation as well as infringing on China’s political security and territorial sovereignty.

3. REGIONAL STRUCTURAL CHANGES

3. 1. The rise of China

Thanks to its economic modernisation, China has become the world’s number two economy by gross domestic product and continues to grow. China’s increasing economic and security interests around the world consolidate its transitioning from a continental actor to a global, maritime power in its self-definition of a “peaceful rise” (Arai et al., 2013). In its quest for a new maritime power identity, China’s perceptions of and policy towards, the SCS have also changed (Nohara, 2017). From being considered as far sea

and uninhabited islands, the SCS islands and waters now play a more important role in China's identity and interests. PLA Navy Commander Admiral Liu Huaqing has stated: "Whoever controls the Spratlys will reap huge economic and military benefits" (Fravel, 2011, p. 296). In terms of economics, jurisdiction over these waters would provide China with the rights to access SCS maritime resources, especially hydrocarbons and fish. The majority of Chinese trade passes through the sea, including 80 per cent of China's oil imports. In military terms, the SCS provides a maritime buffer for the south of China, necessary waters for China's submarines to maneuver and practice, and a key potential battle zone for China to counter the US over Taiwan. These waters would be a key blockade to China in wartime (Fravel, 2011, p. 296). These perceptions provide a background for China's maritime power identity which, for the first time, was officially announced by the then CPC general secretary, Hu Jintao, at the eighteenth Party Congress in 2012 (Stewart, 2018). President, Xi Jinping in 2013, continued to strengthen the maritime power identity by suggesting that in resolving the SCS disputes, the claimant states should uphold "the principle that sovereignty belongs to China, setting aside disputes and pursuing joint development" (Stewart, 2018, p. 15). By insisting that SCS sovereignty belongs exclusively to China, breaking with the previous Chinese leaders' identity and positions over maritime disputes, China, under President Xi's leadership, has signalled that it would not tolerate any "interference" in its claimed sovereignty by other powers. China has undoubtedly increased its militarisation activities in the SCS region, which were relatively limited in the previous periods (Rozman, 2015). These activities have been of concern to Vietnam and the Philippines and changed the two countries' reactions toward the US' pivot policy.

3. 2. The US' pivot to Asia

The US announced the pivot policy to Asia, which shifts its focus from the Middle East to the Asia Pacific to reinforce its strategic role in the region, in 2008. For China, the US' pivot to Asia created many economic and security implications making the bipolar power contest between China and the US more dramatic in Southeast Asia (Castro & Cruz, 2014a). Economically, the Chinese worried that the strategy posed many challenges to China's attempt to strengthen its leading position in East Asia. One of the key parts of the pivot policy was the US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership initiative which aimed to place the US at the centre of regional economic integration (Arai et al., 2013).

Through the pivot, the US enhanced its military presence in the region and strengthened its alliance relationships, particularly with the Philippines. In China's view,

this was an attempt to change the balance of power in Southeast Asia and provided the SCS claimant states with opportunities to hedge and balance between China and the US threatening stability in the SCS (T. T.-T. Liu & Tsai, 2014). Meanwhile, evidence shows that the Aquino government considered the US' pivot as an opportunity to leverage its WPS strategy to deal with China, although the US publicly refused to take sides in the disputes and to confirm whether or not the 1951 Mutual Defence Treaty (MDT) would apply to the Philippines' claimed areas in the SCS (Glaser, 2012). For instance, in his effort to pursue closer cooperation with the US, President Aquino redirected the focus of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) from domestic security to territorial defence; tightened Philippine-US security relations; acquired American military support and requested an unequivocal commitment from the US under the MDT. In late April 2014, the two states agreed on a framework for an Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), which allowed for US forces to have a rotational presence on Philippine territory (Castro & Cruz, 2014a).

Vietnam also executed strategic political manoeuvres to flex its US alignment option to counter China's pressure. During the 2014 oil rig stand-off, Vietnam participated in the US-led Proliferation Security Initiative. In late 2014, the US announced the lifting of its arms embargo to allow Vietnam to buy maritime surveillance and lethal maritime security capabilities on a case by case basis (Gill et al., 2016). In sum, the SCS claimant states had different views on the US' pivot policy and China's rising power, then re-shaped their SCS policy, especially their behaviour towards the other claimant states. China and the US's strategy also restructured identity and the sense of self and national pride in China, Vietnam and the Philippines, all of which widened the existing gaps in national identity and perception between these countries (Hayton, 2014a; Pao-Min, 1987).

III. INTRODUCTION OF CASE STUDIES

1. THE OIL RIG CRISIS

1. 1. Stage 1: The oil rig entered disputed waters (1 – 10 May 2014)

The presence of HD 981 oil rig and three Chinese ships off the coast of Da Nang province was first detected by Vietnamese maritime staff on 1 May 2014 (MOFA, 2014e). By the afternoon of May 2, the oil rig platform was settled 17 nautical miles south of Triton, sitting very close to the edge of two oil and gas blocks that Vietnam had already claimed and bounded but not yet exploited (Bower & Poling, 2014). China officially confirmed the issue on May 2 (MSA, 2019).

After detecting the oil rig, the Vietnamese government sent Vietnam Coast Guard and Fisheries Surveillance forces to the site to request China to move the rig out of Vietnam's claimed waters (MOFA, 2014c). In response, China deployed up to 40 ships, including China Coast Guard (CCG), China Marine Surveillance (CMS), Fisheries Law Enforcement Command (FLEC), and PLA Navy ships to prevent Vietnamese vessels from approaching the rig, immediately resulting in violent collisions.

The Vietnamese ambassador to China was summoned twice on May 2 and 4. China also made a phone call to the Vietnamese Vice Foreign Minister through a maritime hotline to protest Vietnam's interference at sea. Vietnam summoned China's Chargé D'affaires and sent a Note Verbale, while Vietnam's Ministry of Defence also talked with China's military attaché in Hanoi about the tension. (Yangyijun, 2014b). On May 6, the Vietnamese Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Pham Binh Minh, conducted a phone call with the Chinese State Councillor, Yang Jiechi, to restate Vietnam's stance, and to emphasise that Vietnam would "take all suitable and necessary measures to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests" ("Vietnam: prepared to act on China rig," 2014). For his part, State Councillor Yang Jiechi said Vietnam had no right to disrupt China's operation in Chinese waters and warned that "China is strongly dissatisfied and firmly opposes Vietnam's interference" (Yangyijun, 2014b).

On that day, the US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia, Daniel Russel, who was still in Vietnam at that time, called on "each of the claimant countries to exercise care and restraint" (Torode, 2014). A US State Department spokesperson released a statement which described China's move as "provocative and unhelpful" (Psaki, 2014a). On the following day, in a press statement, the State Department criticised China's "unilateral action" as part of a "broader pattern of Chinese behaviour to advance its claims over disputed territory in a manner that undermines peace and stability in the region" (Psaki, 2014b).

Until May 7, according to Vietnam's records, Chinese vessels had harassed Vietnamese fishing boats from a distance of 70 nm east of the rig. Eight Vietnamese vessels had been hit with water cannons and six persons had been injured. Vietnamese officials threatened that Vietnam would respond with similar self-defence if the ramming activities continued. Nevertheless, officials confirmed that Vietnam would never fire first (Linh & Martina, 2014). On the diplomatic front, Vietnam circulated a note at the United Nations on the same day to object to China's oil rig deployment (GOVVN, 2014d). In response, China's spokesperson stated that the Paracels had "nothing to do with Vietnam

and even less to do with the US” and criticised the US statement as “irresponsible remarks” (“China protests Vietnamese interference,” 2014). On May 8, China's Vice Foreign Minister rejected Vietnam’s claims and warned of “disastrous consequences” if the Chinese rig was attacked or rammed (Blanchard, 2014; Kaiman, 2014a). The bilateral communications were substantial at this time; officials from the two countries conducted 14 communications and 6 meetings (MOFA, 2014a).

On May 10, the ASEAN foreign ministers issued a joint statement raising their “serious concerns over the ongoing developments in the SCS” (ASEAN, 2014a). China sent a strong reaction claiming that “the issue of the SCS is not one between China and ASEAN” (Chunying, 2014k). The statement was harshly condemned later by the Vietnamese Prime Minister. On May 12, a Chinese spokesperson reiterated the MFA’s stance and accused Vietnam of attempting to “rope in other parties and put pressure on China” (“China: Vietnam’s failed strategy,” 2014).

1. 2. Stage 2: The stand-off escalated (10 – 26 May 2014)

On May 9, thousands of Vietnamese people on Ly Son island and nearby areas peacefully demonstrated against China’s illegal activity in the East Sea (“Vietnamese fishermen protest Chinese actions,” 2014). On May 10, nearly 100 people gathered for half an hour outside the Chinese Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City with banners and flags (“Anti-China march in HCM,” 2014). In Hanoi, hundreds of police were mobilised to maintain order but did not intervene in the demonstration. International journalists who were on hand to record the event observed that the government “appeared to give in to public anger that also provided them with the opportunity to register their own indignation at Beijing.” State security staff were deployed to watch the protest and used speakers to express the government’s complaints about China’s actions, state television and media agencies recorded and published the event, which was very rare to see in Vietnam (Brummitt, 2014).

The demonstrations continued to escalate over the next few days. Tens of thousands of Vietnamese citizens participated in rallies in Hanoi, Hue, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh (“Vietnamese protesters,” 2014). China requested Vietnam to “take all measures necessary to safeguard the security and legitimate rights and interests of Chinese citizens and organisations in Vietnam” (Chunying, 2014h).

On May 13, in a phone call with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, called China’s oil rig placement and its escorts “provocative” and requested both sides to conduct self-restraint. For its side, Wang called

on Kerry to cooperate with China to develop a “new type of great power relations.” Meanwhile, China reportedly rejected a suggestion for a meeting between the Vietnamese Communist Party’s secretary general and the Chinese president (“U.S. vs China on SCS,” 2014).

On May 14 and 15, anti-China protests in Vietnam turned violent. Rioters attacked and vandalized hundreds of foreign-owned companies and factories, targeting Chinese ones, but also damaged many Taiwanese, Singaporean and South Korean firms (Chris Buckley, 2014). In the central Ha Tinh province, up to 21 people were killed including 2 Chinese workers, and hundreds were injured. The Chinese government lodged a solemn representation to request Vietnam to act “to restore order urgently”, and issued safety warnings to Chinese who were living in Vietnam (Makinen, 2014). In an attempt to manage the crisis, Vietnam sent its deputy foreign minister to China for comprehensive discussions (Binh, 2014e). Two days later, the riots had been suppressed (“Arresting violent anti-China Protests,” 2014).

At sea, China expanded its defensive perimeter up to 15 nautical miles. On May 11, Vietnam detected Chinese military aircraft harassing Vietnamese vessels (“China’s fighter jets to the rig,” 2014). On May 12, the Vietnamese side released a report that, for the first time, Vietnamese vessels had hit back at 15 Chinese vessels with water cannons (“Vietnamese ship hits back,” 2014). During May 15-16, two Yuzhao-class amphibious transport docks of the PLA Navy, bristling with five guns and eight surface-to-air missiles, were deployed, accompanied by Chinese aircraft which flew above to protect the rig (MOFA, 2014a).

On May 15, diplomatic channels between the two sides were resumed. Vietnam’s Foreign Minister, Pham Binh Minh, made a phone call to his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi. Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung also issued an order to relevant ministries and local bodies to take all necessary measures to protect foreign investors and re-establish public order (GOVVN, 2014c). At the same time, Vietnam sent a signal that it was considering internationalising the oil rig stand-off by submitting its protest to the UN Security Council or by using legal methods (“Vietnam’s demand,” 2014).

At sea, on May 17, a collision occurred between the 2000-ton China Coast Guard vessels and 450-ton Vietnamese ships, nearly causing a Vietnamese one to sink. In waters near Triton Island, a Chinese vessel reportedly rammed a Vietnamese fishing ship (“Attack from Chinese ship,” 2014). Significantly, a rumour was quickly circulated on the Chinese internet from May 16 to 19 that a large group of China PLA troops were seen

in the Guangxi region, heading to the Vietnamese border ("China's Troops Near Vietnam's Border ", 2014). This rumour made the public fear that the tension would be exacerbated (Chankaiyee, 2014).

On the diplomatic front, a meeting between the Chinese State Councillor and Defence Minister, Chang Wanquan, and the Vietnamese Defence Minister, Phung Quang Thanh, at the ASEAN-China Defence Ministers' Meeting on May 19 did not create a breakthrough (GOVCN, 2014b). On May 21, the Vietnamese Prime Minister, started his trip to the Philippines to discuss Chinese maritime behaviour and the possibility of using legal methods against Beijing (Mogato, 2014). In Vietnam, the Foreign Minister made a phone call to the US Secretary of State to review developments ("US hails Vietnam's goodwill," 2014). On the Chinese side, Xi Jinping at the Fourth Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, voiced China's disapproval of "military alliances targeted at a third-party" (Jinping, 2014). Three days later, during his trip to the Philippines for the World Economic Forum on East Asia 2014, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung stated that Vietnam was not seeking "any military alliance against another country" and insisted that "Vietnam will never barter its sacred sovereignty for an unrealisable or conditional peace and friendship" ("Vietnam never barter sovereignty," 2014).

On May 22, Vietnam submitted a report on China's activities to the UN (Fook & Hop, 2018). However, China maintained its stance that "there exists no dispute" over the Paracels as a reaction to the news of Vietnam's possible use of legal action (Lei, 2014h).

On May 25, China settled the rig into a new location, only 100 yards north of its previous location, and retained their defensive perimeter up to 12 nm from the oil rig. Both sides accused each other of ramming vessels (Gang, 2014e).

1. 3. Stage 3: China moved the rig to a new site (27 May – 15 July 2014)

China announced the move on May 27. Vietnamese media described the new location as 25 nautical miles away, which was still beyond the feature's 12 nautical miles territorial sea. At sea, Vietnam reported that there were now 120 vessels at the new location, including 14 freighters and 17 PLA Navy ships, with a high tempo of operations of these ships (MOFA, 2014a). In China, a series of nationalistic and rhetorical arguments, such as congratulations to the Chinese ship for its movement in sinking the Vietnamese boat, were posted on Chinese social media sites like ifeng.com, the website of Phoenix Television (Perlez, 2014).

On June 18, the Chinese state councillor Yang Jiechi visited Vietnam to talk about the oil rig crisis (MOFA, 2014i). During the time of the meeting, China retained about 40 China Coast Guard vessels, 35 iron-clad fishing ships, 20 tugboats and 5 PLA Navy ships, while 18 vessels departed.

On June 19, a second Chinese oil rig was detected in disputed waters. Vietnam immediately objected to China's activities (Binh, 2014a). The US State Department also expressed concern over the second rig placed in "disputed waters" in the SCS ("US concerns China's rigs," 2014). Vietnam's National Assembly approved a resolution condemning China's act on June 24 ("Vietnam condemns China's acts," 2014).

1. 4. Stage 4: China withdrew the rig a month early (15 July – 31 August 2014)

On July 15, the China National Petroleum Corporation stated that the HD981 oil rig had found "signs of oil and gas" that needed comprehensive assessment, finished its mission and been relocated to near Hainan Island (Lei, 2014j). In August 15 a Vietnamese diplomatic delegation visited China and the two sides achieved a consensus on the bilateral relationship ("Vietnam decries China's activities on Paracel islands," 2014).

2. THE SCARBOROUGH SHOAL STAND-OFF

2. 1. Stage 1: The Chinese fishermen were detained, the stand-off ensued (8 – 26 April 2012)

On April 8, after monitoring for nearly three weeks, the Philippine Navy reported that eight Chinese fishing vessels had been anchored inside the lagoon of the Scarborough Shoal (Landingin & Hille, 2012). The Philippines' BRP Gregorio del Pilar was deployed to investigate on April 10 (Tessa Jamandre, 2012). After taking pictures of "illegal" collected corals, clams, and live sharks found on the Chinese vessels, the Philippine cutter left the shoal without arresting the Chinese fishermen as they had done before. When the cutter turned back, two Chinese marine surveillance vessels, the CMS 75 and CMS 84 had also arrived and prevented the PN from approaching the fishermen (Ming, 2012).

On April 11, the two sides published the incident on the media and exchanged diplomatic protests (Weimin, 2012a). To demilitarise the tension, on April 12, the Philippines replaced the cutter with a coast guard vessel (PCG), the BRP Pampanga ("Stand-off btw Philippine and Chinese vessels," 2012). However, right after the cutter left, the Chinese Fisheries Law Enforcement Command ship (FLEC 303) arrived at the site (Green, Hicks, Cooper, Schaus, & Douglas, 2017).

On the morning of April 13, the Philippines unilaterally announced that both sides agreed to maintain the status quo of the incident and avoid escalating the tension while looking for a peaceful resolution (K. J. Tan, 2012). At sea, the CMS 75 and the FLEC 303 escorted several fishing vessels to leave the scene with their catches on April 13, leaving only the BRP Pampanga and CMS 84 at the scene (Embassy, 2012).

While the stalemate between both sides over withdrawal of their last ship from the shoal continued, the Philippine military deployed another PCG ship to support the BRP Pampanga and China sent the CMS 75 back to reinforce the CMS 84 (Weimin, 2012d). On April 20, the FLEC 310 was deployed to replace the CMS 84 at the Shoal (Yunbi & Quanlin, 2012). Meanwhile, PLA Navy warships were deployed over the horizon from the shoal, guaranteeing China's law enforcement vessels docked at Scarborough shoal within the protection of its missile range. The Philippines ordered the BRP Gregorio del Pilar to be ready at the Porto Point if the tensions escalated (Esmaque, 2012b).

The tension became complicated with China's harassment of a Filipino surveillance ship, internet hackings, and the M/Y Saranggani incident near the Shoal (Evangelista, 2012b). Manila threatened to appraise the incident into the agenda of the first US-Philippine 2+2 meeting on April 30 (Segal, 2012). Chinese Vice FM, Cui Tiankai called for the US to stay neutral in the dispute ("PHL: Chinese envoy inaccurate," 2012).

On April 23 Beijing stated that its withdrawal of two Chinese vessels from the shoal including the CMS 84 on April 20 and the LEC 310, leaving only the CMS 71 at the shoal, was to show its readiness "to settle this incident through friendly diplomatic negotiations" ("China's withdrawing two vessels," 2012). Nevertheless, Manila doubted Beijing's overture and did not respond.

2. 2. Stage 2: The Philippines internationalised the dispute, and China escalated the tensions (26 April– 26 May 2012)

On April 26, the DFA stated that Manila hoped to "maximize the benefits to be derived out of the MDT, officially confirming its attention to call for US support in the dispute (Lee-Brago, 2012e). In addition, the Philippines formally requested ASEAN to "take a stance" on the incident ("PHL and US, ASEAN support," 2012). China described the moves as a clear threat of military escalation (Chun, 2012). At sea, on April 28, Manila replaced the BRP Pampanga with the BRP EDSA II and Beijing deployed the FLEC 310 and the CMS 75 back to the scene on the next day (Calonzo, 2012a).

The US emphasised its neutral stance on the sovereignty dispute during the 2+2 meeting (Clinton, 2012). China publicly appreciated US neutrality and toughened its

stance towards the Philippines (Ratnam, 2012). On May 3, China rejected the import of a shipload of Philippine bananas for failing China's quarantine tests (Higgins, 2012). On May 7, Vice Minister Fu summoned Philippine Chargé d'affaires to urge the Philippines to withdraw its vessels from the shoal (Yunbi, 2012).

Anti-China protests occurred on May 11 at Chinese diplomatic posts in the Philippines and around the world. China accused the Philippine government of having a hand in the protests (Mogato & Buckley, 2012).

On May 14 and 16, China and the Philippines respectively announced their fishing bans over certain areas in the SCS including the Scarborough Shoal (Callar, 2012e). However, until May 21, China increased its forces at the Shoal up to 76 "utility boats," dinghies which were stored aboard larger fishing vessels, 16 fishing, and 5 government vessels ("China's fishing ban," 2012).

2. 3. Stage 3: Discussion reactivated, starting the de-escalating stage (26 May – 30 June 2012)

On May 27, Beijing decreased the number of Chinese utility boats at the Shoal from 97 to 35 (Green et al., 2017). Meanwhile, Chinese quarantine measures had been lifted for Philippine banana exports ("Trillanes visited China," 2012).

On May 28, Philippines Defence Secretary, Voltaire Gazmin, met his Chinese counterpart on the sidelines at an ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting in Cambodia to discuss an initial withdrawal from the inner lagoon. In Manila, the Aquino government threatened to bring the incident onto the agenda of President Aquino's trip to the United Kingdom and the US from June 4 to 8 (Legaspi, 2012).

On June 4, eight Chinese and two Philippine government ships reportedly repositioned outside the shoal's lagoon while 30 Chinese fishing ships were inside ("Ships withdrew from Scarborough Shoal," 2012). To respond to China's de-escalation, President Aquino discussed "in passing" the incident in his meeting with UK Prime Minister, David Cameron (Esmaque, 2012a). On that day, Manila unilaterally ordered Philippine ships to leave the shoal based on information that both sides achieved a bilateral agreement for a simultaneous withdrawal thanks to supporting of US negotiators (Tiglao, 2015). However, China stated that there was no such agreement to withdraw its ships and kept its vessels at the shoal (Lei, 2014c, 2014d).

Philippine President Aquino mentioned the tension at his meeting with US President, Barack Obama, in Washington, on June 8, but the US' neutral stance was unchanged (Obama, 2012a, 2012b). Manila ordered its two government boats to leave the

shoal due to a coming storm and announced that China was committed to removing its vessels in turn without the details of backdoor negotiations on June 15 ("Palace: China to withdraw ships," 2012). However, one day later, after welcoming Manila's withdrawal, the MFA refused to acknowledge any commitment and stated that Chinese vessels would continue to patrol over the shoal (Lei, 2012a).

Manila criticised Chinese ships for remaining at the scene and threatened to send its force to the shoal (Lamentillo, 2012). On June 25, the DFA informed that all Chinese vessels had been removed (Callar, 2012a). However, on the next day, the Philippine Air Force spotted that there were three CMS ships and two FLEC ships outside the lagoon and six fishing and 17 utility boats inside (Callar, 2012b). Manila decided not to send its force again and calmed the public by saying that stormy weather prevented any countermeasures (Tubeza & Burgonio, 2012). Thereafter, while China remained a constant presence, establishing de facto control at the shoal, the Philippines refrained from dispatching its vessels back to the Scarborough Shoal and did not concede loss of its control of the shoal (Forsyth, 2014).

3. THE SOUTH CHINA SEA ARBITRATION CASE

3. 1. Stage 1: The initiation of the arbitration (January 2013 – March 2014)

On 22 January 2013, by submitting the Notification and Statement of Claim, the Philippines formally initiated an arbitral proceeding against China under Article 286 and 287 of the 1982 UNCLOS and in accordance with Annex VII of the Convention (PCA, 2013). On 19 February 2013, the CPC sent a note verbale to the Philippine government to reject the arbitration, returned the Notification and the Claim to the Philippines and called for resolution through bilateral negotiations.

Since China did not appoint a member of the tribunal, on 22 February 2013, the Philippines asked for the President of the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) to appoint the second arbitrator in accordance with Articles 3(c) and 3(e) of Annex VII to the Convention. On 23 March 2013, Judge Stanislaw Pawlak was appointed as arbitrator of the SCS case. By 21 June 2013, with the appointment of Judge Thomas A. Mensah to replace Ambassador Pinto as arbitrator and President of the tribunal, the tribunal was finally constituted.

On 5 July 2013, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) affirmed its willingness to serve as Registry for the Proceedings. On 11 July 2013, a first meeting of the tribunal was held at the Peace Palace in The Hague. On 12 July 2013, the tribunal sent Administrative Directive No. 1, the draft Rules of Procedures and other relevant

documents to China and the Philippines. On 29 July, China returned the documents and attached a note verbale, stating its stance of non-acceptance and non-participation to the PCA. The Philippines commented on the Draft on 31 July 2013.

On 27 August, through Procedural Order No. 1, the tribunal set 30 March 2014 as the deadline for the Philippines to send a Memorial that “shall fully address all issues including matters relating to jurisdiction, admissibility, and the merits of the disputes.” On 14 November 2013, the tribunal rejected the request of the Chinese Ambassador to the UK for a meeting with the President of the tribunal, reminding the parties to refrain from ex parte connections with members of the tribunal. The tribunal advised that the parties should direct their questions of a procedural nature to the Registry, all members of the tribunal and the other party. On 30 March 2014, the Philippines posted Memorial and Annexes to the tribunal and the Embassy of China in the Kingdom of Netherlands. The MFA made a comment on the Philippines’ submission on the same day (Lei, 2014e, 2014n).

3. 2. Stage 2: The Hearing and the ruling on jurisdiction and admissibility of the case (June 2014 – November 2015)

On 14 -15 May, the tribunal was formally convened in The Hague, providing a Draft Procedural Order No.2. On 29 May 2014, the Philippines submitted its comments on the Draft. On 21 May 2014, China sent a note verbale to the PCA, in which it reiterated its position that “it does not accept the arbitration initiated by the Philippines” and that the Note Verbale “shall not be regarded as China’s acceptance of or participation in the proceedings” (“PCA,” 2014).

On 2 June 2014, the tribunal issued Procedural Order No. 2 informing that China could submit a Counter-Memorial by 15 December 2014. On 7 December 2014, the MFA issued a “Position Paper of the Government of the People’s Republic of China on the matter of Jurisdiction in the SCS Arbitration Initiated by the Republic of the Philippines” (the 2014 Position Paper). On 8 December, China sent a note verbale to the PCA to reiterate the position of non-acceptance and non-participation and emphasised that the document should not be considered as Beijing’s agreement or rejection of participation in the case.

On 16 December 2014, the tribunal issued Procedural Order No. 3, asking the Philippines to send a Supplemental Written Submission by 16 March 2015 and China to provide its response by 16 June 2015. On 26 January 2015, the Philippines sent its comments on the procedural matters mentioned in Procedural Order No. 3. These

included opposing bifurcation, suggesting the appropriate profile of a technical expert, the desirability and prospects of conducting site visits and on the procedures for evaluating any amicus curiae submission, and suggesting the dates and scope of an oral hearing. On 6 February 2015, in a letter to the members of the tribunal, the Chinese Ambassador to the Netherlands stated China's Position Paper has "comprehensively explained why the tribunal... manifestly has no jurisdiction over the case" and emphasised China's firm opposition to some of the procedural issues mentioned in the PCA's correspondence, such as "intervention by other states," "amicus curiae submissions" and "site visit(s)."

On 21 April, the tribunal's Procedural Order No. 4 stated that China's communications, including the Position Paper of 7 December 2014 and the Ambassador letter of 6 February 2015, "constitute(d) a plea concerning the tribunal's jurisdiction," and set 7 July 2015 as the date to convene a Hearing on Jurisdiction((PCA), 2015).

On 27 April 2015 the Philippines sent a letter to the tribunal to criticise China's massive land reclamation projects at several locations in the SCS and to suggest holding a hearing at the earliest possible date (DFA, 2015). On 11 May, the Philippines sent its comments on the tribunal's statement on the Hearing on Jurisdiction. On 1 July, the Chinese Ambassador to the Netherlands sent a second letter to the member of the tribunal to reiterate China's position of resolving the SCS disputes through bilateral negotiations and consultation, reaffirmed the position elaborated in the Position Paper, and highlighted China's "legitimate right" to reject unilaterally the use of a third-party settlement or any arbitral procedures (Batongbacal, 2015).

The Hearing on Jurisdiction occurred in two rounds on 7, 8 and 13 July 2015 in The Hague with participants from the Philippine delegation and observers from Vietnam, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, and Thailand, but not China. The tribunal later fixed the date of 17 August 2015 as the deadline for China to comment on any issues raised during the Hearing.

To answer the tribunal's question and relevant annexes of 13 July 2015, on 23 July, the Philippines submitted its written responses. Meanwhile, China did not send any formal document but presented its stance through three press conferences on July 7, 14, and 24 August and one remark (Chunying, 2015e, 2015n; Kang, 2015e). An Award on jurisdiction and admissibility was issued on 29 October 2015, confirming the tribunal's authority to consider the Philippines' submissions No. 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11 and 13, and

reserved consideration of its jurisdiction to decide on Submissions No. 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 12, and 14 to the merits stage (PCA, 2015).

3. 3. Stage 3: The ruling on the merits of the case and the aftermath (November - July 2016)

The merit stage occurred on 24-30 November 2015. At the last hearing, the tribunal decided that China could comment, by 1 January 2016, on matters that were raised relating to the Merits. On 20 May 2016, the Chinese Ambassador in the Netherlands sent letters together with the MFA's remarks to the arbitrators. Accordingly, China protested about the invitations to external experts to participate in the investigation procedures. Similarly, before the tribunal conducted an investigation of the status of Itu Aba, on 3 June 2016, the Chinese Ambassador posted a letter to the tribunal with the MFA's remark stating that the feature is an "island" which people can inhabit and conduct economic activities for their lives, not a "rock" as the Philippines described (Chunying, 2016c). In the 10 June letter, the Ambassador enclosed a statement made by the Chinese Society of International Law, which denied the legitimacy of the tribunal's award (Li, 2018).

The tribunal's final ruling was released on 12 July 2016 and accepted 14 out of 15 the Philippines' requests (PCA, 2016). International scholars argued that the awards were binding on the parties to the dispute. They argued that, according to Article 296 of the Convention, "any such decision shall have no binding force except between the parties and in respect of that particular dispute" which formally limited its application to the parties concerned (Buszynski, 2017).

CHAPTER IV: MEDIA DIPLOMACY IN THE OIL RIG CRISIS

This chapter examines the media diplomacy of the Vietnamese and Chinese governments during the oil rig crisis. The aim of this chapter is to examine how the two sides deployed media diplomacy to handle the crisis while fulfilling their broader national objectives.

PART I: VIETNAM'S MEDIA DIPLOMACY

I. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

1. THE FIRST STAGE (1 – 10 MAY 2014)

1. 1. The MOFA's media narratives

Keeping a low profile over the crisis

Hanoi first released its official objection to China's oil rig placement on May 4, three days after the crisis occurred. Nhung (2017) argues that during the first four days of the crisis, the MOFA controlled information flows to support Hanoi's effort to convince Beijing bilaterally. Hanoi altered its media diplomacy by holding international press conferences, only after recognising that China's tactics included aggression at sea, rejection of a diplomatic resolution and neglect of the issue on the media front.

Voicing the government's reactions

Hanoi released its first protest against China's actions in the media on 4 May (Binh, 2014ca; 2014fb). Common narratives were that Vietnam strongly protested "China's illegal oil rig deployment and its escort forces that "infringed Vietnam's sovereignty, sovereign right and jurisdiction over Hoang Sa islands, EEZ and continental shelf" ("Vietnam demands China withdraw," 2014). Hanoi stated that Vietnam protested about foreign countries' activities that operated in its waters without permission and described such activities as "illegal and void". In addition, they expressed the government's determination to "take all suitable and necessary measures to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests" and Vietnam's peaceful principle "to pursue dialogue to peacefully settle all disputes with China" ("Vietnam to safeguard SCS interests," 2014).⁷

The media outlets also focused on reporting the escalating confrontation at sea with photographs and videos provided by the state authorities .⁸ They created and circulated media narratives saying that "China has deployed many planes, vessels, including military, police and fishing vessels to escort the oil rig" while "Vietnam's law enforcement ships arrived to stop the illegal intrusion of the Chinese side," and "Chinese

⁷ See No 3, 4 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

⁸ See No 6 and 4 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

ships aggressively fired water cannons and even rammed the Vietnamese vessels, damaging them and injuring crew members” (“Chinese ships fired water cannons,” 2014).

Internationalising the crisis⁹

On May 7, the MOFA hosted the first international conference on the crisis. As an information source, the conference provided details of developments at sea and the damage to people and property on the Vietnamese side (MOFA, 2012). In order to convince its target audiences, the MOFA released photographs and video footages taken by on-site Vietnamese officers and international reporters to illustrate China’s aggressive acts at sea which were widely published on the Internet on the same day (MOFA, 2014e).

As a diplomatic channel to lodge its protest, Vietnam accused China of “violating Vietnam’s sovereign rights and jurisdiction” under the 1982 UNCLOS (MOFA, 2014e). Hanoi also blamed Beijing for rejecting all eight communications from 2 to 10 May, causing the deadlock on the diplomatic front (MOFA, 2014e).¹⁰ Moreover, by quickly holding the press conference with the participations of foreign and domestic reporters, Hanoi sought to achieve an advantage by speaking first and initiating a public debate over the legality of China’s drilling activity on a global scale (Fook & Hop, 2018).¹¹ It is argued that China would have been able to reject Vietnam’s diplomatic requests, but it would be harder to neglect questions posed repeatedly by the international community and media. The evidence showed that after the MOFA released images of Chinese ships ramming Vietnamese vessels on the site, on May 8, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister, Cheng Guoping, took to the stage to reply to the media over the issue. Such media reaction means that Beijing participated in the war of words initiated by Hanoi. Then, Hanoi reached out to the international media to launch its “internationalisation strategy.” In doing so, Hanoi had at least three goals, including gaining the moral high ground in terms of legality, transparency, and fairness, attracting much attention from global audiences, and pressurising China to alter its behaviours at sea (Hai, 2016b).

1. 2. The media outlets’ narratives

Citing international support for Vietnam’s stance¹²

A remark by US State Department spokeswoman, Jen Psaki, that criticised China’s move as “provocative and unhelpful to the maintenance of peace and stability in the region” was widely reported in the media in Vietnam (“US: China's oil rig is provocative,”

⁹ See No 1 to 4 of Table A-1 (Appendix 1)

¹⁰ See No 6, 7 and 9 of Table A-1 (Appendix 1)

¹¹ See No 2 and 6 of Table A-1 (Appendix 1)

¹² See No 1, 5, 8 15 and 15, 16 of Table A- 2 (Appendix 1)

2014). The media also quoted the Japanese Foreign Minister, Fumio Kishida, who described the oil rig crisis as “part of a series of unilateral and provocative maritime advancement activities by China” and stated that China “should clearly explain the basis and details of its activities to Vietnam and the international community” (“Japan: China’s rig as provocative”, 2014). The media agencies also collected and reposted the views of international experts and noted the sympathy in international media reports for Vietnam’s claims and against China’s behaviours. VOV quoted Mosyakov, Director of the Centre on Southeast Asia, Australia and Oceania Studies, who said: “China’s intentional act ... is leading a dramatic escalation in the region... and China should not repeat a mistake it made in 1992” (“Expert: China not repeat mistake,” 2014). These media accounts illustrated that Vietnam’s position enjoyed support internationally. Additionally, it provided a reference to help the international and domestic public to judge the legitimacy of China’s oil rig deployment.

Supporting diplomats to mobilise regional fora

Prior to the ASEAN meetings, on May 8, Vietnamese diplomats informed the media that they would put the crisis on the agenda of the summit (Mooney, 2014). The media signalled the Vietnamese intentions and linked the SCS dispute with ASEAN’s agenda, stating that “China’s recent moves ostensibly affect maritime security and safety in the East Sea by any reasonable measurement and represent a serious impediment to peace, stability and cooperation in the region and the world” (“ASEAN Summit 2014,” 2014). During the ASEAN meeting, Vietnamese diplomats’ efforts to put the stand-off on the agenda of the summit were updated regularly in the media, both in English and Vietnamese. The media reported that Deputy Foreign Minister, Pham Quang Vinh, sent Vietnam’s objection to China’s behaviour in the SCS, thereby opening a contested debate over the oil rig deployment and the role of ASEAN in solving the issue and maintaining peace and maritime safety in the region. In doing so, Hanoi managed to inform regional countries about the incident, send its message that Beijing’s assertiveness was perceived as “detrimental to peace, stability, security and maritime safety, as well as efforts to build up trust in the region”, and convince the member states to act together to counter China’s action (“Vietnam decries China,” 2014). As a result, the ASEAN members issued a joint statement to express concerns over the SCS disputes on May 10, 2014¹³ which was

¹³ Although not citing directly the stand-off, the statement expressed “serious concerns over the ongoing developments in the SCS,” and urged the concerned parties to “exercise self-restraint and avoid actions which could undermine peace and stability in the area, and to resolve disputes by peaceful means without resorting to threat or use of forces” (ASEAN, 2014b).

considered to be the most “substantial diplomatic support” for Vietnam (Green et al., 2017, p. 213).¹⁴ The ASEAN members also separately expressed their opinion. Indonesia’s Foreign Minister, for example, stated that his country was “disappointed by the acts of the Chinese government,” while Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, accused China of “gunboat diplomacy” (“ASEAN concerned over SCS tensions,” 2014).

However, in spite of these media and diplomatic strategies, Hanoi was not able to mobilise enough political pressure to force China to withdraw the rig. Hence, Hanoi internationalised the crisis. The battle of words boosted the tension to an even higher level as anti-China sentiments led to violent riots in Vietnam.

2. THE SECOND STAGE (10 – 26 MAY 2014)

2.1. The MOFA’s media narratives

Updating on developments at sea

Hanoi invited and sent foreign reporters to the site to witness Chinese ships’ aggressiveness, utilising the journalists’ prestige to legitimate its narratives (Campbell, 2014). Hanoi argued that main purpose of this activity was to monitor the drilling activities; hence, its major strategy was to come as close to the rig as possible. Meanwhile, the media agencies in Vietnam also sent their reporters to the field to take their own pictures and videos, and create news to provide to the domestic audience.

Simultaneously, Hanoi continued to host international press conferences (Binh, 2014e). On May 25, Vietnam released pictures and videos that showed one Chinese boat which had apparently rammed and sunk a Vietnamese fishing vessel (“Chinese ships ram Vietnamese boat,” 2014). This evidence was then reposted by high profile international media agencies, sending them to the global audiences (“Vietnam fishing boat sink,” 2014). In doing so, Vietnam disregarded China’s accusations that Vietnamese boats purposely rammed Chinese vessels, and continued to disrupt the Chinese rig’s operation. By portraying itself as a victim and China as an aggressor, Vietnam aimed to gain sympathy from the international audience and sought support for its peaceful stance (MOFA, 2014b, 2014d).

For the Vietnamese audience, instead of hiding the issue as it had done in the past, the CPV provided updates on developments and the Vietnam law enforcement forces’ efforts in countering China’s actions at sea.¹⁵ Various incidents in which a modern

¹⁴ See No 9 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁵ See No 10 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

Chinese vessel intimidated and chased a small Vietnamese ship were reported. The media showed how Vietnamese maritime police bypassed Chinese vessels to get closer to the rig on some occasions. At the moment of highest tension, the media coverage strikingly resembled real war or conflict reports and the domestic public reacted accordingly. The people who were watching the news at home were moved by the heroic deeds and sacrifices by those on the front line. As a result, feelings of patriotism and nationalism were evoked and inflamed in every corner of Vietnam. Photographs and videos of Chinese vessels hitting and firing water cannons at Vietnamese ships triggered a wave of unprecedented anti-China protests across the country and overseas (D. T. Thuy, 2017). It is argued that the media tactic was a part of its strategy to mobilise anti-China nationalist sentiments to counter China's actions (Nhat, 2014; Nhung, 2017).

Countering China's media strategy by citing sensitive evidence

At the international press conference on May 23, Deputy Head of the National Border Committee, Tran Duy Hai, provided the legal evidence supporting Vietnam's sovereign claims over the Paracel Islands. He recalled the armed clash with China in the SCS in 1974 and labelled China's use of force to seize the archipelago as "illegal"; and concluded that China could not establish legal and legitimate sovereignty rights over the islands (MOFA, 2014d). Hanoi warned the regional states that Beijing wanted to turn an undisputed area step by step into a disputed one and to realise its U-shaped line (MOFA, 2014d).

Vietnam's media strategy also had to deal with Beijing's citing of Pham Van Dong's diplomatic note in 1958 as evidence for its sovereignty claim over the SCS.¹⁶ At the press conferences, Tran Duy Hai explained that the 1958 note "did not mention territorial and sovereignty issues over the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagos. It only acknowledged and approved China's expansion of its marine territory to 12 nautical miles..." At the time the note was written, Vietnam was temporarily separated at the 17th parallel with the two archipelagos south of the parallel under the management of the Republic of Vietnam. Hai also noted that the two archipelagos were turned over to the Republic of Vietnam in 1956 based on the 1954 Geneva Accords, when China was also a participant (MOFA, 2014b, 2014d). The Vietnamese Ambassador to Indonesia, Nguyen

¹⁶ In Vietnam, the military's failures in the 1988 Gac Ma battle and the 1974 Paracel naval battle with China were not popular before the 2014 crisis ("Vietnam to safeguard sovereignty," 2014). Similarly, the issue of the 1958 note had not been allowed to be widely discussed in Vietnam's media. The CPV's shelving of these topics in the past was to support the normalisation of ties with China (Nhat, 2014). Moreover, the opposing parties, particularly overseas based anti-Communists, used to cite the note and the failure in fighting with China to accuse the CPV of betraying the nation or kneeling to China (Hayton, 2014b).

Xuan Thuy, released an article, namely “another side of the dispute in the SCS,” to counter China’s media strategy of intentionally citing the 1958 note incorrectly (N. X. Thuy, 2014a). As predicted, Vietnam’s narrative was shared by international news agencies (N. X. Thuy, 2014b). The Consulate of Vietnam in New York also re-published the MOFA’s statement over the 1958 note with a legal expert’s explanations on its official website (GOVVN, 2014a).

Although China had widely cited the 1958 note for its SCS historical claims since 2011 (“China’s SCS claim,” 2011), it was the first time Hanoi publicly explained the issue. It is argued that the CPV chose an opportune time in the crisis to explain about the sensitive document to its domestic audience, thus protecting the CPV regime from opposition parties’ criticisms. This statement was released on May 23 and repeated at another press conference held on June 16, after the anti-China riots and peaceful demonstrations had calmed down in Vietnam. In that context, it was assumed that the Vietnamese people would more easily accept the explanation and stay in line with the government’s stance over the document to protect national interests.

2. 2. The media outlets’ narratives

Managing the anti-China nationalist protests¹⁷

The first media publication on the anti-China protests was on May 9 when it was reported that thousands of people on Ly Son Island demonstrated peacefully to protest about China’s illegal activity in the East Sea (“Vietnamese fishermen protest Chinese actions,” 2014). On May 10, demonstrations in Hanoi, Hue City, Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh City to protest China’s illegal placement of the oil rig within Vietnam’s EEZ were featured on VNA (“Vietnamese protesters,” 2014). The English edition was published on May 11 (“Anti-China march in HCM,” 2014). The initial coverage described the rallies in detail with pictures, reported statements of protests about China’s oil rig deployment, and requested the Chinese government to stop the action, employing phrases such as “Chinese oil rig get out of Vietnam!” (“Vietnamese protesters,” 2014). Demonstrations by Vietnamese people overseas were also reported on the same day (H. L. Son & Huan, 2014). When the demonstrations turned violent on May 13 and 14, international observers claimed that the anti-China demonstrations were allowed by the CPV (Fook & Hop, 2018). The large anti-China protests in Vietnam and overseas at this stage created a dilemma for the CPV, challenging its legitimacy and international image, while also risking antagonising China (Vuving, 2008).

¹⁷ See No 15, 12 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

In order to manage perceptions of the nationalist movement, the media intentionally created narratives to suggest that most of the protests took place with the presence of police and security guards and were a “rational expression of patriotism” that occurred “in peaceful ways” (“Anti-China march in HCM,” 2014).¹⁸ Meanwhile, for those protests held by Vietnamese people overseas, the media depicted their response as demonstrating the patriotic spirit of the Vietnamese people with support from local people. Most of these articles were attached with a message that “they, including overseas Vietnamese, supported the Vietnamese government’s stance and policies” (“Overseas Vietnamese protested China,” 2014).¹⁹ By doing so, it can be argued, the government aimed to use the media strategy to mobilise public opinion and to put pressure on the Chinese government, while avoiding portraying a negative image of Vietnam to foreign audiences. Additionally, this was the government’s tactic to build national unity²⁰ by creating a united front between the CPV and Vietnamese people and between Vietnamese living abroad and those at home, in protest against China’s wrongful actions (Salomon & Ket, 2007a).

Efforts were also made to manage the publicity about the riots. In order to repress the violent riots quickly, the government limited information about the confirmed number of deaths and injuries (one dead and some injured in the Vung An riots). In the media, there was no news reporting of the anti-China riots between May 14 and 15 except for two VNA articles on the arrests of extreme participants in the violent protests (“Vietnam: Agitators arrested,” 2014). In addition, the media focused on the government’s efforts to establish order in the provinces where the riots happened. No further reports covering the riots were published by the national media outlets after May 18. In the MOFA’s press conferences, Hanoi offered little for discussion. On May 16, the MOFA answered questions briefly on the violent protests in Binh Duong and Ha Tinh provinces (Binh, 2014e).²¹ When the riots were repressed, the government published its efforts to establish order and compensation for foreign companies that were damaged in the riots. In the media, instead of investigating who incited the riots or why the protests quickly escalated to violence without appropriate intervention by the police at the first stage, the media reporting was framed to make readers assume that the unrest was caused by discontentment over China’s illegal placement of the oil rig in Vietnam’s waters. For

¹⁸ See No 2, 7, 15, 19 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁹ See No 32 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

²⁰ See No 30 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

²¹ See No 12 of Table B-1 and No 23 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

example, the media stated that “China’s oil rig installation in early May sparked mounting anti-China protests at home and abroad” (“Petrovietnam Stays Firm,” 2014).

The news media also tried to shape opinion positively in other ways. In one strategy, the Vietnamese government’s support and compensation policies, as well as its commitments to protect and safeguard foreigners were repeatedly mentioned in the news. Furthermore, foreign investors’ potential criticisms, claims or worries were not publicised in the media. At the same time, positive feedback and appreciation of the government’s reaction from foreigners, living and working in the provinces where the riots happened, were widely reposted.²² For instance, the news of Taiwan’s rejection of the Vietnamese tourism authority’s apologies on May 15 was not published in the VOV and the VNA (“Taiwan rejects Vietnam's apology,” 2014). Instead, Vietnam published the news that the Taiwanese Ministry of Economic Affairs on May 14 announced a financial assistance programme for its investors in Vietnam who were affected by the anti-China protests, while urging the government of the country to take action to reassure Taiwanese investors (Ha, 2014).

The media were also used to ensure that relations with China were not damaged irreparably. As Beijing had been one of the biggest trade partners of Vietnam, Hanoi was required to manage the anti-China protests, while not eroding the friendship between the peoples in the two countries and maintaining hope for negotiation and de-escalating tensions in the future (Nhat, 2014).²³ The government’s effort to subsidise and provide support to Chinese citizens in Vietnam was widely published (GOVVN, 2014c). Moreover, after the riots, the Vietnamese media agencies focused more on peaceful demonstrations by Vietnamese people that took place in major cities like Tokyo, Paris, San Jose, and London, but limited discussions on the protests in Vietnam itself as much as they could (“Overseas Vietnamese protested China,” 2014).

Tactically showing Vietnam’s diplomatic leverage in the media

The CPV used media tactics to demonstrate its diplomatic advantages in order to compel China to withdraw the oil rig. First, at sea, the presence of and confrontation by Vietnamese law enforcement and fishermen and their confrontation with Chinese forces were a message to China that the Vietnamese forces would not sacrifice national sovereignty to its rival.

²² See No 23 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

²³ See No 30 and 33 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

The second tactical component was the use of anti-China sentiments to show that there was an increasing audience cost of backing down to China (Green et al., 2017). As Browne (2015) argued, any breakdown or compromise on territorial disputes would be interpreted as CPV weakness which may not be a dangerous threat to the government, but could impact negatively on the foundations of the political regime. It could be argued that the anti-China nationalist protests in Vietnam sent a message to the two governments that the Vietnamese people would never sacrifice their national sovereignty and territorial integrity; hence, they would never tolerate any government compromises with rivals. Meanwhile, Hanoi publicly stated that “We will not accept it when any country, regardless of how strong it is, forces us to concede the sacred territory and sovereignty of our fatherland” (Sang, 2014). Hence, by publishing news of the anti-China demonstrations in the media, the CPV sought to send China a message that the domestic cost of its compromise for national sovereignty was extremely high. In order to protect the Communist regime, the state was not able to accept a backdown in facing its rivals, including China. If Beijing understood this logic, it would alter its SCS policy towards Vietnam. In fact, China decided to employ diplomatic channels in dealing with the anti-China riots in its Communist ally.

On the diplomatic front, the media reported several diplomatic exchanges regarding the anti-Chinese protests in Vietnam including a phone call between the Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Pham Binh Minh, and his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi. The Vietnamese leader explained that the riots were “spontaneous” and said the Vietnamese government would control the situation and deal with the lawbreakers based on the law (“Vietnam’s phone talks,” 2014). He also called for “China’s serious consideration and positive response to Viet Nam’s demands” after deploying the oil rig and vessels in Viet Nam’s waters (“Vietnam’s demand,” 2014). While MOFA did not give an official comment on the phone call between US Secretary of State, John Kerry, and Wang Yi, the media reported the news and quoted words that portrayed a negative image of China such as “provocative”. Although the US confirmed that they did not take any sides in the incident, the US’s comment towards China’s act was a valuable reference for Vietnam in its media warfare with China (“U.S. vs China on SCS,” 2014).²⁴

Vietnam also deployed media diplomacy to create another diplomatic advantage – a threat to take legal action against China. It is argued that Hanoi tried to time the threat to fit with the oil rig stand-off since the threat was first mentioned during the Vietnamese

²⁴ See No 26 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

Prime Minister's trip to the Philippines. Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung indicated that Vietnam was "considering various defence options, including legal actions in accordance with international law" to defend its claims in the SCS ("PM Nguyen Tan Dung on Bloomberg," 2014).²⁵

3. THE THIRD STAGE (27 MAY – 15 JULY 2014)

3. 1. The MOFA's media narratives

Providing information about Vietnam's efforts

*Diplomatic front*²⁶

The MOFA said that Hanoi sent two note verbales on May 23 and on May 27 to Beijing to object to its illegal activities in the SCS stating that the deployment of the oil rig seriously violated Vietnamese sovereign rights (Binh, 2014d, 2014h). At the 5 June international press meeting, Hanoi reiterated Vietnam's peaceful principle evidenced in its reactions at sea and via diplomatic channels (MOFA, 2014a). At the 16 June press conference, the MOFA stated that Viet Nam had, in over 30 communications of all types, requested China to end all acts that violate Viet Nam's sovereign rights and jurisdiction, respect Viet Nam's sovereignty over the Hoang Sa (Paracels) Islands, and immediately withdraw the oil rig and its escort vessels. However, China responded negatively to Vietnam's efforts and demonstration of goodwill to de-escalate the tensions (MOFA, 2014c).

Vietnam's standpoint was again reiterated by MOFA in June. On 18 June, China's State Councillor, Yang Jiechi, met and discussed the incident with the Prime Minister, Nguyen Tan Dung, Foreign Minister, Pham Binh Minh, and General Secretary of the Communist Party, Nguyen Phu Trong (MOFA, 2014i). In reporting the meetings, for the Vietnamese, the MOFA said that Vietnamese leaders stated that China's placement of the rig caused "seriousness and negative impacts", asserted Vietnam's standpoint on its sovereignty over the two island groups and the East Sea, and called to seek measures to stabilise sea-related issues based on bilateral agreements and international law (MOFA, 2014i). However, there was limited reporting of the event. The VNA sent a signal that the meeting would not result in any solution for the stand-off ("Hanoi and Beijing discussed sea disputes," 2014). As the meetings were occurring, Beijing deployed a second oil rig to the disputed zone. Meanwhile, Hanoi officially agreed to convene a meeting of the Central Committee to discuss the SCS dispute, passed the proposal to initiate legal action

²⁵ See No 23 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

²⁶ See No 1, 2, 6, 11 of Table C-1 (Appendix 1)

against China and approved Foreign Minister Minh's trip to the US in September ("Vietnam urged to begin legal track," 2014).

On 26 June, the MOFA reported a series of reports that documented China's illegal actions in the SCS and Hanoi's protests over them. These included: China's placement of the Nanhai 09 oil rig, the operations of the marine geophysical survey ship Haiyang Shiyou 719, publication of the "Map of the People's Republic of China" with the nine-dash line", construction of a school and public housing project on Woody Island of the Paracel Islands, and illegal reclamation on land features in the Spratly Islands. Hanoi also repeated its demand for China to refrain from further complicating the situation and stated that both sides were conducting diplomatic negotiations.

Developments at sea²⁷

Right after the rig was moved, the MOFA updated developments and confirmed that the new location was well beyond the feature's 12 nautical mile territorial sea, rejecting Chinese claim the day before that the location was "within the indisputable coastal waters of China" (Binh, 2014h). On 5 June, Deputy Commander, Commander and Chief of Staff of the Vietnam Coast Guard (VNCG), Ngo Ngoc Thu, confirmed that the oil rig was generally anchored. On 16 June, Vice Chairman of the National Boundary Commission, Tran Duy Hai provided the overall situation of the oil rig stand-off (MOFA, 2014a). The MOFA subsequently provided information on the location of the second oil rig and reported that the location of the HD 981 was unchanged until 25 June.

At the end of May, the MOFA provided updated information that 120 Chinese vessels remained at the new location, including 36 China Coast Guard Vessels, 14 "freighters", and 17 PLA Navy ships (Binh, 2014d, 2014h). At the 5 June international press conference, the MOFA stated that China had deployed 30 to 137 escort vessels, including 6 types of warships, 70 to 80 service fleet, and six surveillance planes, helicopters and early warning aircraft to protect the oil rig. After explaining the tactics and moves by Chinese vessels, they provided an update on the counter measures undertaken by the VNCG force and the damage to people and vessels on the Vietnamese side (MOFA, 2014a). On 16 June, Ngo Ngoc Thu rejected China's accusation that Vietnamese vessels hit Chinese ones using evidence from pictures and videos (MOFA, 2014c).

According to the MOFA's press conference on 26 June, the HD 981 oil rig maintained its illegal operations in the EEZ and continental shelf of Viet Nam, and

²⁷ See No 1, 2, 3, 5 of Table C-1

China's activities escalated tensions (Binh, 2014a). The MOFA explained that the Chinese vessels generated 3 rings to protect the rig. Ships in the innermost one would swap locations, with those in the outer ring closely following, and approaching to ram and fire water cannon at Vietnamese vessels.

At the international media conferences on 5 and 16 June, the Deputy Director of the Viet Nam Fisheries Resources Surveillance (VNFRS), Ha Le, reported on the situation of Vietnamese vessels and reiterated that the disputed areas were the traditional fishing grounds of Vietnam (MOFA, 2014a). In the remarks of July 10 the MOFA responded to a question about the arrest of a Vietnamese fishing vessel (QNg-94912 TS) by the Chinese authorities (Binh, 2014b, 2014g). Especially, on 16 June, Deputy Director General of Petro Vietnam, Nguyen Quoc Thap, for the first time at an international press conference regarding the SCS dispute, supplied information about Vietnam's oil and gas exploration and production in the East Sea, whilst also protesting at China's illegal oil and gas exploration activities in Vietnam's claimed EEZ.

Countering China's accusations²⁸

Hanoi also exploited the media to counter explicitly Beijing's accusations. One of Beijing's accusations was that Vietnam was an aggressor, claiming that the Vietnamese fishing boat "capsized when it was interfering with and ramming" a Chinese one and interfering with the operations of the oil rig (Perlez, 2014). Hanoi was required to provide evidence that could point in the opposite direction. Consequently, on May 26, the MOFA released video footage that showed a Chinese vessel ramming and sinking a Vietnamese fishing boat near the oil rig. On June 1, the government continued to provide additional video footage which demonstrated Chinese ships ramming and creating holes in the Vietnamese Maritime Police ship. The language was carefully chosen to emphasise Chinese culpability for the situation. The MOFA used words such as "inhumane acts" or acts that "violated international law concerning the prohibition of the threat or use of force", "exacerbate the tension in the East Sea, and seriously threatening peace, stability and maritime safety and security in the region" to describe China's aggressive actions (MOFA, 2014c).

Secondly, to deal with the Chinese extreme nationalist arguments directed at Vietnam over the oil rig crisis in the media, Hanoi used the media to show that the actions of Vietnamese forces at sea and claims in the SCS were rational (Perlez, 2014). One of the common themes of 46 news reports from the website of the MOFA during this stage

²⁸ See No 2, 12, 14 of Table C-1

was the accusation that China was threatening the peace of the region, and damaging friendship between the two nations. At the same time, in the MOFA's press conferences, Hanoi emphasised that Vietnam always respected their friendship and comprehensive strategic partnership with China (N. T. Dung, 2014; MOFA, 2014j). In addition, Hanoi lodged a note verbale to the Chinese Foreign Ministry and informed the UN Secretary General about its plan to bring the issue to the UN institutions. This was to prove that that Vietnam was acting in accordance with international law (Gang, 2014d).

Improving public awareness of sovereignty claims in the SCS²⁹

Vietnamese diplomats and ambassadors also became an important force for this mission and used the media to support their goals.³⁰ Vietnam's Ambassador to the US, Nguyen Quoc Cuong, took to the stage, using the prestige and power of the CNN news channel to criticise the illegal deployment and to counter the Chinese statement over the disputed sea (Chirstiance, 2014). In addition, Vietnamese embassies around the world and their officers held a series of academic conferences over the SCS in the host countries, creating fora for international scholars and experts to express their arguments which benefited Vietnam ("East Sea seminar in South Africa," 2014). These academic conferences were fora for famous scholars and experts to express their ideas over the SCS disputes from diverse perspectives. The contents of such academic conferences would become one of the most reliable information sources in the eyes of audiences, especially young Vietnamese and Chinese intellectuals, who will eventually decide the future of the SCS disputes. The media outlets also accompanied every international academic conference, held in Vietnam and foreign countries, to discuss the SCS disputes and the oil rig crisis. They quoted international and domestic experts' words regarding China's ambitions over the SCS, the consequences of China's acts for the region and for China itself, and Vietnam's strategy towards China during the oil rig crisis. The VOV reported an international conference of "the Philippines, Vietnam and territorial disputes in the East Sea" held by the Wilson Centre in Washington on June 3, quoting scholars' warning that "the prolonged dispute might become a global crisis" ("SCS dispute might become global crisis," 2014). In addition, nearly 80,000 articles covering China's illegal deployment of the oil rig HD 981 in Vietnam's EEZ were posted on the internet from May 2 onwards by both Vietnam's media outlets and international press agencies such as CNN, Reuters and AP ("80,000 articles criticized China's rig" 2014). These news articles

²⁹ See No 3 and 8 of Table C-1 (Appendix 1)

³⁰ See No 16 of Table C-2 (Appendix 1)

transmitted not only information on the stand-off, but also publicised Vietnam's sovereign claims over the islands to raise the awareness of the public over the SCS issues in a selected way.

Mobilising the influence of third-party states³¹

The media reported that Japan's Foreign Minister, Fumio Kishida, had termed China's oil rig deployment as "one step in a series of unilateral and provocative maritime advances" (Kishida, 2014). Japan, then, committed to providing assistance to help Vietnam enhance its maritime law enforcement capability (MOFA, 2014f). The Philippines stated that it "shared the deep concerns over the current extremely dangerous situation caused by China's many actions that violate the international law" (Mogato, 2014). Hanoi took every opportunity to quote and repost the views coming from the US, from the government, officers, politicians and scholars that helped the Vietnamese side to criticise China's actions. Pham Binh Minh, made a phone call to US Secretary of State, John Kerry, to discuss the tensions, which was considered an unprecedented step in Vietnam's diplomatic strategies. Minh suggested coordinating with the US in employing measures to further improve further the comprehensive partnership between the two states and Kerry invited Minh to Washington for discussions.

One of the most important events at this stage was Pham Binh Minh's trip to Washington (Thayer, 2014c; Vuving, 2016). In the public discourse, some scholars argued that Hanoi's move could be a significant change in Vietnam's foreign affairs towards China, shifting from Beijing to the Western countries (Thayer, 2014a). Others argued that Hanoi maintained its hedging strategy, never rushing to pick a side since Vietnam was not yet ready to conduct political and democratic reforms to go from a one-party regime to a democratic one to ally with the US. However, there is no doubt that the engagement with the US benefited Vietnam in countering China (Thayer, 2014a; Vuving, 2014b). Such narratives were mainly designed to show the public that Vietnam's hedging strategy with the Western countries could help to handle the SCS dispute with China. Hence, Beijing was required to alter its policy so that it would not force Hanoi to choose sides between China and the US.

³³ See No 31, 32, 33, 32 of Table C-2 (Appendix 1)

3. 2. The media outlets' narratives

Functioning as a propaganda tool to stabilise domestic³²

The challenges for the government included re-establishing stability after the anti-China riots and re-building Vietnam's image in the eyes of foreign investors. To do this, it gave instructions to task-relevant ministries, agencies and localities to take all necessary measures to support foreign companies affected by the anti-China riots publicity in the domestic and international news media (GOVVN, 2014b).

For the domestic audience, the MOFA reposted the CPV's determination to defend national interests and call for national unity (MOFA, 2014g, 2014h). For instance, Vietnamese President, Truong Tan Sang, confirmed with the voters in Ho Chi Minh City that "(the) Party and State are undertaking policies and measures to meet the just and passionate aspirations of more than 90 million Vietnamese", calling on the Vietnamese citizens for "calm and patience" (Sang, 2014).

The media were also used to try and assist the restoration of order domestically. To restore domestic security and order, the government continued to limit media publicity about demonstrations domestically, and distracted the public's attention by publishing reports on nationalist and patriotic protests by overseas Vietnamese communities (Nhung, 2017).³³ The media conveyed the government's calls for public calm and unity and published stories about its prompt reaction to the riots. There were reports on punishments for individuals who were claimed to have stirred up the riots and disturbed public order. These media stories were designed to show the Vietnamese people that wrong and illegal actions like those that disrupted social order would be strictly dealt with in accordance with the law. Meanwhile, they strengthened the impression of Hanoi's commitment to dealing with violations in accordance with legal regulations and helped to refute accusations that the Vietnamese government allowed the anti-China riots ("VN Rioters jailed," 2014).

The major media outlets presented a comprehensive picture of a united Vietnam in countering foreign aggressions through reposting activities, voices and opinions from a wide variety of people. They included religious groups like Catholics and Buddhists, ethnic groups like the Chinese and Cham, and members of professional associations for journalists and lawyers, as well as farmers and fishermen (Long, 2014; Tuyet, 2014). All

³² See No 4, 6, 12 and 15 of Table C-1 (Appendix 1)

³³ See No 31, 32, 33, 32 of Table C-2 (Appendix 1)

these reports contained a common content which illustrated the groups' support for, and belief in, the government's policies in countering China's illegal acts.

Additionally, the media published narratives about positive consequences of the crisis and sent signals that the government had the capacity to deal the worst scenarios in countering China in every sector ("Voters trust in Party," 2014). In particular, the media quoted international support for Vietnam's peaceful stance, helping to convince domestic audiences that the peaceful approach was the right choice for the Vietnamese nation and that people should keep calm and believe in the CPV's rule. The media also showed evidence that foreign investors, such as Singapore investors, would maintain and even expand their investment in Vietnam due to favourable conditions and policies in the country ("Sing invests in VN," 2014).

Continuing use of the threat to pursue a legal solution

On June 9, the media in Vietnam reported that China submitted a formal position paper on the crisis to the UN which was described as its "internationalising strategy" (Thayer, 2014b). To counter China's unexpected move, the government reiterated that Vietnam had been ready to file a case against China. Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung told the media that he asked the relevant bodies of his government to take the necessary steps for filing a case in international courts against China's "illegal placing a drilling rig in Vietnam's waters" (Thao, 2012; Vu, 2014). The statements became topics and inspirations for Vietnamese scholars and elites to express their views, generating diverse perspectives about the possibility of using a legal solution against China ("Swiss Lawyer supported VN's Legal track," 2014). International scholars argued that the pursuit of international legal action against China was rhetoric (Survey, 2014). Other stated that a legal method was not a suitable choice at that moment since it would take a lot of time to file a case ("China's tactics," 2014). The publication of diverse perspectives on the topic helped to establish the discourse that Vietnam was taking steps towards legal action.

Managing China's pressure in other realms³⁴

To deal with China's pressure, especially in the economic realm, the media were used in a number of ways. First, the government controlled all news that China would close the border with Vietnam or place tax tariffs on Vietnamese products. Secondly, Hanoi ran narratives of "China threats" and "escaping China's orbit" which dominated media discourses at this stage. By informing the public about what happened at sea, these narratives portrayed China as a threat to Vietnam's territory and sovereignty. This view

³⁴ See No 6, 10 of Table C-2 (Appendix 1)

was emboldened by fresh memories of the 1979 border war with China and a long history of anti-China resistance in Vietnam. For the first time since China normalised its relations with Vietnam in 1991, stories of China's invasion of Vietnam's northernmost provinces in 1979 and a clash over the Johnson South Reef in 1988 were widely broadcasted in the media ("Vietnam to safeguard sovereignty," 2014). Some articles explained in detail about "how did China invade Vietnam's Hoang Sa Island" (Binh, 2014k). Publishing these documents and discussions showed that Hanoi had lessened state-control of public and intellectual discussions about these sensitive topics in the relationship between Vietnam and China (D. T. Thuy, 2017).

The narrative about threats from China was combined with a narrative of "escaping China's orbit". Vietnamese intellectuals stimulated a debate on Vietnam's future development in the context of China's rise.³⁵ On July 11, economic scholars in Da Nang City undertook initiatives to look for new markets to reduce their reliance on Chinese markets due to the developments in the SCS, and in the context of the decreasing quality of imported Chinese products harming public health ("Reduce dependence on Chinese market," 2014). Vietnam's travel and agricultural industries were also under pressure to seek ways to reduce China's influence. At the same time, the media reported foreign countries' suggestions for cooperation with Vietnam, aiming at ensuring that "East Sea tensions leave a limited impact on Vietnam" ("SCS less impact on VN," 2014).³⁶ Stakeholders who were concerned about the stand-off and the Sino-Vietnamese relationship, such as Japan and the US, offered positive responses to Vietnam. Japan was committed to helping Vietnam strengthen its maritime force. The US announced it would partially ease its long-time ban on the provision of lethal arms to Vietnam in October 2014 (Gordon, 2014). Such moves were broadcasted in Vietnam, creating a discourse that Vietnam had many options to "escape from China's influences" ("Germany's cooperation," 2014). The discourse about escaping China's orbit signalled the possibility of Vietnam's own pivot strategy which sent a strong message to the Chinese policy makers not to push Vietnam, one of China's most important Asian neighbours, too hard (T. T. Thuy, 2015).

In short, by skilfully using media diplomacy, in combination with other tactics, such as legal threats, management of nationalism and diplomatic negotiation, Hanoi convinced

³⁵ See No 5 of Table C-2 (Appendix 1)

³⁶ See No 12 of Table C-2 (Appendix 1)

Beijing to alter its aggressive policy. From the media reportages, both sides started to show their efforts to de-escalate the tension.

4. THE FOURTH STAGE (15 JULY – 31 AUGUST 2014)

4. 1. The MOFA's media narratives

On July 16, in response to China's move, the MOFA made an official remark to confirm China's withdrawal of the oil rig from its waters and demand that China refrain from repeating such activities in the future (Binh, 2014j). The dispute was discussed at the meeting between Pham Binh Minh and Wang Yi in Myanmar on August 9, 2014 ("Fail to Break Deadlock," 2014). As part of efforts to restore the damaged bilateral relationship, in 25 August 2014 Vietnam's comrade Le Hong Anh, a member of the Politburo and Special Envoy of Secretary General Nguyen Phu Trong visited China (Binh, 2014i). In news reports of foreign affairs activities, Hanoi limited mentioning the incident or criticising China's aggressiveness, and focused on illustrating Vietnam as a peace-loving and law-abiding country. Hanoi also took advantage of diplomatic activities to express appreciation to foreign governments and publics for sharing Vietnam's concerns during the crisis.³⁷

4. 2. The media outlets' narratives

Exploring the reasons behind China's withdrawal³⁸

The media reported immediately on the MOFA's announcement of China's withdrawal and release of 13 Vietnamese fishermen who were captured during the crisis ("The rig moved," 2014). The media propagandised the Vietnamese government's victory statements to improve the CPV's prestige. After Prime Minister, Nguyen Tan Dung, hailed a success for Vietnam in the media, Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh took to the stage to explain the reasons for Vietnam's success in managing the oil rig stand-off. These reasons included Vietnam's experience in dealing with China and support from the international community, explaining that "other countries, for example, the Philippines may not predict (China's behaviour) but we do, we know China" (Minh, 2014). Vietnamese experts referenced China's withdrawal decision as a "diplomatic victory" for Vietnam thanks to its persistence, compliance with international law and wish for peace, and the support of Vietnamese and global audiences ("China's relocation of the rig," 2014).³⁹ In the eyes of the Vietnamese fishermen, the rig's withdrawal was a victory for Vietnam, because finally they could safely go back to business without any disruptions

³⁷ See No 1 to 6 of Table D-1 (Appendix 1)

³⁸ See No 1, 5, 19 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

³⁹ See No 14 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

by foreigners (Hodal, 2014). These narratives were designed to satisfy the public's demand while fortifying the legitimacy of the Communist Party as the protector of the country in the domestic audience's eyes. Moreover, these media articles could improve the image of Vietnam in the international communities and provide Vietnam with diplomatic leverage in the upcoming negotiations with China.

Mobilising public support for the state's maritime strategies

One of the most frequent themes in the media was about the consequences of the stand-off⁴⁰ and the state's effort to stabilise the nation in all sectors.⁴¹ Since the oil rig stand-off, the state ran a mass mobilisation campaign: "Millions of hearts toward the homeland's sea and islands" to call for all kinds of support, contributions, and donations across the country ("Hearts towards Sea," 2014).⁴² Articles highlighted contributions, such as donations and scholarships awarded by social groups, schools, and individuals to help the difficult family circumstances of maritime police officers ("Support for fishermen's families," 2014). The media also reposted the government's policy to modernise Vietnam Fisheries Surveillance and cooperation with other countries on maritime security issues.⁴³ A strong push to publicise the state's maritime strategy and supporting activities was undertaken in media coverage.

These examples illustrate that the Vietnamese government utilised a challenge to the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity as an opportunity for building national unity. Moreover, it was a message to Vietnam's rivals that the people and government in Vietnam have been improving its forces to deter any foreign aggressors violating its sovereignty (Vuving, 2017).

Creating a discourse of closer ties to the United States⁴⁴

The media reported the US' cooperation proposals with Vietnam in a number of areas, economic, military and legal ("US' defence ties," 2014). They created a narrative that Vietnam and the US were going to move closer to each other in all sectors. From the Vietnamese perspective, "moving closer to the US does not necessarily mean sacrificing ties with China in zero-sum terms" (D. T. Thuy, 2017, p. 34). Hanoi assumed that because Beijing did not expect such developments between Vietnam and the US, it would reconsider its SCS policy towards Vietnam. Scholars argue that the active involvement of the US in the SCS during the stand-off partly forced China to withdraw its oil rig one

⁴⁰ See No 8 and 9 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

⁴¹ See No 1, 4, 12, 13, 14 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

⁴² See No 21 and 31 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

⁴³ See No 22 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

⁴⁴ See No 3 and 7 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

month early (T. T. Thuy, 2015, 2018). If that was true, showing that Vietnam had moved closer to the US, together with the media narrative of escaping China's orbit, would have created political pressure to force China to reconsider its strategy in the SCS disputes.

II. CONCLUSION

1. 1. What were the common media narratives in Vietnam regarding the crisis and how did these media narratives function?

Based on the results of the thesis, a number of common narratives were identified in the Vietnamese national media. Firstly, it was made clear that China illegally deployed the HD981 oil rig into the waters where Viet Nam claimed an EEZ and continental shelf in accordance with the 1982 UNCLOS. Secondly, Vietnam framed narratives that accused China of damaging Sino-Vietnamese relations, threatening peace, stability, maritime and aviation security, and safety and freedom in the SCS. Thirdly, Hanoi presented itself as dealing with the crisis in peaceful and law-abiding ways, which were supported by the Vietnamese people and the international community, but Beijing was ignoring this. All of these media reports named the anti-China protests by domestic and overseas Vietnamese as "patriotic actions" in a "peaceful way." Lastly, Vietnam was described as one of the victims of China's aggression, but claimed that it would "never barter these sacred things for an unrealisable and dependent peace and friendship" ("PMDung: defend sovereignty," 2014).

1. 2. How did Vietnam conduct media diplomacy and what were the objectives?

Setting goals for media diplomacy

It is argued that there were at least two main goals for Vietnam's media diplomacy during the oil rig crisis. The first goal was to deal with the incident. Vietnam aimed not only to send a verbal protest to China via the media, but also to draw public attention to the stand-off, then mobilise public support to pressure China to negotiate and settle the crisis by peaceful means. The second goal was to strengthen Vietnam's claims in the SCS. Vietnam asserted its sovereign claims over the islands in the SCS to global audiences, shaped the public's perceptions and feelings of identity over the disputes, and called for support from the international community. Then, by transforming such support into political pressure, Vietnam tried to force China to reconsider its SCS policy in the long-term.

Vietnam's media diplomacy included a number of aspects. Via its national media system, the government delivered a verbal protest over China's actions in the SCS, which

also raised anti-China nationalist sentiments in Vietnam. Then, in combination with results from the diplomatic and confrontation fronts, the media were used to transfer the anti-China sentiments into political pressure to gain multiple goals: to raise attention and sympathy from the international community and to pressure China to engage in negotiations. Lastly, as attention was escalating, the government asserted its sovereignty claims over the SCS to gain and strengthen public support.

Identifying target audiences

Based on the guidance of the external information service, Hanoi identified their target audiences both domestically and internationally (P. M. Son, 2011). For the domestic audience, it was very easy to convince them to believe in the state's SCS claims and arguments because most of these narratives have been parts of Vietnamese perceptions since schooldays. The hardest mission for the government and the media was to manage anti-China patriotic sentiments in the public, transforming public sentiments into political power to counter China's overwhelming military force at sea.

For international audiences, including the government and people in China, third-party countries and Vietnamese people who live overseas, the government first relied on well-educated diplomats, staff of the MOFA, and representatives or leaders of Vietnamese organisations and associations who were working and living in foreign countries. Thanks to their knowledge, prestige and relationships with governments, the media and people in the host countries, their voices would be easier for local communities to understand. Secondly, the government targeted foreign reporters and journalists of the major international news agencies and well-known scholars and experts through international press and academic conferences in Vietnam and overseas. After examining and investigating what the Vietnamese government provided, these intellectuals and reporters would create their own narratives over the oil rig incident and send them to their public and communities to inform them about it.

For the Chinese people, besides the voice of experts, scholars, and journalists, the Vietnamese government utilised a special force that of friendship associations to send its message. The logic was as follows: "It also called on Chinese people and elective officials to stand up for historical truth, justice and international law as well as long-term interests of both peoples, raising their voices to pressure the Chinese Government to immediately stop illegal actions and violation of Vietnam's EEZ and continental shelf" ("Protests China's rig," 2014).

Limitations of Vietnam's media diplomacy

The state-controlled media system allowed the CPV to mobilise the media freely to achieve its political goals. However, there were some limitations. Firstly, while Vietnam tried to improve its democratic status, including freedom of the press in international evaluations, the campaign to gain public trust was negatively impacted upon because of the low prestige of its state-run media system. To enhance the credibility of Vietnam's SCS statements and arguments, the media agencies borrowed the voices of third parties and international scholars. However, for the domestic issues and policy, for example, the anti-China protests and their suppression, this borrowing strategy was not effective. That is why many international media outlets claimed that the Vietnamese government backed the anti-China protests. As a result, the government's political messages have often been questioned due to its lack of neutrality and prestige ("Vietnam accused of allowing protests," 2014).

Secondly, Vietnam's international media system, in comparison with those of China, have been limited, because of a lack of investment. This created many constraints for Vietnam in deploying its media diplomacy. The websites of the Vietnamese embassies and consulates are not maintained and updated frequently, even though they are considered as one of the best channels of information to connect the government to overseas Vietnamese people. During the crisis, the government's actions and policy were rarely conveyed to the audience via the website systems in a timely manner. This research was unable to find any information regarding the oil rig crisis on the website of the Consulate of Vietnam in Shanghai, China or the one at the Embassy of Vietnam in Japan. Vietnamese people who were living abroad had to rely on the media agencies' reports and articles to update the news.

1. 3. What were the effects of media diplomacy?

Supporting Vietnam's hedging strategy

Direct engagement

It is argued that media diplomacy functioned as an important part of Vietnam's hedging strategy to manage the crisis. For direct engagement, Vietnam tried to restore and then maintain high-level exchanges, agency-to-agency interactions, and direct negotiations with China on maritime issues to defuse tensions and settle remaining bilateral issues. Moreover, between Vietnam and China there is a special channel of the Party-to-Party relationship. In the 2014 crisis, when all diplomatic channels between the two states were disrupted, media diplomacy functioned as an alternative diplomatic

channel, allowing the leaders of the two sides to express their concerns and to raise their expectations and suggestions. When the two states agreed to re-establish direct diplomatic channels, Vietnam continued deploying media diplomacy to create a suitable atmosphere for discussing solutions by distracting public attention from the negative nationalist sentiments about each other.

Indirect engagement

ASEAN and its related fora remained one of the most important political means for Vietnam to deal with China's SCS policy. Vietnam aimed to mobilise indirect engagement channels by working with members of ASEAN to engage China in the ASEAN-China Declaration of Conduct (DOC) and implementation and completing a Code of Conduct in the SCS (COC).⁴⁵ The media conveyed messages that Vietnam had tried to engage collectively with China in multilateral discussions of the SCS issues within the framework of the ASEAN-China dialogue ("ASEAN concerned over SCS tensions," 2014). Moreover, the messages conveyed that Vietnam shared a responsibility to maintain and protect the peace, stability, maritime and aviation security, safety and freedom in the SCS ("Vietnam's regional commitment," 2014). Additionally, the media cited criticism of China's provocative behaviour in the SCS that was expressed by other stakeholders, like the US, Japan, and India, through ASEAN-related mechanisms like ASEAN+3 ("ASEAN deliberates maritime security ", 2014).

This media tactic was to convince regional audiences that Vietnam has been pursuing peaceful solutions for the territorial disputes while defending its legitimate benefits in the SCS. If the regional communities could understand and accept the message, a common perception and interpretation of Vietnam's claims over the SCS would be built up over time creating a favourable atmosphere for Vietnam to deploy its SCS strategy in the future. Lastly, sharing Vietnam's SCS narratives in the regional arena would provide information for the Chinese people and scholars to consider rationally their government's SCS policy.

Soft balancing

It is argued that media diplomacy played a key role in Vietnam's soft balancing by raising SCS issues in regional fora (particularly ASEAN-related fora), engaging the participation of other external powers in SCS issues, and using international law to defend its maritime claims and put political pressure on China.⁴⁶ Firstly, Vietnam mobilised

⁴⁵ See No 4, 10, 15, 16 of Table E-1 and No 10, 11, 13, 19, 26 of Table E-2 (Appendix 1)

⁴⁶ See No 1, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15 and 16 of Table E-1 and No 5, 6, 23, 10, 13 of E-2 (Appendix 1)

media channels to further its “internationalisation” strategy including circulating documents to the UN and threatening China with legal action (Fook & Hop, 2018). Then, Vietnam tactically used media diplomacy to show it was ready to adopt legal means in responding to China’s actions (“PM Nguyen Tan Dung on Bloomberg,” 2014). The threat was effective, to some extent, as China had repeatedly asked Vietnam not to take the problem between the two sides to an international court (Fook & Hop, 2018).

Secondly, it is argued that the use of these media discourses was likely to have been a “warning” indicator in Vietnam’s diplomacy to prevent China from pushing Vietnam too hard (D. T. Thuy, 2017). Media diplomacy was employed create media narratives about bilateral agreements between Vietnam and other major powers, such as “shifting to the US” and “escaping China’s orbit,” and to analyse the potential influences of those agreements. This was a way of creating timely political pressure to restrain China’s aggressive activities at sea.

Thirdly, for public messaging, Vietnam consistently described China in negative terms and portrayed Vietnam as a peaceful country. The key contents included that: Vietnam is a country which loves peace, abides by international law, and respects its friendship with China; Vietnam’s goodwill in negotiation and communication were rejected by China; China had overwhelmingly used its military and civilian assets to escort the oil rig without hesitating to use force; and despite being outnumbered, Vietnam used the utmost restraint in countering China’s aggressive actions at sea.

Lastly, by covering the peaceful anti-China protests and publishing the opposition of the Vietnamese people and elites on the media, the government generated and put political pressure on Beijing. Meanwhile, via its media diplomacy, the message Hanoi wanted to send was that most of the protests took place within the existing policies and were “rational expressions” to show their patriotism with the exception of some extremist rioters (“Students towards East Sea,” 2014). Moreover, it is argued that the CPV oriented its media outlets to emphasise the anti-China protests held by overseas Vietnamese peoples, distracting the Vietnamese public’s attention from the riots in some provinces in Vietnam and maintaining hope for negotiations with the Chinese government in the future.

Hard balancing

The last component of Vietnam’s hedging strategy is hard balancing, through which the state has improved its military capacity, especially the navy and law enforcement force (T. T. Thuy, 2016). The confrontation between China and Vietnam at sea was

described to the public via the media.⁴⁷ Narratives portraying Vietnam as a high spirit of bravery, but as the weaker party, were published to mobilise public support for its military modernisation and to show its determination in defending the nation's interests, if China continued escalating the tension.

Shaping the public's perception over the SCS disputes

The controversy between China and Vietnam over the placement of the oil rig and the anti-China protests in Vietnam attracted public attention around the world and in the region, intensifying public demand to understand the SCS disputes and the root causes of the stand-off more than ever. The Vietnamese government exploited the power of the media and tactically turned the crisis into an opportunity to assert its sovereignty claims over the SCS.

Moreover, when the oil rig was removed, the media took the opportunity to prove how China's U-shape lines are wrongly and dangerously established based on China's ambiguous historical evidence ("Chinese rejects U-shaped line," 2014). Combined with China's withdrawal decision, the editor of that particular article reminded the Vietnamese people and the public abroad that "such actions (the oil rig placement) will lead China into the wrong direction and are condemned by the international community", and emphasised that "there has been no unreal land or marine border demarcating line in the history of international cartography. The nine-dotted line in the East Sea is unreal. Our predecessors invented the line without specific longitudes and latitudes, as well as without legal evidence" ("Chinese rejects U-shaped line," 2014).

1. 4. Can the media be a new way to resolve the issue between the two countries?

The CPV's decision to send a special envoy to China, led by Politburo member, Le Hong Anh, in August, was described in international media coverage as a tactical move to ease tensions (Khanh & Thu, 2014). This example can be used to illustrate how Vietnam's media diplomacy functioned at the de-escalating stage of a crisis via bilateral diplomatic channels. Vietnam's media intentionally limited their reference to the oil rig crisis in their coverage during the event, so as to avoid stirring up anti-China sentiment in Vietnam and create a good environment to support the Vietnamese delegation in China ("Vietnam, China restore ties," 2014). In addition, Hanoi proffered the narrative that it was the Chinese government's intentional provision of incorrect wrong information which led to the misunderstandings over the SCS issues and stirred up controversies

⁴⁷ See No 1, 2, 4, 5 of Table E-1 and No 1, 2, 4, 12 of Table E-2 (Appendix 1)

("China's slanderous allegations," 2014). By doing so, the Vietnamese government focused and put pressure on the Chinese government to settle the stand-off by peaceful negotiations, while not widening a gap in perception between the two nations.

For the regional audience, Hanoi aimed to send a message via the media that mending Sino-Vietnamese relations was to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future, and lead to a final goal of peace and stability in the region. For the government and people in China, Vietnam's media narratives aimed at showing its respect for the bilateral relationship with China and convince the Chinese people to support their government's decision to restore full relations with Vietnam.

At first glance, it seems that Vietnam succeeded in managing the crisis, forcing China to withdraw the oil rig from the disputed zone, while restoring Sino-Vietnamese relations. However, at a deeper level, it is argued that the ways that Hanoi conducted media diplomacy in the incident has widened the gaps in perceptions and identity over the SCS between the two nations. Hanoi repeatedly asserted its claims and evidence to protect its sovereign rights over the archipelagos in the SCS to shape the public's perception of Vietnam's claims in the SCS.⁴⁸ During this process, Hanoi tactically linked the territorial issues with other symbolic values including national pride, patriotic sentiment, and used the "China threat" theory.⁴⁹ Since the crisis, the CPV has started to allow more extensive publication of media discourses on the problems in Sino-Vietnamese relations. In addition, the media claimed China's withdrawal of the oil rig one month early as its diplomatic victory. As a result, anti-China nationalist sentiment in Vietnam was awakened, maintained and will be likely to recur in many different forms when the opportunity arises. Importantly, together with a perception that the islands belong to the Vietnamese fatherland, the anti-China nationalist sentiment will be passed from generation to generation in Vietnam, creating a gap among the people in the two countries. Because the root causes of the disputes are the gaps in perception and identity among the claimant nations, a comprehensive strategy is required that starts at the root level to solve the disputes (Desch, 2012).

⁴⁸ See No 6, 14 of Table E-1 and No 12, 20, 22, 16 and 17 of Table E-2 (Appendix 1)

⁴⁹ No 2, 4, 5, 8, 16, 20, 22, 29 of Table E-2 (Appendix 1)

PART II: CHINA'S MEDIA DIPLOMACY

I. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

1. THE FIRST STAGE (1 – 10 MAY 2014)

1. 1. The MFA's media narratives

Controlling information regarding the issue

From May 1 to 6, there were only reports from China's Maritime Safety Administration discussing the oil rig issue (on May 2 and 3), not from the MFA. These reports stated that the rig would conduct its exploratory drilling until August 15 and sent early warning signals that foreign vessels were not allowed to approach the platform within one nautical mile (MSA, 2014). On May 6, the MFA issued its first media statement over the crisis stating that the defensive perimeter of the rig would be expanded from one to three nautical miles.⁵⁰ The developments at sea and diplomatic activities between the two states to deal with the tension from May 2 to 7 were published in media only after May 6. It is argued that when Vietnam started to internationalise the crisis, China kept controlling information. Notably, May 6 was the time that the rig was successfully anchored at the first position.

Defending the legitimacy of China's behaviours

The MFA briefly reacted to Vietnam's challenge of the legitimacy of the location and the deployment of the oil rig on May 4 by confirming that "relevant drilling work was totally within the waters off China's Xisha islands" (Chunying, 2014f). Beijing neglected to give an official reaction to Vietnam's first international press conference on May 7. Only the Chinese Vice Foreign Minister, Cheng Guoping, explained at a sideline meeting in Beijing that the rig was in China's maritime territory and sovereignty, the drilling was a normal activity, there was no "clash" at sea and that Vietnam was exacerbating the incident for its political goals ("China Vice-Minister: not clash," 2014).

1. 2. The media outlets' narratives Functioning as a tool to manage information

There was also a gap between the contents of English and Chinese editions at this stage. It is argued that the tactic of content management was to guarantee that appropriate messages would be sent to target audiences. In English editorials, Xinhua reported a press conference hosted by Yi Xianliang, Deputy Director General of the Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs (DBOA) and Li Yong, CEO of China Oilfield Services Limited on May 8. The report rejected Vietnam's accusations, stating different narratives

⁵⁰ See No 3 to 6 of Table A-1 (Appendix 2)

such as “From May 3 to 7, Vietnam had dispatched 36 vessels of various kinds which rammed Chinese vessels for as much as 171 times” (Yangyijun, 2014b). Additionally, it was reported that Vietnam used armed vessels against Chinese civilian vessels. In particular, Beijing criticised Hanoi for violating China’s sovereignty and sovereign rights and jurisdiction, indirectly fortifying its sovereignty over the location of the rig (Yangyijun, 2014b). Meanwhile, in the Chinese language, the media quoted the Petro China announcement on the 981-drilling rig’s activity for three months, creating an atmosphere that there was no “clash” in the SCS and what China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) did was legitimate.

Deactivating Vietnam’s “ASEANisation” tactic

In dealing with the ASEAN joint statement on May 10, China utilised the weakness of the statement, which did not cite and criticise a specific country explicitly for stirring up the tension in the SCS. In response, China’s media created their own narratives in favour of China. First, they quoted the words of the MFA that the ASEAN statement was a result of a “certain country” which aimed at “spoiling the atmosphere of friendly cooperation between China and ASEAN by making use of the issue of the SCS” (Chunying, 2014k). They then cited the ASEAN foreign ministers’ “serious concerns” over the developments in the SCS and called for a peaceful resolution and added information on how Vietnam and the Philippines had acted aggressively and violated China’s sovereignty in the SCS (“ASEAN: serious concern,” 2014). These narratives aimed at orienting the audience to assume that the objects of the ASEAN statement over the SCS tensions were Vietnam and the Philippines.

In short, besides voicing its principles and stance over the issue, Beijing kept a low profile in the first stage. As Halper (2013a, p. 73) have argued, in an unfolding incident, Beijing would usually “shut down unofficial but normal information channels” once a probable crisis began, then reset the frame and contents with the hope that China could prevail in the next debates (Cheng, 2012).

2. THE SECOND STAGE (10 – 26 MAY 2014)

2. 1. The MFA’s media narratives

Responding to the anti-China riots in Vietnam⁵¹

During the stand-off, published images of the anti-China demonstrations against China’s oil rig challenged China’s SCS claims and actions, as well as its image as a

⁵¹ See No 4 of Table B-1 (Appendix 2)

peaceful rising power, domestically and globally. Moreover, the anti-China sentiment posed a threat to Chinese entrepreneurs and people living abroad (Herr, 2019).

To manage these influences, in its first response on May 12, the MFA confirmed that China was following the protests closely (Chunying, 2014g). In the media, the coding of the research findings showed that the CPC limited its coverage of the peaceful anti-China demonstrators in Vietnam, and in many cities around the world, to prevent the Chinese audiences from being exposed to Vietnamese protesters' messages.⁵²

When the situation turned into extreme violence, on the one hand, the CPC created common narratives in the media that Vietnamese people had irrationally protested because of wrong information and tacit approval by the Vietnamese government. The media updated details of the riots, both in English and Chinese. The media reported that some Vietnamese protesters "would receive a reward of about HK\$110 for participating in the protests", and were encouraged "to bring the children to the streets so that the police would not stop the march" ("Vietnam's anti-China," 2014). The message was that the anti-China protests in Vietnam were a political tactic and not the authentic voice of the Vietnamese people (Huangyinjiazi, 2014).

On the other hand, the MFA updated Beijing's efforts, including a phone call between Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, and his counterpart in Vietnam, Pham Binh Minh, and a cross-sectoral working group departing to Vietnam to handle the situation (Chunying, 2014j). The MFA said that Beijing had summoned the Vietnamese ambassador to China to lodge solemn representations and requested Hanoi to "immediately take all necessary and effective measures" to protect Chinese people there (Chunying, 2014g). After issuing a travel warning for Chinese citizens and suspending some of the bilateral exchange plans with Vietnam (Lei, 2014k), on May 19 and 20, the MFA said that the government had deployed a plane and four ferries to bring back 307 people from the violence zones and around 4,000 Chinese citizens at Vung Ang port of Ha Tinh province (Lei, 2014f, 2014g). The MFA claimed that "the Vietnamese side even gave tacit permission to demonstrations related to China and the violent acts involving beating, smashing, looting and burning which left heavy casualties and property losses to the Chinese side" (Lei, 2014h).

⁵² Only 6 articles covering the peaceful anti-China protests were found in Chinese. The first article was on May 12, describing that Vietnamese people had marched in Hanoi and Tokyo ("Vietnam's anti-China march," 2014). There was no discussion about or updates on the protest on the channel until May 17.

When the riots were controlled, Beijing continued urging Hanoi to punish the perpetrators and compensate the Chinese people for their losses (Gang, 2014d). This content constituted the second most important topic in China at this stage (Huangyinjiazi, 2014).⁵³

In summary, the CPC created common narratives that Vietnamese people had irrationally protested because of wrong information and tacit approval by the Vietnamese government; the CPV was urged to take necessary measures to establish order and compensate for damages; and the Chinese government had quickly and effectively acted to protect its citizens. By quickly updating the situation in Vietnam, the CPC illustrated the government's "all-out efforts to uphold safety and legitimate rights and interests of Chinese institutions and citizens in Vietnam" and generated political pressure on Vietnam to re-establish order and compensate for the Chinese losses (Lei, 2014g). More importantly, the CPC wanted to prevent Vietnam from spreading the images of the anti-China protests to pressure it over the oil rig deployment.

Updating on the oil rig operation and criticising Vietnam's actions⁵⁴

Since Vietnam increasingly updated the confrontation at sea internationally, China was forced to provide its own narratives to balance their accounts. At first, China only deployed diplomats abroad to reject Vietnam's accusations. On May 20, in an interview with the CNN, the Chinese ambassador to the US, Cui Tiankai, briefly answered a question on the oil rig incident stating that "the Chinese companies [are] operating only 17 nautical miles off a Chinese island and it is 150 miles from the Vietnamese coast." He shifted the focus of the debate on to Vietnam by arguing that China had only one rig while Vietnam runs more than 30 such drilling operations in the disputed areas. The diplomat accused Vietnam of using armed ships to attack Chinese civil ones and backing the riots against foreign companies in Vietnam. When a reporter directly asked him to confirm what was happening at sea, the ambassador stated, "at the sea, they are attacking our company ships... They cross 150 miles, come all the way to attack us" (Amanpour, 2014).

After Vietnam threatened to use legal methods, for the first time China released its official criticism of Vietnam's disruption in the SCS by submitting a position paper to the UN on May 22. The paper reported that the Vietnamese side deployed 63 vessels including armed vessels and conducted 745 collisions with Chinese government vessels, emphasised that Vietnam's actions violated China's sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction and urged Vietnam to refrain from these behaviours.

⁵³ See No 2, 4, 6 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

⁵⁴ See No 1, 2, 3, 5 of Table B-1 (Appendix 2)

FM Spokesperson Lei (2014h) criticised Hanoi for “distorting the facts all around the world, confusing the public and making ungrounded accusations of China.” He confirmed that “there exists no dispute” in the SCS rejecting Vietnam’s threat of using legal action . On May 27, the MFA confirmed that the rig was “moved on to another site for the second phase of operations as planned and the operation is planned to end by mid-August” and urging Vietnam “to consider the overall picture of bilateral relations and regional stability”(Gang, 2014e).

Countering Vietnam’s sovereignty claims over the SCS

The MFA rejected Vietnam’s so-called “historical and jurisprudential evidence” and provided its own historical documents to underpin its sovereign claims over the Xisha Islands. Beijing stated that Vietnam had officially admitted to the Chinese government’s control over the islands, referencing a diplomatic note from Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, textbooks, maps and other documents as evidence and accused the Vietnamese side of “bending” history and going back on its words, having a low rating of credibility (Gang, 2014d).

Countering third-party actors’ criticism⁵⁵

To prevent other stakeholders’ criticism, especially that of the US and Japan, from negatively influencing China’s image and the rightfulness of China’s SCS behaviours and claims, the Chinese government was forced to counter these views. Because the US portrayed China’s SCS actions as “provocative,” on May 13, FM Spokesperson Hua Chunying (2014j) argued that such provocative action was not taken by China and that “the wrong words and actions made by the US side on maritime issues have emboldened some countries to take provocative actions.” Moreover, on May 23, Japan’s Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, had criticised “China’s unilateral drilling activities in the disputed waters, causing the tension” (“Japan, Vietnam blame China ”, 2014). China countered the Japanese remarks by saying that they “reflected no facts and that Japan aimed to “fish in the troubled waters and achieve their ulterior motives” (Gang, 2014e). Notably, in all cases, Beijing used words like “maritime issues” and “maritime friction,” not “stand-off” or “disputes,” a choice of words that was in keeping with their stated position that “there exist no disputes in the SCS.”

⁵⁵ See No 2 of Table B-1 (Appendix 2)

2. 2. The media outlets' narratives

Shaping China's narratives over the oil rig issue

Firstly, the media agencies asserted that China's drilling activities in the SCS had been prepared for the last decade; and the location was within the contiguous zone of China's Xisha Islands with solid historical and legal evidence.⁵⁶ Secondly, they sent messages to the neighbours that China had never meant to create trouble in the SCS but was not afraid of any challenge from other countries and would never sacrifice its sovereignty (Wuxia, 2014). The media reiterated that Beijing believed that only outcomes achieved through bilateral negotiations are the most acceptable, deemed fair, effective to both parties and long-lasting (Z. Ying, 2014).⁵⁷

Portraying Vietnam as a provocateur

The narrative that Vietnam illegally and provocatively disrupted the Chinese oil rig in the SCS made up the most popular theme at this stage.⁵⁸ The media reported that from May 3 to 7, Vietnam sent 36 vessels, including armed warships, to harass the rig and interrupt drilling. Moreover, Hanoi's frogmen were detected 5 metres away from the Chinese government vessels and many fishing nets and large obstacles were dropped down to pose security threats to Chinese vessels, jeopardising normal navigation security (Yangyijun, 2014b). Up to May 16, Vietnamese collisions against Chinese vessels had totalled over 500 times.

The media described Vietnam as an ambitious claimant actor, stating that Vietnam had unilaterally divided "the waters around the Nansha Islands into sections ... offering those to international bidders for oil exploitation" (Yangyijun, 2014a). Moreover, Vietnam was accused of intentionally painting China as a provocateur for its own political ends. Xinhua stated: "The Vietnamese media have wrongfully accused China of illegally placing the oil rig HD-981 inside Vietnam's EEZ and spared no effort to portray Vietnam as a victim bullied by China." Aggressive narratives by the PLA's "hawkish faction" regarding the incident were published at a low level, especially after Vietnam's threat to use legal methods ("Chinese media: 'lesson it deserves'," 2014).⁵⁹ Additionally, the media also perceived exchanges between Vietnam and the Philippines as moves to establish cooperation to oppose China in the SCS (Lilaifang, 2014), and criticised the two

⁵⁶ See No 3, 5, 7 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

⁵⁷ See No 1, 4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 23 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

⁵⁸ See No 1, 9, 13, 17 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

⁵⁹ See No 25 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

states for dishonouring their commitments to seek ways of building trust and the spirit of cooperation and understanding (Kun & Songhui, 2014).

In contrast, the media emphasised that China exercised great restraint and fully implemented the DOC, which it signed with ASEAN in 2002, and pursued negotiation and peaceful solutions (Jianhua & Liufei, 2014). They claimed that the channels for talks and negotiations would always be open, since China valued its relations with Vietnam (Mingjinwei, 2014).

In short, China's SCS media diplomacy at this stage focused mainly on how to utilise the anti-China riots in Vietnam to change the game, undermining Vietnam's morale on the media front after internationalising the tension at sea and initially mobilising public support domestically and internationally. Then, after Vietnam had sent a signal that it was considering using legal measures, China started to alter its media strategy by circulating its own narratives to counter Vietnam's strategy.

3. THE THIRD STAGE (27 MAY - 15 JULY 2014)

3. 1. The MFA's media narratives

Strengthening the legitimacy of China's claims and behaviours⁶⁰

On May 27, FM Spokesperson Gang (2014e) confirmed "the drilling rig has moved on to another site for the second phase of operation as planned... these activities are justifiable, legitimate and completely normal." On Jun 5, Lei (2014g) further explained that the new location was "falling indisputably within the contiguous zone of China's Xisha Islands." The next day, Lei (2014d) said "Chinese vessels are only carrying out escort and protection missions close to the drilling platform in the south to China's Zhongjian Island."⁶¹

When both sides confirmed a bilateral meeting, Chunying (2014d) reiterated: "Operations by the Chinese company are in the coastal waters off the Xisha Islands and are absolutely legal and legitimate." These information reports repeatedly confirmed to the public that China's SCS behaviours and claims were rational and legal, preventing the domestic audience from questioning the state's SCS policy.

Internationalising the incident⁶²

On June 8, the MFA suddenly published an article: "The Operation of the HYSY 981 Drilling Rig: Vietnam's Provocation and China's Position" (Chunying, 2014i). The

⁶⁰ See No 1, 3, 5 of Table C-1 (Appendix 2)

⁶¹ In China's views, Zhongjian Island of Xisha Islands in the SCS, which is Triton Island of the Parcel Islands in Vietnam's perspective.

⁶² See No 3, 4, 5, 6 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

document clarified the legitimacy of the waters where the oil rig was located and asserted that “these waters will never become Vietnam’s EEZ and continental shelf no matter which principle (on international law) is applied in the delimitation” (M. Wang, 2014). The document listed historical evidence that proves the Xisha Islands are parts of Chinese territory, such as a declaration in 1958, and a diplomatic note from Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong to Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai. The article also accused the Vietnamese side of acting provocatively to disrupt Chinese drilling operations and igniting anti-China protests in Vietnam and called on both sides to address the situation through peaceful solutions (“China’s Position,” 2014).

One day later, the MFA article was sent to UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, in a diplomatic letter by Wang Min, China’s deputy permanent representative to the UN. M. Wang (2014) attached a map to illustrate the positions of the oil rig and a 1958 Declaration on China’s territorial sea. On the same day, the ambassador further emphasised to the media that the Vietnamese government had gone back on its word by making territorial claims over China’s Xisha Islands; a gross violation of the principles of international law, and the basic norms governing international relations (Lizhou, 2014). China’s diplomats and ambassadors around the world were also mobilised to provide information on its official stance over the SCS issue to the overseas Chinese communities. China’s Ambassador to Australia, Zhaoxu (2014), released an article with the content of the position paper on June 8. Contrary to the interview of the Chinese ambassador to the US, Cui Tiankai, with CNN, which was not fully quoted in Chinese at the second stage, the media were allowed to repost the Chinese diplomats’ media activities abroad (Jun & Chun, 2014). By altering its media strategy, the CPC believed that widely publishing its position paper was an effective way to communicate its own narratives over the oil rig incident and then to shape the public’s perceptions of the SCS issues (Chunying, 2014i). These tactics first functioned to protect the national image of “China’s peaceful rising” while being ready to defend its national interests. They also helped the party inform the public domestically and internationally about what they believed the people needed to know about the incident and ensured its messages would be interpreted in anticipated ways.

Reporting developments at sea⁶³

Apart from the internationalisation and information strategies, the MFA and MOD provided more information over the confrontation at sea. When images of ramming and

⁶³ See No 2, 3, 4 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

sinking Vietnamese fishing boats close to the Chinese rig on May 28 were released in the international media ("Tensions rise," 2014), on the same day, the MFA countered that "Vietnam bore sole responsibility with its insistence on forcefully disrupting China's normal operations and its dangerous actions on the sea," and "a Vietnamese vessel deliberately rammed a fishing boat before sinking" (Zhendong, 2014).

From May 29 to June 14, both the MFA and MOD extensively reported details of confrontations at sea. They accused Vietnam of continuing to deploy large numbers of vessels, including armed vessels, to ram into Chinese government vessels, reporting that such activities happened over 1,200 times (Lei, 2014g). Their communications stated that "China sent government vessels and civilian vessels to uphold the order of normal operation on the sea". "However, the Vietnamese force took advantage of China's exercise of restraint to...further intensify their actions" (Lei, 2014g). On June 6, in a response to Vietnam's footage showing Chinese vessels ramming and sinking Vietnamese vessels, the MFA called the move an effort to make "false counter-charges against China" (Lei, 2014d). On June 14, the MFA released the first video of a Vietnamese ship ramming Chinese maritime police vessels at the scene. Four other video clips were also released on the MFA website as evidence of a Vietnamese ship KN762 ramming Chinese vessels (Chan, 2014). Before that, the MFA rejected information that a Chinese vessel rammed and sunk a Vietnamese fishing boat in the Beibu Bay and complained that the "Vietnamese media have made up the story with ulterior motives" (Chunying, 2014b, 2014c). The MOD (2014) stated in its press conferences that the number of collisions between the two sides reached 1,547 up to June 13. These narratives were later reposted widely by the media agencies, especially in English (Burnett, 2014; Chan, 2014).⁶⁴

3. 2. The media outlets' narratives

Raising the public's awareness of China's SCS claims⁶⁵

Following the release of the position paper, the government allowed the free flow of information and opened debates about the SCS issues and the oil rig incident. Historical events cited in the document were explored to create a common narrative on China's SCS historical rights (Shannon, 2014).⁶⁶ Moreover, it is argued that the MFA took the stand-

⁶⁴ See No 25 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

⁶⁵ See No 3, 12, 21, 26 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

⁶⁶ See more detail in section 2 of Chapter 3, for instance, it was stated that China started discovering and conducting its administration over the SCS 2000 years ago, especially the Nansha Islands and related waters. It was noted that the Nansha and Xisha Islands were occupied by Japan during WW II and then returned to China in accordance with the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Proclamation. In 1948, "the

off to strengthen China's historical narratives by citing documents such as the 1958 diplomatic note, the nine-dotted line map, and other documents. These official narratives were frequently presented in public media coverage in both Chinese and English and emphasised with emotional arguments from nationalist commentators (Lizhou, 2014). They called Vietnam's rejection of the 1958 note "self-serving" and urged Vietnam to honour it (Yuanfu, 2014b).

Using media diplomacy at the meeting between China and Vietnam⁶⁷

At the MFA's press conferences, the CPC showed its commitment to improve bilateral relations with Vietnam and ease the tension. However, a critical analysis of China's media discourses at the meeting reveals the CPC's using of the event to gain multiple political goals.

In the diplomatic media discourse, Chunying (2014d) said, "The two sides had a candid and in-depth exchange of views on bilateral relations and the current maritime situation" and both sides acknowledged the broader picture of bilateral relations. Beijing emphasised that the trip showed China was "sincere" in handling the SCS issue and stated that Vietnam [had] expressed its will to follow the important agreement between leaders of the two governments on dealing with sensitive issues" (L. X. Jian & Wang, 2014). However, in China's media discourse, there were narratives framing the event as "China extends an olive branch to Vietnam on sea dispute" (Defang & Jin, 2014), and a message to tell Vietnam not to "dream of reaping benefits from creating tensions and internationalising the SCS issue" (L. X. Jian & Wang, 2014). In addition, the only way for Vietnam to respond was to accept a negotiation (W. Jian & Xiaokun, 2014). After the meeting, when both sides could not achieve positive results, the media quickly turned into a channel to criticise Vietnam (Bilian, 2014).

Managing nationalist and patriotic sentiments⁶⁸

In combination with internationalising the incident, Beijing mobilised nationalist and patriotic sentiments domestically. The interwoven strands of victimisation, self-righteousness and nationalism in the media narratives that were apparent at this time have been one of the characteristics of Chinese politics (Sutter, 2012).

Chinese government mapped out the nine-dash line" and China's neighbour countries never raised doubts about China's claims over the two groups of islands and the related waters until the 1970s. Moreover, people cannot use UNCLOS, which only took effect in 1994, to retrospectively delimit China's sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction that came into being over a prolonged period of time in history. The law governing the sea is an enormous and comprehensive law system (Yan Jiaqi & Hong, 2014; Shannon, 2014; Tiantian, 2014).

⁶⁷ See No 2, 8, 9, 15, 24 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

⁶⁸ See No 2, 3, 6, 7, 12, 21 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

One strand in the Chinese media was the portrayal of Vietnam as a betrayer and a liar. Reports said that Vietnam had recognised China's SCS sovereignty for more than 20 years but suddenly changed its attitude after its reunification (Yuanfu, 2014a). The Chinese media criticised Vietnam's media activities that promoted wrong information over the SCS sovereignty as a key factor that "had increased the difficulty of Sino-Vietnamese exchanges." They reported that the Vietnamese national television channels provided daily weather forecast programmes on "Truong Sa" and "Hoang Sa" and broadcasted the daily lives of people on the SCS islands during its special Spring Festival programmes. It argued such media activities meant that young Vietnamese people would not be aware that their government had recognised that the SCS islands are part of Chinese territory (Lizhou, 2014).

Moreover, the media continued to intensify China's sense of victimhood in relation to external powers, like the US and Japan, to manage excessive domestic nationalism (Raditio, 2018).⁶⁹ The media widely quoted the voice of Defence Ministry spokesperson, Geng Yansheng, that some countries have taken advantage of the US' pivot and kept making new troubles on territorial issues (Huaxia, 2014). Similarly, the Chinese media interpreted Japan's support for Vietnam's naval force as a counterweight to the growing influence of China (Zhouchangqing, 2014).

China's media aimed at defending the self-righteousness of China's assertive actions in the SCS by labelling them as "defending territorial sovereignty" (Raditio, 2018, p. 185). They quoted the MOD spokesperson's words that "the determination and will of sovereignty and maritime rights and interests are unwavering, there is no room for bargaining, and no provocative behaviour is allowed" (Heng, 2014). In addition, they published rhetoric such as "If Vietnam continues its troublemaking, China will probably have no option but to weigh the possibility of blazing a trail and drilling alone in some sea areas where disputes exist between China and Vietnam" (Yang, 2014).

Through these narratives, the media set the tone and agenda to manage nationalistic and patriotic sentiments of the Chinese people and to intervene, if required. In terms of external propaganda, the media narratives, under the cover of nationalist or rhetorical discourses, could make China's antagonists consider their tough policy against China more carefully. Opponents might be confused about the Chinese messages of peaceful negotiation and threats of the use of force, or unsure about the extent to which the Chinese government could manage the hawkish faction in the PLA in order to prevent

⁶⁹ See 13, 16, 17 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

miscalculated actions. Whatever their interpretation, China might take advantage of their confusion. For the domestic audience, these narratives aimed at creating a common belief that the party had enough capability to defend national sovereignty with its understanding of all their enemies, and that the people just needed to stay in line with the leadership of the CPC.

In summary, by internationalising the incident, mobilising nationalism, and re-establishing a bilateral meeting with Vietnam, China convinced Vietnam to de-escalate the tension. However, during this stage, China's image was also negatively affected by Vietnam's legal threat and its extensive use of nationalist commentaries.

4. THE FOURTH STAGE (15 JULY – 31 AUGUST 2014)

4. 1. The MFA's media narratives

Announcing the withdrawal

On July 16, Lei (2014j) confirmed that the operation of China's 981 drilling rig "has completed successfully on July 15 as scheduled" and emphasised that "the Chinese side firmly opposes Vietnam's unjustified disruptions against the Chinese company's operation and has taken necessary measures to guarantee the security of the operation". The spokesperson refused to give reasons for curtailing the operation suddenly, as on June 11 the government had confirmed that the operation was expected to be carried on until mid-August (Chunying, 2014b).

However, there were many assumptions in media discourses about China's withdrawal. Some considered China's withdrawal as a calculation after achieving its goals of proving to its neighbours that Vietnam could not prevent China from realising its sovereignty claims in the SCS and the US would not engage in a regional dispute. Keeping the rig at the location thereafter would only decrease its marginal returns, further enhance China's image as a bully and erode Sino – Vietnamese relations (Leaf, 2017). In contrast, others argued that the rig operation was concluded because of pressure from external powers, especially the US which adopted a Senate resolution (S. RES.412) on July 10 to call China to move the oil rig and the US' welcome of China's early withdrawal of the oil rig (Kun & Songhui, 2014). It was also interpreted as China's pragmatic face-saving strategy to ease tensions (J. Kim, 2015). Such narratives might lead Chinese citizens to question their government's stance on territorial sovereignty and national interests in the SCS. Hence, right after the information about the withdrawal was released,

Beijing took the necessary steps to reassure and explain the decision to the Chinese public.⁷⁰

The MFA released another remark to clarify that the move was based on the calculated schedule, and unrelated to any external factor and hoped the relevant country could be fair about pertinent issues (Lei, 2014i). Meanwhile, the media ran narratives including, “the 981 platform only listens to China,” not external actors; the CPC would defend territorial sovereignty and interests in the SCS; and Chinese people should be calm and self-reliant, not be subject to the influence of individual speculations and long-term ambitions to destroy China’s prestige (Kun & Songhui, 2014). The media also borrowed the words of experts to prove that the decision on the rig was based on scientific calculations. Qiu Zhongjian, Professor of the China University of Petroleum and Wang Zhen, Deputy Director of the China Petroleum Policy Research Office stated that the drilling work found oil and gas existed at the expected area, and the applicable technology for deep-water drilling was established through the drilling (Yanfei & Jing, 2014).

4. 2. The media outlets’ narratives

Functioning to de-escalate the tension⁷¹

The topic of cooperation between China and Vietnam and between China and the other ASEAN members in multiple fields became one of the most popular topics at this stage. Media articles discussed the economic benefits from cooperation with China, the world’s second-biggest economy, that Vietnam and other stakeholders might have (Linjianyang, 2014). China maintained that the SCS has been stable and there was no problem with freedom of navigation in the region and suggested a dual-track approach to solving disputes between the relevant sides through friendly consultations and negotiations (Yuanfu, 2014b). Moreover, the media also shifted from calling Vietnam a provocateur in the SCS tension to portraying the other claimant states (for instance, the Philippines) and external powers (such as the US and Japan) as profiteers in the tension between Vietnam and China (Jin, 2014).

Supporting the bilateral meetings⁷²

On August 25, the MFA stated that a Vietnamese special delegation would visit and compensate Chinese victims of the riots in May (Lei, 2014i). During the meeting, China’s media also promoted a range of acceptable viewpoints of the Sino-Vietnamese meeting to attract routine domestic and foreign attention. In this regard, the media avoided citing

⁷⁰ There were 16 Chinese news reports and only 3 English items from July 16 to 19

⁷¹ See No 2, 3 of Table D-2 (Appendix 2)

⁷² See No 19, 20, 21, 23 of Table D-2 (Appendix 2)

directly the oil rig deployment as the main reason for the meeting, using “territorial row” or “the flare-up of tensions” to refer to the incident. They also described the significance of the meeting in positive terms and stated that the Le Hong Anh’s visit was “highly suggestive of the common aspirations of the two sides to put bilateral ties back on track at an early date” (Defang Bianji, 2014).

At the same time, the media tactically sent messages to the CPV. They contended that the reasons behind the tensions between Vietnam and China included diversified politics in Vietnam, the US’ pivot to Asia and provocations from Japan and the Philippines. Furthermore, some Vietnamese politicians lacked sincerity and retained a hard-line stance on China causing obstacles for mending fences. Hence, the process to improve the bilateral relationship depended on Vietnam’s domestic political stability. The media stated that Beijing would be the deciding force in the antagonistic relations with Vietnam, and the CPC should let Vietnam understand that “siding with Washington to contain Beijing will cost it more than taking a China-friendly policy as a national strategy” (Jun & Jin, 2014). These media narratives not only illustrated that the Chinese government was rational in its relations with its socialist neighbour, but also defended the prestige of the Communist regime. They said similar political systems could not help the two sides to eliminate differences, however, as socialist nations, both had to be aware of political pressure from the West and consider the bigger picture of China-Vietnam relations (Jun & Jin, 2014).

It is argued that creating a range of acceptable viewpoints over the meeting was a tactical choice for the media to support the meeting. Through it, China’s media agencies could set the agenda for nationalist readers and manage a discourse that the meeting and the withdrawal of the rig were a compromise by the government. In addition, it could send the state’s message to the Vietnamese side while continuing to portray China as a righteous and peace-loving actor, which had used negotiations to solve the regional incident.

II. CONCLUSION

1. 1. What were the common media narratives that the Chinese state-owned media outlets communicated and how did these narratives function in the stand-off?

Analysis of the results of the research have revealed a number of common media narratives. China described the drilling platform operation as a normal and legitimate action that CNOOC has conducted for years. The locations of the platform belonged to

China's territorial sovereignty and there was no dispute over the area. Hence, Beijing stated that Hanoi's claim that the rig was placed within its EEZ was groundless. Since Hanoi's deployment of armed vessels to intervene over the Chinese operation was illegal, Beijing deployed its vessels to protect the rig. Additionally, the Chinese government accused the Vietnamese side of creating and spreading negative narratives about China's action, stirring up the anti-China protests and threatening its image domestically and globally. On the diplomatic front, the Chinese side criticised Vietnam for internationalising the oil rig issue, providing opportunities for other stakeholders to take advantage of the regional incident to threaten China's interests and damage the peace and stability of the region.

1. 2. How did China conduct media diplomacy and what were the objectives?

Setting goals for media diplomacy

It is argued that there were at least three main goals for China's media diplomacy during the oil rig crisis. The first was to deal with Vietnam's media diplomacy on the oil rig issue. The second was to function as part of China's long-term SCS strategy. The third one was to support the national grand strategy to become a great power, especially a "maritime power."

During the crisis, the CPC controlled information flows from the Vietnamese and international media into China to prevent its domestic audience being exposed to negative criticism and selected an opportune time to release its own narratives. Then, via its media system, the Chinese government released its statement to legitimise the drilling operation. Besides supporting China's SCS salami-slicing tactic, media diplomacy was used to strengthen public perceptions about its sovereignty claims over the SCS. China also used its media diplomacy to mobilise public support and build national unity under the leadership of the CPC.

Identifying target audiences

According to the theory of the three warfares, there were three major target audiences in the crisis. These were the domestic public, the global audience and the governments and people in the SCS claimant countries (Cheng, 2012). For the domestic audience, one of the key goals of the media was to consolidate the Party's legitimacy to rule. Proving that the crisis was used to distract public attention from domestic problems in China, however, is outside the scope of the research (Jackson, 2015). However, it is argued that the oil rig crisis was also utilised to mobilise public support for the CPC.

Chinese people living overseas are an important lobby channel through which the CPC can leverage its notion of transnational culture, an idea of a common ethnic Chinese people, to convey the state's diplomacy to ethnic Chinese communities around the world (Walton, 2012). Although this group did not seem to be mobilised to put political pressure on the Vietnamese side during the incident, the government ensured that through the media activities of Chinese ambassadors around the world regarding the SCS issues, this group were kept well informed and guaranteed to believe in the Party's righteousness (Jackson, 2015).

For international audiences, Beijing's media warfare seeks to improve its media narratives with a mission to shore up support for the nation's reputation and to surmount the perceived Western information hegemony (Walton, 2012). In the oil rig crisis, the goals of the CPC's media warfare towards this group included promoting China's narratives over the incident, rejecting Vietnam's accusations and defending its reputation at international and regional fora.

The most challenging target audience group is China's rival claimant audience. One of the long-term goals of China's external propaganda toward this group is to convince them to be aware of, and accept, China as a maritime power in the region. In the short-term, China's media warfare functions as an information source to provide its own stories to people in the antagonist countries, balancing the rival state's propaganda. In the oil rig crisis, this was the Vietnamese audience. As the CPV controls Vietnam's media system, it is hard for foreign countries to deploy their propaganda toward the Vietnamese people. During the crisis, only when the two sides agreed to de-escalate the tension, did the relations between the two communist parties became the most important and effective motivation for communication, as well as providing channels to amend the overall bilateral relationship through which China's reputation with the Vietnamese people could be improved.

The limitations of China's media diplomacy in the crisis

Although China has an extensive media system in comparison with Vietnam, and a long history in using information warfare to win the battle of hearts and minds, China's media diplomacy in the oil rig crisis had some limitations. First, China's state-run media system had low prestige. As a result, the Chinese side's official narratives were accused of lacking neutrality and forming barriers to conduct media diplomacy.

Second, it seemed that China underestimated Vietnam's ability and assertiveness in using media diplomacy. At sea, it is argued that China did not know that on board with

the fishermen and naval forces on Vietnamese vessels (including those that were deployed at the first front line to directly counter with the Chinese side) were Vietnamese and foreign reporters with cameras and other necessary equipment to make news reports at the scene and to air these internationally immediately after each collision. While Vietnam provided daily updates from the scene, creating a warlike atmosphere domestically and drawing attention and sympathy internationally, China did not release its own footage and argument until June. The international media channels published images and video footage that Chinese vessels had attacked Vietnamese civil ones which angered China whilst the ASEAN member states' issue of the joint statement on May 10 caused another surprise for China, forcing the MFA to take steps to counter this (Chunying, 2014i).

Lastly, it is argued that China overestimated its capacity to use media strategy by keeping a low profile over the incident. Because of the perspective that “there was no dispute,” the Chinese media were not used to send a warning signal to Vietnam to alert it about the escalating tension. This function was only used when the anti-China riots occurred and caused deaths. Although China's media strategy of internationalising the confrontations and debates regarding the oil rig was based on political goals and calculations, it is argued that China was too late in telling its narratives and gaining sympathy from international audiences (Drifte, 2005).

It is argued that China's circulation of the position document at the UN was designed to isolate Vietnam from the other UN member countries. However, media narratives of this tactic revealed inconsistent legal bases in China's claims (Thayer, 2014b). In the first position paper sent to the UN on May 22, China stated that the oil rig was located within its territorial waters (Min, 2014). In the second position paper, however, China claimed that the location was within “China's contiguous zone” based on the UNCLOS (M. Wang, 2014). This showed inconsistency in China's SCS strategy as the government presented its position document to the UN to accuse Vietnam of wrong actions, but refused to join an arbitration tribunal under the UN regime to solve the issue (Thayer, 2014b).

1. 3. What were the effects of media diplomacy?

Functioning in China's SCS strategy

Releasing principles for the resolution of the incident⁷³

On the surface, the MFA reiterated that the state continued to pursue a peaceful means of resolution (Dutton, 2011). China also stated its pre-conditions for negotiations:

⁷³ See No 1, 4 of Table E-2 (Appendix 2)

Vietnam must stop its harassment of the oil rig; withdraw its sovereignty claims over the Paracels; not pursue a legal case; and not involve third parties against China (Thayer, 2017; Vuving, 2014b). However, the most popular theme in Chinese media coverage was the CPC's efforts and commitment to protect national sovereignty. It could be argued that the Chinese media outlets conveyed a clear message: China was committed to peaceful bilateral negotiations to solve the incident, but did not hesitate to use a tougher method to defend its sovereignty and interests in the SCS.

*Managing information channels while changing the status quo*⁷⁴

The status quo of the legitimacy of the waters where the rig was located was one of the most controversial issue between the sides. China explained that the waters indisputably belonged to China while Vietnam stated the location was within its EEZ and continental shelf under the UNCLOS. Strategically, by setting down the oil rig in the region and publishing the move in the media, China was “creating facts on the ground” in the SCS from the viewpoint of the international audience and was trying to turn an “undisputed area” into a “disputed one” from the Vietnamese perspective (“Vietnamese Deputy FM on CNN,” 2014).

During the first two stages of the incident, the CPC's strategy of information management prompted many questions about the giant Chinese oil platform. Scholars argued that China manipulated the oil rig crisis to test the other claimant states' reactions as well as to examine the US's willingness to become engaged in a regional dispute (Panda, 2014). If that was the case, the tactic of keeping a low profile at the onset of the crisis might have been a part of a strategy to expose adversaries to political dilemmas that would make Vietnam more cautious in deciding on its reactions (Jackson, 2015). Others explained that the late response at the onset stages of the crisis was because of the poor coordination among the different government bodies involved in the SCS issues. They argued that the crisis surprised not only the international audience, but also China's foreign ministry to some extent (He, 2016). If this was the case, the MFA might have needed time to set the agenda for the next debate (Jackson, 2015).

From a media diplomacy perspective, because the reaction from Vietnam and external stakeholders was, to some extent, a surprise for China, as Cheng (2012) argued, the way to control information was to select the frame and to shape the next debates in order to manage its political goals. In any case, the strategy of information control

⁷⁴ See No 2 and 3 of Table E-2 (Appendix 2)

managed changes to the status quo in the SCS, in keeping with China's salami-slicing strategy.

*Creating media narratives to strengthen the new facts*⁷⁵

When the CPC decided to speak out, its media narratives included the selection of legal norms and systems in its favour to build and strengthen the legitimacy of the oil rig deployment. Media diplomacy was used to introduce the legitimacy of the oil rig and its activities when it was first built in 2012. The media quoted the words of the chairman of the CNOOC, Wang Yilin, who described the oil rig as "mobile national territory and a strategic weapon" of China in the SCS. Although there were no international laws under UNCLOS to recognise such drilling rigs as sovereign territory, China's media widely conveyed this kind of a narrative to establish a perception of the legitimacy of the rig among Chinese citizens (Xiaolan, 2012).

Further, China used the media extensively to strengthen the legitimacy of China's claim to the waters in its favour while rejecting Vietnam's sovereignty claims over them and challenging legal norms that could be used in delimitation in territorial disputes in the region. The Chinese media channels reinforced the state's official position that the rig was in waters within "China's contiguous zone", and "these waters will never become Vietnam's EEZ and continental shelf no matter which principle is applied" ("China's position," 2014). It has been argued that both the government and the media in China tactically obfuscated the dispute, advancing the idea that the location of the rig was closer to the Paracel Islands than to the Vietnamese coastline (Thayer, 2014b). Moreover, as Hayton (2016) argued, China's SCS claims focused more on emotion than historical facts. Much of the narrative emerged from the feeling about national violation during the 19th and early 20th centuries and with mixed misperceptions about historical events that favour China and its strong view of the rightfulness of its cause. In addition, China also offered its own interpretation on the role of the UNCLOS to bolster its greater maritime claims. The purpose was to interweave political and historical perceptions with emotional sentiments.

In addition, the media were used to create and convey narratives on developments at sea in a way that benefited China. China's media denied Vietnam's accusation, stating only that civil vessels and government ships were sent to the scene to protect the rig (Lei, 2014g). The mixed presence of both civilian and law enforcement Chinese ships might have been exploited to open the operational environment to Beijing's advantage at sea

⁷⁵ See No 3, 5, 21, 22 of Table E-2 (Appendix 2)

and protect its image as a peaceful and righteous actor, while simultaneously clouding the judgement of Vietnam and other stakeholders and complicating their decision-making procedures.

In reporting the anti-China protests in Vietnam, both the government and the media in China made a distinction between the reasons for the protests and the Chinese oil rig deployment in the zone claimed by Vietnam. The Chinese media did this by creating narratives that the Vietnamese irrationally targeted foreigners including Chinese people, because of the CPV's wrong accusations and arguing that the protests were motivated for political goals. In this way, China aimed to change the perceptions of the cause of the anti-China protests to balance the battle of public opinion with Vietnam.

Enforcing China's new reality

The first new reality was that "the rig had completed successfully its tasks in the waters off the Xisha Islands" (Lei, 2014j). This reality was so important for the CPC's information strategy in relations to the domestic audience that it was continually featured in many news articles in Chinese to ensure that it reached the audience. This was to cater to the public's demand for information over the early withdrawal, mobilise public support for the CPC's policy and reject criticism from the opposition and extremist nationalists.

The second important reality was that a relationship existed between the two parties. Positive narratives about the trip of Vietnamese leaders to China published in the Chinese media were messages to other stakeholders, especially the US and the other claimant states. It implied that China's solution of bilateral negotiations was an appropriate choice and that there was no room for other major powers to take advantage of the regional troubles.

Functioning in realising the Chinese dream⁷⁶

One of the challenges for China in the oil rig crisis was how to achieve the short-term purposes in the oil rig development and the long-term goal in the SCS while not neglecting the nation's larger goal of developing its economy and international status (Yi, 2017). For the international audience, the CPC maintained a balance between promoting a national brand image of peaceful intent and accentuating the image of a war-ready situation, especially at the third and fourth stages of the crisis (Raditio, 2018). China's peaceful image in the incident was constructed through the reiteration of the themes of China as a peace-loving country, with commitment to solving maritime issues through negotiation, and a preference for cooperation rather than contestation with its neighbours.

⁷⁶ See No 3, 1, 7, 17, 18 of Table E-2 (Appendix 2)

The media promoted China's effort to play the role of a strong influencer in regional politics, economics and security. The media introduced a new security vision for Asia advocated by Chinese President Xi Jinping: "No country should seek absolute security for itself at the expense of others... We cannot just have security for one or a few countries while leaving the rest insecure" (Yansheng, 2014). This vision was later outlined in five organizing principles that were reflected in China's 2015 Defence White Paper (MOD, 2015).

Moreover, China's media warfare also helped to stabilise China's economic cooperation with the regional states.⁷⁷ The main narratives were that China had been the initiator as well as the largest stakeholder in many bilateral and multilateral economic cooperation projects and in financial institutions that its partners could benefit from (He, 2016).

For the Chinese audience, both at home and overseas, evidence shows that, throughout the crisis, the CPC tactically used media warfare to manage nationalist and patriotic sentiments so as to convince the domestic audience to believe in the righteousness of the state's policy and in the party's commitment to defend national sovereignty and to make China great again (Yamaguchi, 2016).

Notably, the victimhood narrative effectively balanced two strategic images of China: assertiveness in defending its national interests and a peaceful leading power in the region. By creating and conveying the narratives describing China as a victim of external powers linked to Vietnam and the Philippines over the SCS issues, the CPC could not only directly reject "the China threat theory" projected by these states, but also defend China's peaceful image. The logic that these narratives established was that, because other stakeholders threatened China's interests in a provocative manner, China was forced to take action.

1. 4. Can the media be a new way to resolve the issue between the two countries?

Evidence showed that China's media warfare could only attain the short-term goal of amending its party-to-party relations, but not people-to-people relations with Vietnam in the long-term. The main narratives and purposes of China's media diplomacy remained to maximise and realise its sovereignty claims and interests in the SCS. The CPC continued their escalating actions regarding the SCS and used the media to support those movements. For instance, regarding China's survey of possible sites for lighthouses in

⁷⁷ See No 7 of Table E-2 (Appendix 2)

waters off the Xisha Islands, Chunying (2014e) reiterated, “China has long been building and maintaining lighthouses and other navigational aids on islands of the Xisha Islands and Nansha Islands”, and such activities were to “safeguard the navigational safety of vessels passing by and serves the public good,” in accordance with international rules.

Moreover, Beijing was required to re-calculate its public diplomacy towards the Vietnamese in order to guarantee its long-term interests in the bilateral relationship with its socialist neighbour. However, there was no signal in this respect from the Beijing government. The narratives during the crisis were similar to those discussed in the textbook and national education curriculums in China, constructing the Chinese public’s perceptions over the SCS disputes, and over the claimant states’ behaviours in the SCS. Therefore, the media tactics that China deployed to end the oil rig crisis were not enough to reduce the tension in the SCS. In order to resolve the SCS disputes, both sides need a long-term strategy for the media and education on the SCS issues.

CHAPTER V: MEDIA DIPLOMACY IN THE SCARBOROUGH SHOAL STAND-OFF IN 2012

This chapter examines how China and the Philippines deployed media diplomacy to handle the Scarborough Shoal stand-off in 2012. It is argued that this was the first time China deployed the so-called “salami-slicing” tactics with the support of media warfare to set up a new status quo of control over the disputed shoal. The Aquino government deployed its media diplomacy to handle the stand-off for its political objectives in the SCS over the short- and long-term (Volkomer, 2012).

PART I: CHINA’S MEDIA DIPLOMACY

I. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

1. THE FIRST STAGE (8 – 26 APRIL 2012)

1. 1. The MFA’s media narratives

Functioning as an information source⁷⁸

Beijing confirmed the incident at the MFA’s press conference on 11 April, but the night before had posted it on the website of the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines (Embassy, 2012; GOVCN, 2012; Weimin, 2012a). Accordingly, at the first press conference, Beijing said the main cause of this incident was that “the Philippine side harassed Chinese fishermen and fishing boats.” Moreover, the MFA was committed to defending the nation’s sovereignty and interests at the shoal and protecting the Chinese fishermen involved in the incident, citing its urgent reactions such as deploying two Chinese government ships to the scene and sending diplomatic protests against the Philippines’ behaviour (GOVPH, 2012k; Weimin, 2012a). The CPC’s stance and commitment became one of the most popular themes in media discourses at this stage.⁷⁹

The MFA also labelled the Philippines so-called “law enforcement” around the shoal’s water as “a violation of China’s sovereignty” and a threat to the stability of the region (Weimin, 2012a). Moreover, although both sides criticised each other, only China’s request to the Philippine warship to leave the shoal appeared in its first reports. As a result, the request was widely reposted globally, putting the Philippines in a disadvantaged position (“China orders PN to leave,” 2012).

When the Philippines slowly updated the incident in the media, from April 12 to 14, China took this opportunity to fortify its sovereignty claims over the shoal on the media front (GOVPH, 2012l, 2012m). Common narratives were based on historical

⁷⁸ See No 1 to 7 of Table A-1 and No 1 to 9 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

⁷⁹ See No 1 to 4 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

claims over the shoal, such as those expressed in statements like “it is China that first discovered Huangyan Island, gave it the name, incorporated it into its territory and exercised jurisdiction over it” and the rebuttal of the Philippines’ EEZ claims over Huangyan Island as “groundless” (Embassy, 2012).⁸⁰ In the media, China’s sovereignty narratives were developed with the claim that the area was a traditional Chinese fishing zone⁸¹, quoting statements by Chinese fishermen who said that they had fished there since ancient times (Xiaguannan, 2012). Importantly, Chinese news articles cited the map of nine-dotted lines to prove that the shoal is within the lines, implying that it belongs to China.⁸² In addition, the MFA claimed that Manila had “misled public opinion” by publishing the Philippines’ sovereignty claim over the shoal (Weimin, 2012d).

Functioning as the CPC’s mouthpiece and a diplomatic tool⁸³

The two governments started diplomatic negotiations to find solutions from 11 April. At the press conferences, the MFA repeated the Party’s principles of peaceful resolution.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, Beijing used the media to call for bilateral negotiations and remind the Philippines about the “China-Philippine friendship,” tactically projecting an image that China was an actor seeking a peaceful resolution⁸⁵ (Weimin, 2012e, 2012f).

As negotiations were deadlocked due to disagreements over the sovereignty claims over the shoal, and the legitimacy of the Chinese fishing vessels presence there, China projected a positive signal stating that the tensions had “eased” thanks to diplomatic activities. However, when Manila publicly blamed the Chinese embassy for negotiating in bad faith and conveying “inaccurate” information about the bilateral meetings and suggested using legal methods to deal with the tensions, China protested against the accusations and demanded Manila treat its ambassador with “the proper courtesy” (Weimin, 2012h).⁸⁶ On April 24, the MFA issued the first separate remark to criticise the Philippines’ dispatch of more ships to waters off the shoal as an escalation (Weimin, 2012s).

⁸⁰ See No 2 and 9 of Table A-1 (Appendix 1)

⁸¹ See No 4, 12, 24 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

⁸² See No 15 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

⁸³ See No 8 to 12 of Table A-1 (Appendix 1)

⁸⁴ See No 4 and 5 of Table A-1 (Appendix 1)

⁸⁵ See No 1 and 6 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

⁸⁶ See No 3 and 11 of Table A-1 (Appendix 1)

1. 2. The media outlets' narratives

Discourse on the status of the Chinese vessels

To defend the actions of the Chinese vessels,⁸⁷ China ran a common narrative: “Huangyan Island is an integral part of China” and the water was a Chinese traditional fishing zone; hence, there was no doubt about the legitimacy of Chinese fishing boats operating in the area. Moreover, the media strengthened the MFA’s official statement that the CMS successfully prevented the PN from harassing and arresting the 12 Chinese fishing vessels that had been taking shelter from a storm within the lagoon of the shoal (Jiemin, 2012a).

When both sides had yet to finalise the status of the Chinese fishermen via diplomatic negotiations, on April 13, the media reported that all the Chinese fishing boats were safely escorted from the disputed zone with their catch onboard (Green et al., 2017). As Philippine officials were still confused over how to speak with a common voice over the removal of the Chinese fishing vessels, the Chinese media created its own story in its favour. On the one hand, the media cited an announcement by the Chinese Embassy to the Philippines which stated that the Chinese fishing boats departed on April 13 to defuse the tension but the Philippine ships remained at the shoal (Jiemin, 2012a). On the other hand, the media criticised the Philippines’ requirements for returning the catch at the shoal labelling it an intention to “seize” the properties of the Chinese fishing vessels (Xiaguannan, 2012). In this way, China’s media rejected the Philippines’ accusation of illegal harvesting of endangered species within its EEZ without quoting them in their reporting, illustrating the CPC’s capability to protect China’s rights and interests and paint their rival as a source of the tensions.

Managing information about developments at sea

The results show that English narratives reported a stable situation at the shoal,⁸⁸ while Chinese ones depicted a tense situation caused by the Philippines’ aggression and ambition.⁸⁹ English editorials reposted the main themes of the MFA that both sides agreed “not to do anything to complicate or aggravate the situation” and “to settle the incident through diplomatic means” (Weimin, 2012b, 2012c). Without providing details of developments at sea, they emphasised that China was exercising its sovereignty over the shoal and that the incident had never impeded freedom of navigation in the SCS (Houlijun, 2012b, 2012c). When China’s most advanced fishery patrol ship, the FLEC

⁸⁷ See No 3 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

⁸⁸ See No 10, 11 and 13 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

⁸⁹ See No 5 and 7 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

310 (Yuzheng-310), was deployed to the disputed site on April 20, Xinhua stated in English that “its mission [is] only to protect the country’s interests in territorial waters,” but in Chinese, it described the deployment as “a warning signal” of China’s “tough action” (Houlijun, 2012c; Xulingui, 2012). It is argued that the CPC tactically projected a stable situation at the disputed site with the objectives of using the CPC’s calls for bilateral negotiations, avoiding drawing the attention of external actors and protecting China’s peaceful image in the international arena.

In contrast, Chinese reportage updated confrontations in detail and especially targeted the Philippines’ behaviour.⁹⁰ They framed a discourse on the Philippines’ SCS strategy which was built on three major components: the anti-China paradox, US help and internationalisation to make use of the incident to violate China’s sovereignty continually.⁹¹ Moreover, the media utilised developments at sea to portray Manila as an unreliable actor. For instance, on April 16, a Philippine FM spokesman, Raul Hernandez, accused Chinese ships and planes of “harassing” a Philippine archaeological ship operating in the waters off the island. China confirmed the incident and stated that it had asked the ship to leave the area (GOVCN, 2012; Weimin, 2012d). Two days later, the Philippine side announced that the case was not harassment. The PD saw an opportune moment to criticise the Philippines for “changing its mouth” (“China blames PHL,” 2012). In doing so, the Chinese media attracted the attention of domestic audiences to the incident, portrayed the Philippines as an ambitious, aggressive and contradictory actor and then shaped their perception of “China’s external threat” which was an important tool for the CPC to mobilise nationalist sentiments.

Stirring up nationalism⁹²

Immediately after confirming the incident, the media described Filipino claims to the shoal and its military activities towards Chinese fishermen as a threat to Chinese sovereignty and territorial cohesion (“China’s top priority in SCS: reputation,” 2012).⁹³ Moreover, rhetoric by the PLA’s hawkish editors was permitted to be published on the very first days of the tension.⁹⁴ The PD linked the incident with the wars in the Xisha and Nansha islands in the past and warned that Chinese tolerance for the Philippines was limited (“First bilateral contact,” 2012). The incident, together with the other SCS

⁹⁰ For instance, they reported how the PN frigate carrying 12 Philippine soldiers, 6 of them carrying weapons, approached and harassed Chinese fishing boats with pictures taken at the scene (Libo, 2012).

⁹¹ See No 11, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

⁹² See No 13 to 17, especially No 15 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

⁹³ see No 18 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

⁹⁴ See No 5 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

disputes, was described in Chinese media as a battle between “bigger and smaller countries,” in which smaller countries, like the Philippines and Vietnam, counting on external powers like the US, cooperated to “infringe China's sovereignty” (Wuliming, 2012).⁹⁵ There were at least 3 PLA editorials raising the prospect of military conflict over the stand-off, framing a discourse of China’s war-readiness. They suggested China send more CMS to ask the PN to leave the shoal and to prepare for emergency reinforcement; to take the tension as an opportunity to enhance comprehensively the level of patrol enforcement in the SCS; and to strengthen China’s propaganda over the sovereignty of the SCS (“Phoenix TV on Huangyan Island dispute,” 2012). In addition, the media published Chinese elites’ arguments which stated that the CPC’s assertive reactions towards the incident were to calm the public’s outcry which had stirred up by photographs of harassment of Chinese fishermen (F. Ying & Shicun, 2016b).

It is argued that by using hawkish narratives, connecting the incident with the sovereignty issue, describing the Philippines (with the US’ help) as an external threat, and linking the incident with China’s victimisation narratives, the CPC intentionally publicised its assertive and determined actions for the objectives of manipulating and hardening domestic public attitudes over the incident. Moreover, by bringing the public in line with the party’s rule and SCS policy, the CPC conducted one of the first steps in using media strategy to bolster Chinese nationalist sentiments.

Countering the Philippines’ internationalisation⁹⁶

Chinese media decoded that Manila’s internationalisation strategy included seeking help from external powers and ASEAN, filing a legal case to the International Court and mobilising international sympathies for its policy (Houlijun, 2012a). In response to Manila’s legal invitation, after quoting the Chinese government’s official rejection that “China's sovereignty over the island does not require international arbitration,” the media channels neglected to discuss the issue in their reportage (Weimin, 2012h). With regard to the Philippines’ internationalisation, the media reiterated the MFA’s warning that Manila should “not draw other countries in or ask them to choose a side and stop making false, legally unjustifiable and misleading remarks” (Weimin, 2012h). Xinhua warned that any attempt to resort to external forces to complicate the incident was “unwise and doomed to failure” (Qiwei, 2012).

⁹⁵ See No 17 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

⁹⁶ See No 11, 16,17, 21 and 22 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

In relation to the Philippines' targeted stakeholders, including ASEAN and its members, especially the other SCS claimants, the media reminded them that China's stance on safeguarding its territory and sovereignty in the SCS was "clear" and "firm" and called on "countries to not take positions on the sovereign dispute between others" (Liaolei, 2012). In addition, the PLA's commentaries which warned that China was maintaining maximum restraint and that the irrelevant states should abstain from their fickle and delirious attempts to seize other countries' territory or to "fish in troubled waters," were also widely published in English (Liaolei, 2012).

For the US-Philippine relations, any military confrontations with the Philippines in the SCS might provide a chance to involve Washington against Manila's rival as well as to enhance US military presence in the region through the 1951 MDT. To deal with it, the MFA kept a low profile over the likelihood of US involvement in the incident and reminded people that "we hope relevant countries do more things to promote security and mutual trust among regional countries as well as to enhance regional peace and stability" (Weimin, 2012d). Except for some English news reports repeating the US and Philippine confirmations that the exercise had no relation to the SCS incidents, in order to urge these two governments to pair words with actions, the media limited discussion about the issue (Chenyan, 2012). Meanwhile, Chinese reportage accused the two states of attempting to extend the confrontation at Huangyan Island to the military exercises, furthering China's victimisation narrative (Tiehu, 2012).

It is argued that, at the first stage, the goal for the CPC was to protect Chinese fishermen from the Philippine Navy, to retain the balance in the situation at the disputed area and to protect China's international image. Media diplomacy was used to fulfil the mission by legitimising the presence of Chinese vessels, balancing the media and public opinion fronts, domestically and globally, and supporting China's diplomatic negotiations with the Philippines.

2. THE SECOND STAGE (26 APRIL – 26 MAY 2012)

2. 1. The MFA's media narratives

Rebutting the Philippines' accusations⁹⁷

Before prevailing and controlling the situation at sea, China restrained its counterarguments to the Philippines' accusations on the media. For instance, the MFA rejected the Philippines' accusation that China's Yuzheng-310 vessel "bullied" Philippine vessels by calling the story a "fabrication" (Weimin, 2012t). Moreover, Manila accused

⁹⁷ See No 13 of Table B-1 (Appendix 1)

Beijing of breaking commitments that they had almost seemed to reach in diplomatic meetings on May 14, but China simply reiterated that it never signed any deals (Lei, 2012i).

After issuing the fishing bans, China permitted its fishing boats to continue operating at the shoal, tactically controlling it in this way (Fangning, 2012; Lei, 2012l, 2012m). After the situation at sea changed in their favour, it is argued that China reacted to the Philippines' complaints more strenuously, including on the media front. In contrast to its reticence in April, the MFA frankly admitted the increasing number of vessels at the shoal, stating that with the increase in the number of vessels at the shoal China "took stronger administrative measures" to counter "the Philippines' recent provocative moves" (Lei, 2012l).⁹⁸

Tactically sending a threat of using force

From early May, media reporters repeatedly asked questions about the possibility of China's military response at the press conferences on May 4, 14 and 15 (Lei, 2012j; Weimin, 2012n). By pre-arranging questions for reporters to raise at the conferences and then quoting these in the official archives, the MFA could send a warning signal towards Manila and test reactions from the domestic public and external states about a tougher approach to the incident.

Additionally, the MFA reposted a statement of Vice Foreign Minister, Fu Ying, who said that the Philippines had made "serious mistakes" and warned that China "has made every kind of preparation to respond to further enlargement of the situation by the Philippines". Simultaneously, the MFA employed low-key diplomatic rhetoric and used phrases like "the Chinese side urges," "should abide by" (Lei, 2012h). The MOD also discussed rumours on the internet that the PLA army had "entered a state of war preparedness" on May 11, implying that China was not optimistic about the situation (Lei, 2012b). Media diplomacy was deployed to signal ambiguity, prompting Manila to think China was ready to use military force.⁹⁹ This was a significant tactic helping China to secure advances at sea without a need to use its gunboats in case the Philippines attempted to oppose its assertive actions. As Castro and Cruz (2014a) argue, using force could have worsened the situation at sea, undermining the stability that China ultimately sought to establish at the shoal and damaging China's peaceful image. Additionally, a military confrontation with the Philippines might provide a reason for US involvement against

⁹⁸ On May 23, the Philippines made accusations that China's total maritime presence was about 97 vessels including 5 government and 76 small utility ships.

⁹⁹ See No 13 of Table B-1 (Appendix 1)

China. Explicit verbal threats to use force would also put the CPC's credibility on the line, limiting its flexibility of action.

Utilising Manila's de-escalating efforts¹⁰⁰

At first glance, Manila's de-escalating initiatives seemed to be a response to Beijing's stance of peaceful resolutions and promises that the tension would be resolved. Responding to Philippine President Aquino's confirmation on April 29 that the Philippine military would not escalate the tension, the MFA urged Manila to "match their words with their actions, adopt concrete steps and stop making trouble at the scene" (Weimin, 2012q). In addition, Beijing welcomed Manila's invitation of joint development at the nearby Reed Bank, but asserted that "the Bank is a part of China's sovereignty" and warned that any unilateral development in the area would be considered as "harmful to China's rights and interests" (Lei, 2012f, 2012g). In this way, Beijing not only strengthened its sovereignty claims, but also prevented the Philippines from utilising economic cooperation to prove its administration over the zone. Similarly, on May 14, China issued its own fishing bans over the relevant waters in the SCS and argued that the fishing moratorium did not relate to the current incident, thereby signalling its administration over natural resources and exploration activities within the claimed waters (Lei, 2012i; Macikenaite, 2014). Meanwhile, Beijing ignored the Philippines' fishing ban and did not recognise it as a Philippine de-escalation initiative in the media (Xinyang, 2012). These narratives reveal that Beijing capitalised on Manila's concessions to assert its sovereignty claims and to re-establish a status quo over the control of the disputed zone in its favour, instead of reciprocating in the de-escalation of the tension.

2. 2. The media outlets' narratives

Reporting developments at sea

Analysis of the coding results showed that there were differences between the state's pronouncements and media archives regarding China's activities at sea, reflecting the CPC's control of information for its political purposes. In the MFA's statements, details of Chinese vessels at the scene were only mentioned at three press conferences (May 4, 23 and 24), with limited information and without any images and videos for evidence (Weimin, 2012o).¹⁰¹ In the media, Xinhua quoted the MFA's confirmation that there were around 20 Chinese fishing vessels operating in the shoal's waters until May

¹⁰⁰ See No 16 of Table B-1 (Appendix 1)

¹⁰¹ See No 10 of Table B-1 (Appendix 1)

23 (Yangyijun, 2012). Doing so in English and through diplomatic channels could project an image of a peace-loving China exercising self-restraint.

In contrast, developments at sea were reposted with more details and more frequently in the Chinese versions. For instance, the PD summarised that on May 10 the number of Philippine vessels had continued to increase¹⁰² and that China would react more strongly ("China stronger," 2012). However, it tactically neglected other information in the Philippine reports such as a description of the Chinese side allegedly harassing and preventing Filipino fishermen from entering the inside of the lagoon for the first time on May 9 ("China not barring Filipino fishermen," 2012). Based on the news reports that were collected, it is evident that although the public's demand for information over the incident was escalating, the number of China's news reports on situations at the shoal decreased sharply from May 11 to 18. Information regarding the withdrawal of the CMS 71 was rarely found in the media. This was partly because the CPC was required to temper anti-China nationalist sentiments in the Philippines and needed to manage potential US involvement in the incident, especially as the USS North Carolina had been docked in Subic Bay from May 13 to 19. From May 23 to 30, as a part of its stronger counter strategy towards its rival and so as to keep public interest in the incident at a relatively high level, the media conveyed the CPC's stance that the increasing number of Chinese vessels was to counter the Philippines' provocation ("Chinese: more than 20 ships," 2012).

Dealing with the anti-China protests

The Philippines' anti-China movements, domestically and overseas, provided challenges to China's international prestige. The coding results showed that China kept a low profile over the issue via its state official channels,¹⁰³ while widely discussing the issue via the media channels.¹⁰⁴

The media tracked the movement from April 28 as the Filipinos in New York had called for holding anti-China demonstrations at the Chinese embassies and consulates around the world ("overseas PHL call for demonstrations," 2012). Xinhua sent an early warning that such calls had heightened anti-China sentiments in the Philippines and around the world, causing great safety concerns for Chinese citizens in and outside China and threatening bilateral relations (Jiemin, 2012b). On May 8, the Chinese Embassy in

¹⁰² Accordingly, there were 11 Chinese vessels including 2 law enforcement and 2 sea surveillance vessels and 7 fishing boats versus 7 Philippine vessels including 1 Philippine Coast Guard and 1 Philippine Fisheries Bureau vessels and 5 fishing boats.

¹⁰³ See No 12 of Table B-1 (Appendix 1)

¹⁰⁴ See No 7 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

the Philippines issued an emergency notice to ensure the safety and security of the Chinese people there. In Beijing, both the MFA and the media directly blamed Manila for inciting the public to stage anti-China protests prompting significant concern for Chinese people (Zhangyi, 2012).

When the protests took place on May 10 and 11, they were described in the English media language as the “scattered” and “small-scale” street protests in Manila (Jiemin, 2012b). Instead of acknowledging the Philippines government’s effort to take control of the movement, the media stated that such small-scale protests showed that the Philippine people were not mobilised by ruling groups in the Philippines to become involved in the tension over the tiny islands that they believed did not belong to their country (“PHL fishermen hoped the dispute calm down,” 2012). In Chinese editorials, the media informed the public that the Philippine government rejected links to the anti-China protests and promised to guarantee the safety of Chinese citizens in the Philippines (“Philippines hold anti-China protests,” 2012). Moreover, they tracked and reposted Philippine experts’ criticism of the Aquino government for misjudging using domestic pressure on foreign countries to mobilise Filipinos’ support and causing negative impact on Sino-Philippine relations, especially the trade between the two countries, and as a result, challenging the Philippine economy (“Anti-China sentiments,” 2012).

In this way, the CPC tried to use the media systems to reframe understanding of the causes of the anti-China protests in the Philippines. Instead of showing them as protests against China’s violation of their sovereignty over the Scarborough Shoal, they explained the protests as a result of the political ambitions and mistakes of political groups and the government in the Philippines. Moreover, China aimed to shift the responsibility for managing and de-escalating the protests and amending bilateral relations onto the Philippine government. The most important goal of this tactic was to protect China’s prestige domestically and internationally.

Managing China’s nationalist and patriotic sentiments

From April 27 to May 8, the wave of popular nationalism escalated in China. Some news reports labelled the sovereignty over the disputed island as being in China’s “core interests” and called for China to prepare for war (Jiemin, 2012c).¹⁰⁵ Moreover, hawkish PLA editors continued to link the current issue with China’s humiliations in the past.¹⁰⁶ The PD argued that China’s ocean energy interests had been threatened because “Vietnam

¹⁰⁵ See No 12 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁰⁶ See No 26 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

is the enemy, the Philippines is playing and the US is picking” (G. Jiquan, 2012). As the wave of nationalism escalated, China commented in the media that the Philippines’ provocations in the SCS had “triggered strong reaction and concerns from the Chinese people” (Lei, 2012h). Simultaneously, both English and Chinese media created and published the dual narrative that Beijing is a peace-loving country but ready to fight for its territorial sovereignty (Chun & Xin, 2012).

It should be noted that there is always a link between the legitimacy of a government and its ability to protect the nation’s fundamental core interests including territory and sovereignty in China. Any compromise by the government to relatively small countries like the Philippines in defending China’s sovereign territory in the SCS would be considered as a betrayal of the nation (Cabestan, 2005). The narratives implied that the price of Beijing’s giving up the shoal to Manila was extremely high for the Communist regime, signalling that China would not compromise over the incident. Moreover, the narratives sent ambiguous warnings over the Philippines’ behaviour in challenging Chinese nationalist sentiments and violating China’s so-called “core interests” in the SCS.

The CPC deployed media tactics to manage carefully the risks of mobilising nationalism when the nationalist movements escalated. Firstly, the media publicised PLA editorials that supported diplomatic measures and spoke against using force. They explained that China’s defensive military strategy should focus on preventive actions to stop its rival(s) from taking the first action (“China not fight first,” 2012). Moreover, editorials argued that irrationally deploying military force to stir up the region or triggering anti-Filipino riots would provide external, hostile forces with an opportunity to conduct a delegitimised war to push China into chaos (L. Yuan, 2013). Secondly, the media frequently streamed information with a positive focus, such as expressing appreciations of the fishermen who had returned from the disputed zone thanks to the Party’s policy or the peaceful ending of the anti-China protests in the Philippines. Such narratives illustrated the effectiveness of the CPC’s hard-line policy towards the incident without a need to alter or calm down the Chinese citizens’ anxieties (“Chinese fishermen returned home,” 2012). Lastly, evidence showed that the CPC published nationalist activities of overseas Chinese communities while limiting discussion of the domestic movements, so as to shift the attention from China’s mainland.¹⁰⁷ The media called the Chinese people in Spain and the US who demonstrated peacefully at the Philippine

¹⁰⁷ See No 12 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

Embassies to protest the Philippine's SCS behaviours "compatriots" ("Overseas Chinese protest Philippines," 2012).

Supporting China's tactic of economic sanctions

Scholars argued that China imposed the quarantine on fruit as a tool of economic coercion during the stand-off (Green et al., 2017). However, China's image would have been influenced negatively if these sanctions were officially ramped up (Chubb, 2016). Correspondingly, China's media diplomacy was used to support this tactic. In the English language coverage, the media maintained that China's impounding of Philippine bananas was not related to the SCS dispute as China had adopted new inspection standards since March 2012 (Jiayunkun, 2012).¹⁰⁸ However, on May 10, the MFA endorsed the government's cancellation of Chinese outbound tourism and tightening of inspections on all Philippine banana imports, effectively informing the public of the informal sanctions, and projecting its image of a reliable trade partner globally (Lei, 2012h). In Chinese editorials, the economic sanctions were described as one of the approaches to pursue simultaneous "rights defence and stability maintenance" in the SCS and to generate domestic pressure on the Aquino government to back down over the tension ("Filipinos worried about banana industry," 2012). Such narratives were designed to increase the Chinese people's confidence in the CPC's SCS policy and discredit the Philippine government.

Countering Manila's internationalisation strategy¹⁰⁹

China continued to keep a low profile and softened its criticism of the Philippines' internationalisation strategy so as avoid attracting the attention of party actors and being utilised as propaganda for its rival's tactics.¹¹⁰ On April 26, the MFA merely requested Manila to refrain from complicating the situation when it called for ASEAN mediation to address the tension (Weimin, 2012i). As the Philippines mobilised US help, the MFA officially protested and described the call as an "escalation" move.

When both the US and the ASEAN member states expressed their neutral stance in the dispute,¹¹¹ China started to counter aggressively Manila's media tactics internationally (Shengnan, 2012; Wenwen, 2012). For the Philippines, the MFA considered the Philippines' receipt of patrol ships and warplanes from other countries to

¹⁰⁸ See No 18 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁰⁹ See No 8 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

¹¹⁰ See No 15 of Table B-1 (Appendix 1)

¹¹¹ The US expressed its neutral stance in the regional territorial disputes at the "Philippines-US 2+2 meeting" and none of the ASEAN member states issued an official document against China and Chinese vessels dominating at the shoal after the fishing ban was issued.

develop its minimum credible defence as a move to complement the country's diplomatic capacity to counter China. It warned that any "attempt(s) to draw third-parties for disruption or intervention" into the issue would result in escalating the situation, or even change the nature of this issue (Lei, 2012k). When the Philippines continued to call for international "mediation" of the dispute at the UN General Assembly on May 24 (Callar, 2012c), for the first time since April 18, the MFA publicly requested that the Philippines withdraw its ships from the shoal via a press conference (Lei, 2012m).

On US – Philippine relations, the Chinese media informed its domestic audience that the US' neutral policy was a result of the CPC's diplomatic efforts towards the US. For instance, during his trip to the US, Chinese Defence Minister, Liang Guanglie, urged the US to stay neutral in the incident (Zhangyi, 2012). China's media quoted the view of US experts who argued that because of its own interests, the US would not involve itself in the territorial disputes in the SCS, emphasising the weakness of US-Philippine relations (Xinjun, 2012). Chinese experts commented in the media that the Aquino government relied mistakenly on US help to provoke China (Yun, 2012).

It appears that China continued to maintain a low profile over the legal bid. The MFA repeatedly criticised the filing of a sovereign country's territory to an impartial third-party as a "weird thing in global politics," and noted that China had no obligation to accept the legal invitation (Lei, 2012f, 2012j).

It is argued that Beijing's key missions at this stage included calling for Manila to resume bilateral diplomatic negotiations, to withdraw its vessels from the shoal and not to internationalise the incident and mobilise anti-China sentiments. Moreover, China had to balance between managing nationalist sentiments domestically while protecting the nation's interests in the SCS and its image as a peace-loving country globally.

3. THE THIRD STAGE (27 MAY – 30 JUNE 2012)

3. 1. The MFA's media narratives

Creating narratives about the withdrawals

After noting that there were no Philippine vessels in the shoal, China claimed victory in the crisis via its official statements. On June 5, to reject the DFA's statement that the two governments agreed to remove vessels from the shoal, the MFA confirmed, "the government vessels have been deployed on guard in waters off the Huangyan Island" (Weimin, 2012r). The next day, the MFA announced that China had successfully ended the incident and protected its sovereignty over the shoal. It stated, "Since April 10 when the Philippine warships harassed Chinese fishermen which caused the Huangyan Island

incident while making solemn representations with the Philippine side, China has also sent government vessels to the area for regulation, which made the Philippine side withdraw most of its ships except for one Philippine government vessel still left in the lagoon. China has been committed to solving the situation through diplomatic consultations and has worked a great deal on the Philippine side and the remaining vessel finally left the lagoon on June 3.” To establish public perception over the new status quo status at the disputed zone, the MFA stated that Chinese fishermen were freely accessing the lagoon with the management and protection of Chinese forces (Weimin, 2012j).

Meanwhile, the Philippines published a discourse that China committed to withdraw its vessels simultaneously, hence, it ordered its forces to move. Beijing used media channels to reject Philippine media discourses. From China’s viewpoint, the announcement just meant that Chinese vessels had finished their mission and would be replaced by others to maintain China’s jurisdiction and sovereignty rights over the area (Xinyang, 2012).

Keeping a low profile over the Philippines’ protests

After the statements on June 6, the MFA did not discuss the incident again at its press conferences until June 14 (Weimin, 2012m). Even when the Philippines intentionally cited US help in back-channel negotiations over the tensions during the meeting between President Aquino and Barack Obama on June 8, China did not comment on it (Weimin, 2012k, 2012l). This tactic might have helped China to manage the political risks of any commitment from the negotiations before they were implemented and to negate the role of the US in the negotiations, China’s absence of comments may also have provided it with more time to strengthen its presence on and control over the island (Wanis - St. John, 2006).

When the Philippines accused China of failing to commit to withdraw its vessels and threatened to send planes and vessels back to the island on June 21, China officially rejected the existence of the so-called commitment and criticised the Philippines for maintaining a high profile over the issue (Lei, 2012c). The MFA urged the Philippines to refrain from making provocative remarks to re-escalate the tension. Until the end of June, the MFA did not discuss the incident at the press conferences (Lei, 2012d, 2012e) which changed the nature of the debate, and handed the responsibility for managing the tension to Manila.

3. 2. The media outlets' narratives

Preventing the Philippines' counter strategy ¹¹²

Before controlling the island, China continued to deploy media diplomacy to call for bilateral negotiations.¹¹³ After establishing de facto control over the shoal, China's media diplomacy was used to prevent the interventions by third-party actors that were believed to have the ambition to support the Philippines to stir up tensions again.¹¹⁴ In English editorials, the media continued to publicise the narrative that the Philippines and the SCS issue were not a focus of the US policy in Asia (Zhulei, 2012). In the Chinese language, the media reported a Filipino discourse that Manila had declared war against Beijing with strong military support from the US and Japan, quoting the Philippine FM as asking to prepare for war¹¹⁵ ("Philippines' action of declaring war," 2014). Moreover, the US' joint military exercises with the Philippines and Vietnam, and its encouragements to its allies such as Japan and South Korea to give military support to the Philippines, were interpreted as steps to create conditions for its involvement in the SCS and to prevent China from strengthening its security and interests in the region (Weimin, 2012i). These narratives generated a situation that China was under external threat, hence, it needed to take actions to prepare and counter these threats, including strengthening its maritime capability and gaining more public support for the CPC's policy (Castro & Cruz, 2016b).

II. CONCLUSION

1. 1. What were the common media narratives in China and how did these media narratives function in the stand-off?

Analysis of the results demonstrates common themes in Chinese narratives over the incident: the Huangyan Island was an inherent territory of China, and the Philippines' claims over the shoal were groundless. Moreover, the Philippine warships' harassment of Chinese fishing vessels and infringement of China's sovereignty had caused the incident. The message was that by deploying bilateral diplomatic means, China convinced the Philippines to withdraw its vessels, protected its sovereignty over the island, and ended the crisis peacefully.

¹¹² See No 1, 2 and 3 of Table C-2 (Appendix 1)

¹¹³ For instance, during the meetings with the Philippine Defence Minister in Cambodia on May 28, Liu Weimin fortified the Party's peaceful stance to deal with the incident and urged the Philippines to "withdraw its ships from the Huangyan Island" (Weimin, 2012p) (See Part B, III, Chapter 3).

¹¹⁴ See No 4 of Table C-2 (Appendix 1)

¹¹⁵ See No 12, 21 and 31 of Table C-2 (Appendix 1)

1. 2. How did China conduct media diplomacy and what were the objectives?

Setting goals for media diplomacy

It is argued that there were at least three main goals for China's media diplomacy, including dealing with the Philippines' media strategy, achieving China's long-term SCS strategy and projecting an image of China as a peaceful power. The CPC took the opportunity to speak as soon as possible in order to gain the advantages in setting the agenda for the international public and media discourse. Beijing used its principal policy to handle the issue at the first stage and set pre-conditions for negotiations. These conditions included the withdrawal of Philippine ships from the shoal, accepting China's control over it by not sending Philippine vessels back to the scene, not pursuing legal methods, and not seeking third-party actors' help.¹¹⁶ When the two sides were balanced at sea, the CPC used its media strategy to counter Manila by keeping silent on bilateral negotiations, sending ambiguous signals, mobilising public support and turning it into political pressure, and exploiting opportune moments to change the nature of the relevant issues. After Chinese forces dominated at sea, media diplomacy was deployed to legitimise and mobilise public support for China's de facto control of the shoal, to send warning signals to prevent Manila from conducting counter measures and to end the crisis in its favour. More importantly, China deployed media diplomacy to manage Chinese public sentiments towards the territorial disputes, which united the nation to strengthen the CPC's regime and protect China's image.

Identifying the targeted audiences

Evidence shows that the CPC deployed media warfare to inform Chinese audiences about the incident, shape consensus perceptions over the incident and mobilise their support for the CPC's SCS policy. The scope of this study does not focus on whether the CPC used media tactics and the incident to redirect criticism of the national internal concerns away from the Party's policy and onto a foreign aggressor (Walton, 2012). In addition, China mobilised "compatriotic" activities hosted by overseas Chinese communities (such as peaceful anti-Filipino demonstrations). These activities were designed to counter the Philippines' anti-China protests globally and to consolidate the Party's rule by uniting the Party with the Chinese people at home and around the world. For the international audience, China's media warfare during the incident served to project China's peaceful image while deterring the Philippines from utilising the incident to influence China's prestige in multilateral arenas.

¹¹⁶ See No 9, 23, 25, 26 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

The most significant challenge for China's media diplomacy was to convince the people and government in the Philippines to accept its narratives regarding the stand-off and the SCS issue and perceive China as a maritime power without antagonistic sentiments. Evidence shows that Beijing took advantage of the freedom of information in the Philippines to convey its media narratives to the target audiences in the Philippines.

Limitations of the CPC's media diplomacy in the incident

Analysis of the evidence revealed poor coordination between the Chinese propaganda body and the media agencies in controlling information. For instance, on April 20, the Chinese media informed the public of the deployment of the FLEC 310 into the waters of the shoal with great fanfare, describing the move as China's muscle-flexing tactic (F. Yuan, 2012). However, when the ship was recalled, together with China Haijian 84 on April 22, the MFA sought to cite the withdrawal as an act of goodwill to ease the tension, but the media channels could not adjust the tone and narrative to reflect the CPC's intention in time (Jinghao & Xue, 2012). Chinese online news websites even considered the move as a backdown by the government in the face of Philippine aggression (Chubb, 2012). Notwithstanding this, on the next day, Philippine media reported that these vessels were sighted within the shoal.

Moreover, there were limited resources available for China's media channels to create its sovereignty narratives (Green et al., 2017). In some Chinese articles, they even cited Wikipedia records to show that Chinese people were the first to discover the shoal ("China's pearl," 2012). They might have cited historical treaties to argue that the shoal was not Philippine territory, but they could not provide any legitimate documents such as international treaties, that stated that it belonged to China. China's media also lacked internationally prestigious academic sources that could be cited to support China's arguments in the stand-off.

1. 3. What were the effects of media diplomacy?

Functioning as part of China's SCS salami-slicing

It is a widely shared view that China's behaviour during the incident represented China's salami-slicing strategy in the SCS (Luguoqiang, 2012). The purposes of the strategy were to limit the options of the targeted rivals by confounding their deterrence plans and making it difficult to devise effective counteractions.

Camouflaging offence as defence

Scholars have argued that the Chinese side was not in a defensive situation during the crisis (Barrowclough, 2012). Right after arriving at the shoal and providing Chinese

fishing vessels with physical protection, the CMS claimed sovereignty over the waters of the shoal and requested the PN to leave (Green et al., 2017). These claims were reposted in the media creating a perception amongst the audience that the incident was not about the status of Chinese fishermen and their fishing operations within the shoal's waters, but the sovereignty of the shoal itself. Moreover, China's media discourse described the Philippines as a trigger and offender for using its largest naval vessel to harass the Chinese fishermen. Meanwhile, it described the government forces' successful escorting of the Chinese fishing vessels out of the disputed zone as an achievement. Additionally, China confirmed that by using peaceful methods, it had convinced Manila to withdraw all the vessels, ended the tension and defended the nation's sovereignty (Weimin, 2012j). It is argued that by choosing the time, creating narratives and setting the agenda, China's media strategy "camouflaged" its behaviours in the SCS as defensive and placed the onus on the Philippines for starting the incident.

Undercutting the Philippines' deterrence

From China's media discourse, the Philippines' strategy towards China in the incident included internationalising the stand-off; appealing to ASEAN and the US for help, stirring up nationalism, domestically and globally, and threatening to use legal methods. Media warfare played its roles in China's salami-slicing strategy to undercut the Philippines' deterrence.

First, the media were used to divide the Philippines from other external stakeholders including the US, Japan and ASEAN member states (Baviera, 2016a). The media quoted the Chinese state's request for third-party states not to be involved and emphasised the economic benefits of cooperating with China.¹¹⁷ Then, English editorials accused the Philippines' internationalisation strategies of complicating the tension. They described the Philippines as a hesitant and unreliable actor who lacked experience in managing both domestic and foreign affairs issues.¹¹⁸ In contrast, the media created and sent coercive messages, such as the threat of the use of force, informal economic sanctions and rising nationalist and patriotic movements in China, implying that China was ready to use force to defend its national interests.¹¹⁹ At a deeper level, these narratives shaped third-party governments' perception of the risk of helping the Philippines against China over the incident.

¹¹⁷ See No 12, 35, and 24 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

¹¹⁸ See No 11, 13, 28 and 33 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

¹¹⁹ See No 16, 27 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

Moreover, to break the consensus between the government and people in the Philippines, it is argued that China used media tactics to support the unofficial economic sanctions and nationalist mobilisation. Media warfare was used to camouflage China's unofficial economic sanctions as "normal economic issues" in trading. This was a way of causing concern over the burden of the sanctions among the Filipinos so that those who worried about economics would require their government to de-escalate the tension and consider bilateral relations with China.¹²⁰ In other words, China's media changed the Philippine domestic audience's concern into political pressure on the Aquinogovernment, forcing it to alter its assertive policy against China in the SCS.

As mentioned above, China's media exacerbated the public's concern over anti-China protests, then, turned the responsibility on to Manila to maintain the safety of the public and social order. Moreover, China's media tactics swelled nationalist sentiment among Chinese people and draw the public's attention to the incident. Meanwhile, China labelled Chinese nationalist pressure as a motivation for the CPC's assertive reactions in the SCS. After refusing to join the legal proceedings, China kept the topic at a low profile in the media to avoid talking about the weakness of the legal basis of its SCS claims. However, this tactic failed to prevent Manila from pursuing the legal bid.

Realising the Chinese dream

It is argued that the greatest challenge for China was how to establish de facto control over the shoal and to continue legitimising China's claims over it, while not affecting negatively its image as a peaceful power. China's peaceful image in the crisis was communicated through China's promise of following peaceful paths to solve the crisis, calls on the Philippines to respond in the same way, and reversals of the China threat theory.¹²¹

The media also turned the crisis into an opportunity to raise China's sovereignty claims in the SCS and inform audiences of its claims and its determination to realise them. China also rejected the Philippines' title over the shoal. In addition, media diplomacy was deployed to protect the image of a stable society in China while utilising the foreign affairs issue to unite Chinese and strengthen the Party's leadership (Sutter, 2012).

1. 4. Can the media be a new way to resolve the issue?

Evidence shows that China used media tactics to reduce the negative impacts of the incident on bilateral relations between the two nations: mobilising overseas Chinese

¹²⁰ See No 35 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

¹²¹ See No 1, 6, 20, Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

people and Chinese netizens, preventing street demonstrations to put political pressure on the Philippine government, and shifting the responsibility for stirring up nationalist anti-China protests onto the Aquino government and activist groups. However, China continued to publish rhetoric in the Chinese language to criticise the Philippines' for calling a war against China.¹²² Additionally, when the Philippines submitted a case to the tribunal court, China ran a massive campaign which combined both legal and media warfare to rebut the final result of the Court that favoured the Philippines. In summary, the evidence shows that China focused on deploying media warfare to consolidate its peaceful image, but not to solve the tensions with the other claimant states at a grass roots level or to maintain peace in the SCS.

¹²² See No 11, 13, 16, 20, 22, 33 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

PART II - THE PHILIPPINES' MEDIA DIPLOMACY

III. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

1. THE FIRST STAGE (8 – 26 APRIL 2012)

1. 1. The DFA's media narratives

Framing the Philippines' official narratives over the incident

After jointly hosting a press meeting with the Philippine Navy and Philippine Coast Guard to provide information, the DFA published its first statement over the incident on April 11 (Rosario, 2012a).¹²³ To legitimise the presence of BRP Gregorio del Pilar, the DFA stated that the PN ship did not aim to harass the Chinese fishing vessels, and was just aiming to “protect the marine environment and resources,” and “to assert Philippine sovereignty and sovereign rights over the shoal. Importantly, the DFA communicated the Philippines' commitment to seek a peaceful resolution of the stand-off, citing bilateral meetings between Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Albert F. Del Rosario, and the Chinese Ambassador in Manila, Ma Keqing, on 10 and 11 April.

Framing the Philippines' titles and rejecting China's claims over the shoal

It is argued that one of the most important goals for the Aquino administration's media diplomacy was to assert Philippine titles over the disputed zone and to reject China's interpretation of the Philippines' claims (GOVPH). In order to fulfil this mission, in the first statement, the DFA emphasised that: “The Panatag Shoal is an integral part of Philippine territory and the Shoal is within the Philippines' 200 nautical miles EEZ and continental shelf” (GOVPH, 2012k). As China reiterated its claims over the shoal causing deadlock on the diplomatic front, on April 17, the DFA formally suggested clarifying the legitimacy of the two sides' claims by filing a case to the ITLOS (GOVPH, 2012t).

Moreover, the DFA issued a position paper which protested against China's self-interpretation of the Philippines' sovereignty claims over the area and refined systematically the legal basis for the claims¹²⁴ (GOVPH, 2012i). The DFA emphasised

¹²³ The statement reported that, on April 10, the Philippine Navy (PN) had detected eight Chinese fishing vessels docking inside Scarborough Shoal with large amounts of “illegally collected corals, giant clams and live sharks” on board and that the two CMS had arrived and prevented the PN from arresting the Chinese fishermen, causing tensions (See Part B. III. Chapter 3).

¹²⁴ The document asserts that these rocks are within the Philippines' EEZ and continental shelf under UNCLOS; however, instead of anchoring on that fact, the country based its claims over the rock features of the Shoal on principles of public international law focusing on “effective exercise of jurisdiction”. It also provided evidence of the Philippines' effective occupation and jurisdiction over the shoal such as naming, mapping and exploring activities. The area was classified under the “Regime of Islands” in accordance with the Philippine law of the Sea in 2009. In addition, the shoal was used for defence purposes under the Philippine Forces' cooperation with US Naval forces in the past, implying that the shoal was managed to be used for international cooperation under the Philippines' jurisdiction. For waters surrounding the shoal, the DFA anchored its claims on the regulations of the UNCLOS, particularly Article 121, which stated that

that the basis of the claims was not premised on the cession by Spain of the Philippine archipelago to the US under the Treaty of Paris. Moreover, the document distinguishes the country's claims over the features of the Scarborough Shoal and the waters within its vicinity. The shoal is described as a ring-shaped coral reef, not an island and not a part of the Spratlys, with only five rocks that are above water and with the rest below water during high tide (GOVPH, 2012i).

The document also provides legal arguments to counter China's sovereignty claims which are mainly anchored on an historical basis. For Chinese historical claims, it stated that under public international law, historical claims are different from historical titles and "historical claim could not be a basis for acquiring territory" (GOVPH, 2012i). Moreover, the paper argued that China could not prove that its usage of the shoal was "open, continuous, adverse or, in the concept of an owner, peaceful and acquiesced by other states," hence, China's so-called historical claims could not be matured into historical titles over the shoal. Similarly, in relation to China's statement of "traditional fishing waters," the DFA's paper points out that in the international law regime "fishing rights are not a mode of acquiring sovereignty or sovereignty rights" over a region and that Chinese individuals' fishing activities could not be construed either as a sovereign or authorised act by the Chinese state (GOVPH, 2012i).

Managing information regarding diplomatic activities

While pursuing diplomatic resolutions to settle the stand-off,¹²⁵ Manila altered its media diplomacy to cope with the escalating tension. From April 11 to 14, to defuse the tensions via bilateral negotiation, the Philippine government downplayed the incident in formal media statements and managed the sharing of information on diplomatic activities with the media (GOVPH, 2012m). In a news report on the meeting on April 11 with Ma Keqing, Del Rosario did not disclose the details of the discussion, but just told the media that: "If the Philippines is challenged, we are prepared to secure our sovereignty" (Pazzibugan & Santos, 2012). After the second meeting on the same day, the Secretary sent a positive signal that the two sides had been trying to solve the tension in a friendly way (Pazzibugan & Santos, 2012). The media also reported that a representative of the Philippine embassy in China had been summoned and received a note verbale from Beijing over the incident (Romero, 2012d).

rocks that are above water during high tide can generate 12 nm maximum territorial waters. Given that the Philippines has sovereignty over the rocks of the shoal, the country has sovereignty rights over the 12 nm territorial waters surrounding them (GOVPH, 2012i) (See more at Part A, II, Chapter III).

¹²⁵ See No 1, 3 and 6 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

On the morning of April 13, Del Rosario said that the two sides had agreed to “set aside” their diplomatic protests to maintain the status quo and avoid escalation at the shoal. The head of the DFA clarified “the immediate task is to be able to come to a peaceful solution” and the statement did not mean that Manila had withdrawn all protests (Lee-Brago, 2012h). However, in the meeting at night, negotiations broke down again when Manila requested a confiscation of the Chinese illegal harvest, but Beijing refused this request. Moreover, both sides refused to be the first to recall their ships.

As the meetings were suspended, both sides sought to use the media to signal opposition towards the other’s behaviours at the shoal and on the diplomatic and media fronts. On April 16, Philippine officials published the contents of the bilateral negotiations, emphasising that Manila had lodged another diplomatic protest against China (Esplanada, 2012i).¹²⁶ In return, the Chinese Embassy in Manila published a counterblast via Philippine media channels accusing the Philippine ship of infringing on China’s sovereign rights and violating international conventions (Chanco, 2012).

On April 20, in a meeting with the Chinese Ambassador in the Philippines, President Aquino encouraged both sides to continue to talk to deal with the issue (Romero, 2012d). However, the diplomatic front turned to tension again when China accused the Philippines of breaking a so-called “agreement on the pull out of the (Philippine and Chinese) ships and fishing boats (from the shoal),” on April 25. The DFA reacted by lodging a note verbale to blame the Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines, Ma Keqing, for not conveying “an accurate rendition of facts” (GOVPH, 2012r). Scholars argued that by criticising the Chinese Embassy in Manila mainly via media channels, the DFA aimed to save face for both governments for their failures in diplomatic negotiations, while maintaining other opportunities to communicate directly with the Beijing government (Green et al., 2017).

Reporting developments at sea

As an information channel between the state and the public, the media were utilised to convey Manila’s official narratives on developments at the shoal from April 11 (T. G. Santos, 2012d).¹²⁷ On April 13, the media reposted the President’s order to ensure “no violence will happen there” (Avendaño, 2012a).¹²⁸ However, the Aquino government was

¹²⁶ At that time, a Philippine surveillance ship, the M/Y Saranggani, was reportedly harassed by Chinese vessels at the shoal (See Page 84, Part B, III. Chapter III)

¹²⁷ See No 2, 7, 9, 11 and 17 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

¹²⁸ Accordingly, the media reported the government’s update that the PN’s flagship had been replaced by a Coast Guard vessel, BRP Pampanga, from the morning of April 12, according to the President’s order to

not always able to update developments at sea. For instance, it was not until April 14 the information that the CMS 75 and the FLEC 303 reportedly escorted all of the Chinese fishing vessels out of the shoal on the evening of April 13 was released (Lee-Brago, 2012h).

From April 14 to 16, when the two states were in a stalemate both at sea and on the diplomatic front, Manila toughened its stance on the media front. The DFA started to blame the Chinese fishing vessels at the shoal for “illegal activities” and “a serious violation of the Philippines’ sovereignty and maritime jurisdiction” (GOVPH, 2012s; T. G. Santos, 2012d).¹²⁹ Filipino authorities requested that the Chinese side withdraw all vessels from the shoal and respect the Philippines’ rights over the shoal¹³⁰ (Esplanada, 2012i). The media updated that China re-deployed the CMS 75, conducted fly-bys over Filipino fishing vessels and harassed a Filipino surveillance ship at the shoal (Mangosing, 2012a).

The media described Philippine forces as exercising the utmost self-restraint at sea. They reported that on April 16 the Coast Guard 002 (BRP EDSA) and the BRP Pampanga were deployed to monitor Chinese vessels (Evangelista, 2012a). They reposted the government’s information that on April 23, right after replacing the BRP EDSA at the scene, the BRP Pampanga “faced off” with four Chinese vessels at the shoal (Esplanada, 2012l) and cited President Aquino’s commitment to retain the Philippine presence at the shoal to exercise the nation’s territorial and sovereignty rights (Avendaño, 2012b). On April 21, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) formally advised Filipino fishermen not go to the disputed zone for their safety so as not to complicate the tension (T. G. Santos, 2012c).

The Chinese embassy in Manila sent an email to the PDI on April 23, stating that China had withdrawn the vessels from the shoal to show its intention to de-escalate the tension. Lieutenant General Anthony Alcantara took to the stage to criticise the Chinese embassy for not “telling the truth” and confirmed that at least seven Chinese vessels, including the gunboat FLEC 310, were anchored in the vicinity of the shoal, and denied de-escalation of the tension (Yap, 2012a).

ensure “no violence will happen there” (Avendaño, 2012a). At that time, a third Chinese vessel, the FLEC 303, was also sighted at the area (Pazzibugan & Santos, 2012) (See Part B, III. Chapter 3 – page 84).

¹²⁹ See No 9 and 22 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

¹³⁰ See No 34 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

1. 2. The media outlets' narratives

Functioning as part of the Philippines' internationalisation strategy

When the stand-off began, President Aquino's principle of not involving any third-party actor was published in the media. He stated: "We cannot just give it away (Scarborough Shoal) and we cannot depend on others but ourselves" (Avendaño, 2012a).¹³¹ The DFA and the Department of National Defence (DND) reiterated the stance and stated that Philippine forces were able to handle the tension (Evangelista, 2012a). However, from April 16, the Philippine government started its internationalisation strategy by officially urging external stakeholders, especially ASEAN and the US, to voice their opinion of the incident via media channels with the objectives of mobilising international support and sympathy for its policy and criticising China's behaviours. The narratives became one of the most popular themes.¹³²

Seeking ASEAN support

The media were fully deployed as a tool to convey Manila's diplomatic messages to ASEAN as a whole and its members. First, the government repeatedly urged ASEAN to take the lead in dealing with the WPS issues as a dialogue partner of China. However, Manila clarified that the organisation should not intervene in the Scarborough shoal issue (Esplanada, 2012a). Moreover, on April 22, Del Rosario, used the media channels to send a stronger call for the regional countries to express their voices on "what China is endeavouring to do in the Scarborough Shoal in order to pursue its so-called full sovereign rights over the entire WPS on the basis of [its] nine-dash line claim" (Esplanada, 2012m). Lastly, the media reportage became an arena for Filipino politicians who had differing motivations, to express their support for the use of the ASEAN card to deal with China. For instance, Senator Joker Arroyo urged that the Aquino administration should encourage its ASEAN allies to issue a "resolution of concern or sympathy" over the incident (Romero, 2012f).

Not seeking US help and the Balikatan exercises

Because the Philippines is a US treaty ally, narratives on the US' reaction to the incident as well as the Philippines' stance towards the role of the US became popular during the first stage.¹³³ In accordance with the principle of seeking peaceful and diplomatic resolutions, Manila officially confirmed that it would not seek US help (Whaley, 2019). Moreover, President Aquino committed to maintaining the country's

¹³¹ See No 23 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

¹³² See No 24 and 13 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

¹³³ See No 13 and 23 of Table A-2 and No 2, 4 of Table A-1 (Appendix 2)

independence and territorial integrity with the Filipinos, while the DFA and DND officials confirmed that they could handle the incident (Calica, 2012c).

For their part, the US kept silent over the issue until April 13 when it expressed concerns and called for both sides to “exercise full restraint and seek a diplomatic resolution” (Pazzibugan & Santos, 2012). Moreover, the US expressed its stance of not becoming involved in the regional territorial disputes right before the annual Balikatan military exercises happened (Whaley, 2019). In the media, US officers avoided framing the exercises as a muscle-flexing action against China in the SCS (Pazzibugan, 2012a; Yap, 2012d). In response, Manila also reiterated that the exercises were not related to the incident with the intention to save face for the two sides and to ensure that China continued to seek peaceful resolutions (Green et al., 2017).

Manila’s decision might partly have resulted from discord in domestic politics regarding the role of the US in the incident. Pro-America groups argued the Philippines needed the US’s help as a back-up plan in case China escalated the tension (Esguerra, 2012). In addition, such involvement by the US and its allies such as Japan and Australia would constrain China’s military might when the Philippines continued asserting its ownership over the shoal (Ager, 2012). In contrast, anti-America politicians believed that Beijing would react more strongly if Manila brought the US into the SCS tensions and the US could mobilise the incident to undermine the Philippine assertion of sovereignty and to serve its own agenda of military expansion in the region (Bello, 2012). Given heated debates in the media, it is argued that it was a tactical choice for the Aquino government not to ask for help from the US.

Investigating the government’s information

In the Philippines’ democracy, any miscommunication or incoherent information from the government would be perceived as weakness in its handling of the incident. Hence, the government deployed media diplomacy to deal with the function of investigation of the media agencies.

The media identified the government’s inconsistent information in some cases. First, when the Chinese fishing vessels left the shoal¹³⁴ on April 14, the media queried whether they were able to escape or allowed to go with their catch. Lieutenant General, Anthony Alcantara, answered that the Chinese withdrawal (of the CMS and fishing vessels) was “the result of the negotiations” by the foreign department with the Chinese side (Yap, 2012c). Conversely, the DFA reiterated the Philippine stance that the Chinese

¹³⁴ See No 9 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

fishing vessels were only allowed to leave following the confiscation of their illegal catch and confirmed the Chinese departure was not part of any agreement with China (Yap, 2012c). The AFP admitted that they were not able to monitor the progress of the Chinese departure from the shoal (Lee-Brago, 2012i). As the public started to become concerned about the capability of the government to exercise the national laws at the shoal, the Philippine authorities ultimately decided to give up confiscating the Chinese boats' illegal catch to avoid escalating the tension (Romero, 2012f).

The second debate was about the deployment of the Gregorio del Pilar. When it was pulled out from the disputed zone, Vice Admiral Alexander Pama assured the public that the removal was “not a retreat,” but part of the Philippines' effort to defuse the tension by citing “needs for refuelling and provisioning” for several days (Pazzibugan & Santos, 2012). AFP chief, General Jesse Dellosa, then stated that the warship was ready to mobilise and was just 14 km away from the disputed zone (Lee-Brago, 2012h). On April 16, Pama finally confirmed that the Navy warship would not be re-deployed to the shoal because the Coast Guard vessels could handle such “law enforcement issues” (Mangosing, 2012d). Such inconsistent media statements made the public confused about the government's determination to defend national sovereignty.

Moreover, the case of the M/Y Sarangani emphasised the contradiction in the Aquino government's media tactics. At first, the DFA was eager to deploy media tactics to protest China's behaviour towards the surveillance ship, labelling it as “harassment” (Kabling, Aben, Ribaya, & Carandang, 2012). However, on April 19, Lieutenant General Anthony Alcantara stated that there was no harassment and the surveillance ship had left the shoal on the night of April 18 without threats or demands from the Chinese side (Frances, 2012). The Philippines might have wanted to reject China's media discourse that the ship had left because of the Chinese orders. Nevertheless, such inconsistency in the media narratives negatively affected the Aquino government's prestige amongst the domestic and international audience.

2. THE SECOND STAGE (26 APRIL – 26 MAY 2012)

2. 1. The DFA's media narratives

Supporting Manila to internationalise the stand-off

From the United States

At this stage, Manila internationalised the incident by maximising US help (Green et al., 2017). It is argued that the first ever Philippine-US 2+2 Ministerial Consultations

meetings provided a chance for Manila to reshape narratives on the role of the US over the incident so as hone its strategy towards its ally.

Prior to the meetings, the DFA released its own interpretation of the MDT stating that Washington would honour its obligations under the treaty if the Philippines' national security and territorial integrity in the WPS were challenged and that Manila aimed at maximising the benefits from it (Lee-Brago, 2012f).¹³⁵ Then, the DFA negated China's accusation that the Philippine delegation to Washington for the meetings was designed to "internationalise" the stand-off. In addition, the DND emphasised that the two sides were still at the diplomatic table and "nobody wants to reach the point where we have to rely on the MDT," thus orientating the audiences to think about the roles of the US (Mangosing, 2012c).

When the meetings occurred, the US committed to supporting the Philippines to modernise its armed forces, but would not take sides in the regional territorial disputes (M. Santos, 2012b). Instead of confirming its second failure in asking for the US's affirmations, the DFA altered its media diplomacy, by issuing official statements to provide information about the result of the meetings.

For the first time, Manila introduced its SCS strategy consisting of legal, diplomatic and political tracks (GOVPH, 2012n, 2012v). It stated that both sides agreed to "build a minimum credible defense posture" and the US reiterated its obligations under the MDT through military exercises, financial subsidies, information sharing and defense equipment transfer. Interestingly, the DFA mentioned and described the Scarborough Shoal incident as a challenge for the government and called the WPS "a core national interest" in the statements. The DFA statement confirmed: "the alliance (with the US) does not aim to confront or contain anyone" (GOVPH, 2012n, 2012v).

On May 9, the DFA released a statement stating that under the MDT, the US would respond to its commitment to protect the Philippines from external armed attacks in the SCS. First, the statement cited Article IV of the Treaty, stating that when "an armed attack occurred in the Pacific area on either of the Parties," the other "would act to meet the common dangers in accordance with its constitutional processes." Moreover, the statement also contained a consulting mechanism for the two sides when an armed attack against either of them happened. In addition, the DFA cited Article V which stated that the treaty covers "the metropolitan territory of either of the Parties, on the island territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific Ocean, and its armed forces, public vessels or aircraft

¹³⁵ See No 13, 14 and 23 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

in the Pacific” in the document (Rosario, 2012b). A letter sent by US State Secretary, Cyrus Vance to General Carlos P. Romulo, in January 6, 1979 which recognised that “the US considers the South China Sea to be part of the Pacific Area” were also reiterated. The reference implied that the Vance assurance covered the Scarborough Shoal in “the Pacific,” and that any armed attack by China targeting Philippine vessels in the area would trigger counteractions from the US, under the MDT, under its constitutional processes, against “the common enemy” (Laviña, 2012).

From ASEAN

The DFA formally cited ASEAN-China dialogue relations such as the ASEAN regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asia Summit (EAS) as an important part of Manila’s SCS strategy with the objective of engaging China in a dispute settlement mechanism to solve the SCS issues peacefully (GOVPH, 2012n). In the media channels, Del Rosario said that “China wants to establish the rules” in the WPS, which was “a negative implication for everyone, not just the Philippines,” painting China as a threat to the stability of the region¹³⁶ (Lee-Brago, 2012e).

It is argued the DFA’s media efforts to seek ASEAN support were not skilful enough to attract the attention and support of the people and governments in the region.¹³⁷ As a result, none of the ASEAN member states responded to Manila’s call until April 27, frustrating the Filipino politicians (David, 2012).

Mobilising support for the legal track

The DFA formally ran a media campaign for the legal initiative from this stage (GOVPH, 2012n). First, the DFA circulated discourses that the Scarborough Shoal dispute related to fundamental interests of regional and international communities in terms of building a rules-based environment and maintaining the freedom of navigation and commerce and that China’s actions in the SCS violated the UN Charter (GOVPH, 2012d). Secondly, Manila criticised China’s rejection of the legal invitation for missing an opportunity to validate its claims in the SCS in accordance with UNCLOS. Then Manila confirmed it would unilaterally pursue a legal case (Esplanada, 2012c). Thirdly, the DFA brought the incident and its legal initiative to the agenda of UN fora, such as the meeting between Del Rosario and UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, at the UN Headquarters in New York on May 4 and the 30th anniversary of UNCLOS on May 8 (GOVPH, 2012o, 2012p).

¹³⁶ See No 20 and 37 of Table B -2 (Appendix 2)

¹³⁷ See No 29 and 31 of Table B -2 (Appendix 2)

Via the media channels, the government continued to describe the legal choice as a “peaceful resolution” to the incident.¹³⁸ In addition, President Aquino frequently leaked to the media that his officials were consulting international legal experts to prepare their case, and documenting Chinese behaviours at the shoal so as present evidence of their incursions at an international tribunal (Bordadora, 2012c).¹³⁹ Filipino elites also urged the whole nation to unite in articulating the country’s claims via legal cases so that not only China, but also the rest of the world, would be informed that the shoal is part of the Philippines (Romero, 2012c).

In this way, on the one hand, Manila wanted to attract the attention of the international community and mobilise support from the other UNCLOS party countries. On the other hand, such international and domestic public support was turned into political pressure to make China reconsider its behaviours at sea, by using the threat that the incident would be brought to the international court.

2.2. The media outlets’ narratives

Reporting the government’s efforts at sea

The media continued functioning as a channel to convey information provided by government bodies regarding developments at sea. For instance, the media reported that on April 27, Chinese Navy ships harassed Philippine fishing ships and built steel posts and navigation buoys within the waters surrounding Scarborough Shoal, while a PN ship and a Coast Guard vessel were still deployed at the shoal (Esplanada & Ubac 2012). Besides reporting the fishing bans of the two sides,¹⁴⁰ the media also reiterated Manila’s denial of China’s fishing ban and reported the BFAR’s advice to Filipino fishers to respect the ban and to leave the shoal (GOVPH, 2012j). The media said the Coast Guard ship remained at the shoal to patrol the area and to make sure that Filipino fishermen did not engage in fishing in the region until May 24 (Bordadora, 2012b). Meanwhile, criticism was directed at China for deploying fishing vessels in the waters of the shoal despite fishing bans (GOVPH, 2012b). Until May 24, the DFA reported the Chinese side had retained at least 92 ships at the site (Lee-Brago, 2012g)

On May 23, for the first time, the DFA updated the number of Chinese vessels at the shoal via its formal statement¹⁴¹ and accused the Chinese actions of threatening

¹³⁸ See No 4 of B -1 and No18 of Table B -2 (Appendix 2)

¹³⁹ See No 12 and 9 of Table B -2 (Appendix 2)

¹⁴⁰ See stage 2, part B, III, Chapter 3.

¹⁴¹ For instance, on May 23, the DFA stated that there were “5 Chinese government vessels and 16 fishing boats, ten of which were inside the lagoon while six were outside... there were also 56 utility boats, 27 of which were inside the lagoon and 29 were outside.”

Philippine sovereignty and jurisdiction over the shoal and sovereignty rights over the Philippine EEZ, and violating DOC in the SCS and the UN Charter. It sent the government's official request to the Chinese vessels to immediately withdraw from the shoal and refrain from conducting provocative actions.

Activities on the diplomatic front

Filipinos started to become concerned about the government's diplomatic stance and its effectiveness in handling the incident, putting pressure on the Aquino government (Melencio & Masa, 2012). To handle the pressure, first, the Aquino government explained the reasons for failures on the diplomatic front. Aquino's administration blamed China for unprofessional behaviour that destroyed the two sides' efforts to achieve a de-escalation of tensions. For instance, on April 28, the DFA blamed the Chinese embassy for conveying inaccurate information to the government in Beijing and wrongly accusing Manila of breaking a so-called withdrawal agreement. Del Rosario explained to the media that "there was no agreement" ("DFA halts talks," 2012).

Moreover, Manila showed its endless efforts on this front. It stated in the media that on May 24, the Philippines' Assistant Foreign Secretary for Asia Pacific Affairs, Teresa Lazaro, had met with the Chinese Ambassador, Ma Keqing, and lodged its seventh diplomatic protest to Beijing regarding the increasing number of Chinese vessels at the shoal (Lee-Brago, 2012g).

The DFA also countered China's use of the Philippine media to assert its own narratives. For instance, China published an article, titled "The Stand-off between Beijing and Manila around the Huangyan Island: Who owns the shoal?" in the Philippines. On May 27, the DFA blamed the Chinese Embassy for "distortion of facts" in the article. Especially, the DFA accused Ma Keqing of wrongfully delivering a non-existent agreement of withdrawal of all vessels from the shoal and clarified that both sides had agreed not to undertake any provocative action there (Esplanada, 2012h).

Describing China's SCS strategy¹⁴²

Filipino scholars' analysis of China's SCS strategy during the stand-off became one of the popular themes in the media. Discussing China's motivation in choosing the Philippines as its SCS target, they argued that China had always been interested in the vast resources of oil and gas in Philippine waters (Laguatan, 2012). Some argued the incident was mobilised to divert the Chinese public from domestic scandals, such as the Bo Xilai affair, to international issues or just to show the Party's power (Dumlao, 2012).

¹⁴² See No 2 of Table B -2 (Appendix 2)

Others believed that China just wanted to send a signal to the other claimant states (Mercado, 2012).¹⁴³ Most of them agreed with the government's narrative that "China would not go to war with the Philippines over Scarborough Shoal" and that the Philippine government could handle the tension by peaceful means (Macairan, 2012).

For China's SCS strategy, Philippine elites discerned that Beijing was flexing its military force against Manila at a low-intensity level and gradually escalating the tension with the objective of grabbing part of the WPS, particularly the Scarborough Shoal, from the Philippines (Lee-Brago, 2012a). In addition, China gave assurances that it wanted a diplomatic solution to the dispute, but it did not put any effort into mediating or de-escalating tensions (T. G. Santos, 2012a). Moreover, as they argued, China fanned the flames of nationalism in China via its state-controlled media system (Escoda, 2012; Jose Ma Montelibano, 2012). For the information battle, the media reported that the Chinese government told the Philippine journalists, who had been invited to Beijing, that reducing sensational news coverage was a way to ease tensions between the two nations and urged them to cooperate with the Chinese media to reduce it (Avendaño, 2012c).

Dealing with economic pressure¹⁴⁴

The Philippines' media discourse on economic sanctions was started on May 3 when China rejected the Philippines' banana exports and limited tours to the Philippines (Agcaoili, 2012). However, the government delayed announcing its stance on the issues until May 11, when the President's Office rejected the connection between the economic issues and the Scarborough Shoal incident (Panares & Domingo, 2012). In the media, there were some scholars who supported the government's views and argued that the Chinese restriction on Philippine bananas came more than a month before the incident. Moreover, they assured the public that China was only one of the Philippines' target markets, not a top priority like the US, Japan and Korea (Regalado, 2012).

However, pressure on the government increased as the media published the Filipino fruit exporters and tourism agencies' concerns and disappointment in relation to the government. They criticised the government's "retaliatory efforts" for resulting in bigger economic losses for the Philippines (Calica, 2012d). Figures on economic deficits caused by the sanctions¹⁴⁵ were updated frequently on the media, which might have heightened dismay and anxiety among the public (Jaymalin, 2012). To reduce pressure, the

¹⁴³ See No 26 of Table B -2 (Appendix 2)

¹⁴⁴ See No 5 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

¹⁴⁵ Accordingly, around USD 33.6 million to the Filipino banana industry that was lost due to China's sanctions.

government sent a special envoy to Beijing to ease tensions between the two countries and decided on a special assistance package for banana farmers who had been affected by China's inspections (Bordadora, 2012a).

Managing Filipino nationalism¹⁴⁶

As the incident was confirmed, nationalist elites in the Philippines extensively used the media to urge the government to react more strongly against China,¹⁴⁷ such as by imposing trade tariffs on or conducting boycotts of Chinese products (Esplanada, 2012j). Such heated rhetoric penetrated media reports, news airwaves and cyberspace creating an atmosphere where many Filipinos were willing to sacrifice their lives for national sovereignty (Jose Ma. Montelibano, 2012).

Nationalist movements reached a peak with the anti-China protests led by a pro-government party, Akbayan. Its calls for mass demonstrations against China's actions were aired in the media from April 27 with narratives such as: "This is a matter of Philippine sovereignty. Somebody is stepping on our shore. We should tell them (to) get out" (Calica, 2012e). They argued that mass demonstrations were a legitimate way for the Filipinos, at home and overseas, to express their voice, to stay in line with the government, to mobilise the international community's sympathy, and even to make China "lose face" for its bullying behaviours (Lee-Brago, 2012a).

When mass demonstrations took place in the Philippines on May 11, the media described them as peaceful and safe events with around only 500 Filipinos waving national flags and chanting slogans like "make peace, not war," and "China stop bullying the Philippines" ("Anti-China protests," 2012). The media also reported that overseas Filipinos staged rallies outside Chinese embassies and consulates in Vancouver, New York, Washington DC, Paris, Switzerland, Ireland, South Africa, South Korea, Hong Kong and other countries and international cities (Rueda, 2012). By doing so, although the influence of these mass demonstrations was doubtful because of low participation, the media channels played a role in connecting the movements and converted them into political pressure on the governments in China and the Philippines. The media reposted China's safety warning and cancellation of tours to the Philippines due to the protests, as well as its accusation that the Aquino government had a hand in the movements (Lee-Brago, 2012a).

¹⁴⁶ See No 8 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

¹⁴⁷ See No 30 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

In this context, the Aquino government first denied the Chinese accusation, emphasising that it was still committed to talking with Beijing and called on the Chinese side not to retaliate against the overseas Filipinos. Moreover, a warning message was also sent to Filipino nationalists that mass protests might threaten the government's de-escalation efforts. In addition, the government utilised the media to convey its efforts to manage the demonstrations including deploying more than a hundred police officers around the Chinese Consular and Embassy offices in Manila (Esplanada, 2012j).

The media became a tool for Manila to prevent the Philippine public from being exposed to Chinese nationalist rhetoric and to continue its de-escalation efforts. When the Philippine media criticised a CCTV newsreader who described the Philippines as part of Chinese territory, with the former claiming the Chinese channel had made a "Freudian slip" and this was "another sign of China's arrogance," the DFA downplayed the issue as "an inadvertent statement" (Esplanada, 2012d).

It is argued that the government's priorities at this stage included de-escalating the incident while asserting its sovereignty claims. However, the stalemated situation at sea and on the diplomatic front forced the government in Manila to internationalise the incident. Meanwhile, political pressure on the Aquino administration was increased as a result of China's economic sanctions and Philippine nationalist movements.

3. THE THIRD STAGE (27 MAY – 30 JUNE 2012)

3. 1. The DFA's narratives

Managing information on the withdrawals

It is argued that the DFA managed to keep a low profile over developments at the shoal at this stage. The Philippines suddenly announced that both sides had agreed to withdraw all vessels first from inside the lagoon on June 5 and then from the shoal on June 15 without revealing details of the negotiation with the Chinese government.¹⁴⁸ The President's Office described the move as "the gesture of both parties to de-escalate tension in the shoal" ("AIWPHI," 2012d; "DFA," 2012a). However, on June 9, the media quoted the MFA's explanation that the two Chinese government vessels had left because they had finished their cleaning mission in the lagoon from May 30, meaning that the withdrawal was not because of the announced agreement ("AIWPHI," 2012c). Under pressure from the media and public, Raul Hernandez answered in an interview with the PDI that the verbal agreement between China and the Philippines only covered the

¹⁴⁸ Accordingly, the two Chinese government vessels, joining with six other fishing ships versus the two Philippine coast guard vessels repositioned outside the lagoon. Around 30 Chinese fishing vessels remained inside the lagoon while none of the Philippine fishing vessels operated there (See Part B, III, chapter 3).

withdrawal of vessels inside the lagoon (Boncocan, 2012). On June 15, Del Rosario told the media that China had pledged to withdraw all its vessels at the shoal. By publishing the so-called commitment in the media, it is argued that besides meeting the public's demand, Manila planned to mobilise public pressure to compel to China to obey the agreement.

On June 16, President Aquino ordered the PCG and BFAR survey ships to leave the shoal due to an impending storm and reiterated that the departure of the Philippine vessels had not been based on any Chinese request. The Filipino officers stated that a re-evaluation of the situation at the shoal would be conducted after the weather became better, but did not commit to redeployment of its vessels to the shoal in case China refused to comply with its pledge (Avendaño, 2012d). By publishing the withdrawal order in this way, the Philippine government aimed to convince the audiences that the decision was a rational choice to guarantee the safety of the two government vessels' crews in bad weather, as a response to China's commitment, and not to give up national sovereignty over the shoal.

Failure to compel China to withdraw its vessels

After this juncture, the government continued to track Chinese vessels and called for China to obey the commitment to leave (T. G. Santos, 2012b).¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile, when questioned by the media, Manila's officials used rhetoric to show their determination to defend the nation's sovereignty such as "the Chinese are not leaving, we have to go back" (Pazzibugan, 2012d).¹⁵⁰ On June 25 and 26, the DFA consecutively published two statements to inform that from June 23 none of the Chinese or Filipino vessels would remain inside the lagoon (GOVPH, 2012c, 2012q, 2012u). However, on the next day, after noting that Chinese ships took control over the access to the shoal,¹⁵¹ the DFA and DND kept silent over the situation and stated that they were waiting for advice from the President (Pazzibugan, 2012b).

When the government decided not to re-deploy its vessels back to the shoal, the DFA changed its stance by saying that "the Chinese fishing boats have obviously returned" and bitterly accused China of renegeing on the bilateral commitment

¹⁴⁹ For instance, the DND updated on the media that only two Chinese government vessels had left the shoal, leaving six Chinese government ships at outside, and around 30 fishing vessels inside, the lagoon until June 19 (for further information, see Part B, III Chapter 3). On June 22, the DND suggested to send maritime enforcement vessels back to the scene if there were still Chinese fishing boats inside the lagoon (Pazzibugan, 2012d; Rodis, 2012).

¹⁵⁰ See No 38 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

¹⁵¹ On June 27, the Philippine Air Force spotted that there were 3 CMS ships and 2 FLEC ships outside the lagoon and 6 fishing and 17 utility boats inside (Callar, 2012b).

(Pazzibugan, 2012b). The Philippines aimed at turning the tables on China, implying that the loss of the control over the shoal was because of China's dishonesty. Moreover, in order to save face with the domestic and regional audiences, Manila did not admit Beijing's de facto control over the shoal. The government assured the public that the Chinese move would not weaken the Philippines' stance on its sovereignty claims over Scarborough Shoal and that other measures including the legal and diplomatic tracks were deployed (Esplanada, 2012b, 2012k). However, it is argued that the Aquino government could not convince the media and the domestic public over its failures. The Philippine media said the government's withdrawal on June 15 was a move to give up the country's claim over the area, or a step that left "China in control of the Scarborough Shoal" (Romero, 2012b). The media frankly stated that Beijing had not expressed any intention of withdrawing its ships and the Philippines had been cheated by China (Rodis, 2012).

3. 2. The media outlets' narratives

Managing Manila's internationalisation tactic¹⁵²

Before withdrawing its vessels from the shoal, the Aquino government continued its internationalisation tactic. On May 27, Manila threatened to discuss the stand-off during the President's meetings with his counterparts in the US and the United Kingdom (UK) (Bordador & Santos, 2012). Moreover, on May 30, on his official trip to Malaysia, the Vice President of the Philippines, Jejomar Binay, discussed the tension at a meeting with the Malaysian Prime Minister, Najib Razak, and said to the Malaysian Prime Minister that he considered the tension to be a regional issue, hence, he might want support for a "multilateral solution" (Esplanada, 2012g).

In the visit to the US, President Aquino explained in detail about the issue and the Philippines' SCS strategy in his meetings with US president Barack Obama (DFA, 2012; GOVPH, 2012h). In addition, in reporting the results of the meetings between the two leaders, the DFA linked the role of the US-Philippine relations with the incident. The DFA stated that US President, Barack Obama, had expressed his support for the Philippines' peaceful and diplomatic efforts to manage the incident. Then, it also cited the words of US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, who said, the US did "oppose the use of force or coercion by any claimant to advance its claims" and that the US would "continue to monitor the situation closely" as part of its efforts "in the maintenance of the freedom of navigation and peace and stability in the region." The US' commitment to

¹⁵² See No 3 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

honouring mutual obligations with the Philippines under the MDT was also inserted in the statement (GOVPH, 2012h).

After withdrawing its vessels, Manila limited mentioning the stand-off at diplomatic events as well as press conferences. In reporting the visit of Myanmar Foreign Minister, U Wunna Maung Lwin, to Manila on June 15, the Aquino government did not cite the stand-off (Reyes, 2012).

Supporting de-escalating the tension¹⁵³

Controlling information over negotiations

Reporting the meeting between the Chinese and Philippine Defence Ministers on May 30, the DND told the media that the two sides had agreed to maintain communication channels while dealing with “difficulties.” Meanwhile, China’s Defence Minister, Liang Guanglie, stated that both sides should “stay calm (and) make prudent remarks” and “avoid overstatements and misinterpretations by other parties” (Pazzibugan, 2012c). There was no information in the Philippine media at this stage regarding the backdoor negotiations in Beijing between Philippine and Chinese officials as well as mediation between the two sides with US support.

Preventing the tension from re-emerging

The government used media diplomacy to prevent tensions from re-emerging due to issues such as Philippine ports hosting foreign warships and a ramming incident which happened close to the shoal. The government repeatedly confirmed that the visits of foreign warships from the US and Japan were “part of the routine port calls that friendly navies make” and scheduled long before the incident (Esplanada, 2012f). This was a message against accusations by anti-American militant groups, who blamed the Aquino government for being utilised for the US’ interests. Moreover, it was also a message to reassure China whose leaders expressed their displeasure at any larger US presence in the region.

For the ramming incident, which killed one and left four other Philippine fishermen missing on June 25, the Aquino government denied assumptions in the media that the incident was caused by China and linked with the Scarborough Shoal stand-off and rejected requests to take counter actions against China (Uy, 2012). After finding that the incident was caused by Hong Kong vessels, Philippine officials continued warning the media and other stakeholders not to link the incident with the stand-off (Pazzibugan, 2012b).

¹⁵³ See No 2 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

IV. CONCLUSION

1. 1. What were the common media narratives that the Philippine media portrayed and how did these media narratives function in the stand-off?

The results in Tables D-1 and 2 show the common narratives that the Philippines had sought peaceful policies to de-escalate the tension, while also asserting its sovereignty over the shoal by focusing more on pointing out the legal basis for its claims, rather than on strongly accusing China of violating the country's sovereignty. In order to manage the incident, the Philippines relied on bilateral diplomatic channels, initiating legal methods and mobilising the attention of third-party actors and the international community.

1. 2. How did the Aquino government conduct media diplomacy and what were the objectives?

Setting goals for media diplomacy

It is argued that there were at least three main goals: to support its general strategy towards China during the incident, to support its long-term WPS strategy and to protect the nation's image. First, although managing to express its stance over the incident at the same start date as China, Manila chose to keep a low profile over the following days to pursue its peaceful and diplomatic principles. When the situation at the shoal escalated and diplomatic channels stalemated, Manila deployed media diplomacy to pursue its three major tracks in dealing with China. In addition, media diplomacy was deployed to manage nationalist movements and other relevant issues such as economic sanctions with the objective of releasing political pressures on the government, putting pressure on China and preventing the erosion of bilateral relations. When China dominated at sea and took control over the shoal, the Aquino government used media diplomacy to end the tension and minimised negative impacts on its prestige, domestically and globally.

Identifying target audiences

For domestic and overseas Filipinos, the mid-term election in 2013 jointly forced the Aquino government to put more effort into keeping them informed about the incident and to shape common understanding over the state's stance, principles and policy (Ortuoste, 2013). The purpose was to shape common perceptions over the issue, which was a necessary step for the government to unite the nation and gain public support.

For international audiences, the government's goals were to gain their attention and then turn their support into political pressure against China's aggressiveness while maintaining their independence and territorial integrity and sovereignty. To reach

Chinese audiences, due to the CPC's control of the media, Manila had to send its narratives via the international media with the hope of influencing their knowledge and perception over the SCS issues for the longer-term.

Limitations of the Philippine government's media diplomacy

In dealing with China's new tactics

There was no doubt that Manila's press and information networks lagged behind those of Beijing. The relevant bodies of the government provided contradictory information on several occasions, causing confusions in information flows and negatively affecting the Aquino administration's prestige. Moreover, during the incident, the Aquino government had struggled to appoint a new diplomat to China, creating many disadvantages for its media strategy, especially in communicating with Chinese audiences. In addition, the crisis was considered as one of the first cases where China tested its "extended coercion" and "salami-slicing" strategy in the SCS (Baviera, 2016a, p. 168). As a result, it is argued that the Philippines was not able to conduct a comprehensive media strategy to coordinate and support its overall WPS strategy for dealing with China during the stand-off.

In managing information over backdoor diplomacy

It is argued that when controlling information about backdoor diplomatic activities and secret bilateral meetings, the DFA prevented the media and other stakeholders of the government such as the Senate and the House of Representatives from accessing details of the progress of negotiations without any supplemental tactics to amend concerns. This caused concerns in the public and elites over the government's capability to handle the crisis (Mendez, 2012a).

In mobilising support from external stakeholders

The Philippines has considered ASEAN as an "indispensable partner" in maintaining the stability of the region through norms and its fora with external powers (Ortuoste, 2013). In July 2012, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' failure to issue a joint communiqué could be considered as a weakness of the Philippines' media tactics in attempting to mobilise ASEAN in the handling of the Scarborough Shoal crisis. Evidence showed that the Aquino government neglected to insert the incident into the agenda of bilateral meetings between the Philippines and the other ASEAN countries as well as multilateral meetings with China and the US (GOVPH, 2012a). Although Manila linked the incident with the peace and freedom of navigation in the region, it did not popularise the content via the media.

Moreover, Manila did not focus on seeking support from countries that had also been involved in tensions with China such as Japan and Vietnam. Narratives of support from the public in the regional countries were also neglected and rarely reposted in Philippine media (Katigbak, 2012b; Mindoro, 2012). Hence, it could be said that Manila missed opportunities not only to draw the attention of regional audiences towards the incident, but also to borrow the influence of the ASEAN community to handle the crisis.

1. 3. What were the effects of media diplomacy?

Supporting the Philippines' SCS strategy

It is argued that media diplomacy played a key role in President Aquino's balancing policy vis-à-vis an assertive China in the SCS. This policy comprised of developing the AFP, strengthening the Philippine-US alliance and internationalising the tensions via regional and multilateral mechanisms, while managing the direct tensions with China via formal and informal diplomatic channels (Castro & Cruz, 2014b, 2016b).

Shaping narratives about its sovereignty claims over the shoal

The Aquino government's media diplomacy was used to assert Philippine sovereignty claims and to protest China's ones over the shoal during the tension with a legal basis and evidence from the very first stage.¹⁵⁴ Manila aimed to prove that the Philippines had a superior claim to the shoal and surrounding waters in the eyes of international audiences. It also provided the basis for the government to deploy its legal track in the future and for the Philippine media channels to develop their own national sovereignty narratives over the shoal (Ortuoste, 2013). However, partly due to pressure to defuse the tension, Manila did not continue the tactic during the process of managing the stand-off.

Developing a minimum credible defence posture

It is argued that the Aquino government employed media diplomacy to utilise the incident and the power of asymmetrical relations between the Philippines and China for this goal. Through narratives of the deployments at the shoal, the government emphasised the asymmetric power situation between the two sides, strengthening perceptions that the country's military lacked the capability to repel China's assertiveness and that there was a need to modernise the armed forces. For instance, the Philippines sent one coast guard vessel, while China mobilised civilian ships including fishery administration and maritime surveillance ones (Calica, 2012c). They also functioned to legitimate the

¹⁵⁴ See No 5, 6,7 of Table D-2 and No 6, 11, 15 and 19 of Table D-1 (Appendix 2)

country's demand to develop a "minimum credible defence posture" in order to protect its rights and sovereignty in the eyes of international audiences (Abinales, 2013).

Seeking US support

Among the SCS claimant countries, only the Philippines has a formal alliance with a major power, the US, under the MDT. However, there were many challenges for Manila to manoeuvre the MDT for its political goals.¹⁵⁵ First, the Treaty does not provide for an automatic reaction from either the Philippines or the US in the event that the other was under military attack (Castro & Cruz, 2014b). Moreover, the US remains ambiguous about specifying the geographic scope of the MDT, refusing to clarify if the Philippines' "metropolitan territory" covers the claimed areas in the SCS (Ortuoste, 2013). In addition, anti-American sentiments in the Philippines were another challenge for the Aquino administration's US strategy. A request by Manila to Washington for intervention in the SCS might have caused Beijing to retaliate directly against Manila or to make a deal with Washington. Furthermore, an official rejection from the US might have affected negatively opportunities for Manila to convince the US in the future and place it into a disadvantageous situation in the tension with China.

To deal with the dilemma, firstly, Manila reiterated its principle of not involving third-party actors, including the US, directly in the incident with the objectives of fulfilling its commitment to maintaining the nation's independence and territorial integrity. Further, this stance was designed to complement its other strategies to de-escalate the tension, including avoiding provoking China. Secondly, Manila altered its media tactics towards the US, particularly from the second stage when the US continued setting itself apart from the territorial disputes. The media ran a discourse that the disputed shoal was part of "metropolitan" Philippine territory and that "in case of attack by China, the US is not only morally obligated to come to the aid of the Philippines - it is also legally and politically obligated by formal treaty" (Rosario, 2012b). Moreover, by putting the Scarborough Shoal incident on to the bilateral agenda with the US in the international media, Manila aimed to fortify its own interpretation, reminding the US about its obligations under the Treaty and confirming the linkage between the incident and Philippine-US relations. For the domestic audience, these statements provided legal references for the Philippine media channels to shape their narratives on the role of the US not only for the crisis, but also for the future. This was also an important step in mobilising the media to stay in line with the government to manage anti-US sentiments

¹⁵⁵ See No 3, 9 of Table D-1 and No 12, 17, 18 of Table D-2 (Appendix 2)

domestically. For Beijing, Manila's message was that it had the basis to activate the MDT to defend its sovereignty rights and interests in the WPS regardless of the US' ambiguity if an armed attack happened at the shoal (Castro & Cruz, 2016b).

During the third stage, President Aquino reportedly asked for a definite security guarantee during his trip to the US (Castro & Cruz, 2014b). Manila altered its media narrative again, stating that the country appreciated the US's help in strengthening the Philippines' force while being committed to not involving the US in the territorial tension (Katigbak, 2012a; Lucas, 2012). The narratives reflected the Aquino government's priority of de-escalating and ending the tension with China. Meanwhile, they helped to save face for the government in front of the domestic audience due to the failures to seek US affirmation of the country's security while retaining other chances to receive more US assistance for its long-term military modernisation plan.

Legal methods¹⁵⁶

In the media, the legal track was used as a tool to create unity in domestic politics. President Aquino put himself on the line by stating, "It would be an impeachable offence if the President would cede any part of our territory" and citing the legal track as evidence of his administration's efforts (M. Santos, 2012a). Moreover, the legal initiative was welcomed among Filipino politicians. They believed that an international arbitration case would function as a peaceful resolution for the disputes in accordance with international law, while nationalist politicians considered it as a "shame campaign" against China or a way to show the Philippines' spirit of "not retreating" (Romero, 2012c).

Moreover, the legal track was cited as the government's ongoing effort not to give up the nation's territorial sovereignty. The legal invitation was a gamble that China might acknowledge that its nine-dash claim would have no credible legal basis to the disputed region under the UNCLOS, and hence, could pave the way for negotiations with the Philippines and the other claimant states in the future (Dor, 2015).

Managing nationalism

According to the media, a common goal of the demonstrators was to express their support for the government who called the protests "patriotic and solidarity" actions. By doing so, the Aquino government took the opportunity to unite and manage nationalist and patriotic sentiments, turning them into support for the government, especially for its WPS policy. On the other hand, it aimed to put political pressure from the nationalist movements on to the CPC with the hope of reminding it about China's image in the eyes

¹⁵⁶ See No 3, 8, 11 of Table D-1 and No 16, 26 of Table D-2 (Appendix 2)

of the Filipinos and the world. In addition, by managing nationalist rhetoric describing China's behaviour as a threat to the country's territorial integrity, dissent towards the US was also drowned out, generating a suitable environment for the public to be positively disposed to the government's seeking external support, including from the US (Ortuoste, 2013). Moreover, the nationalist movements in the Philippines could not prevent the Aquino government from de-escalating the stand-off (Burgonio, 2012).

Strengthening the nation's prestige

First, the popular narratives of the peaceful principle¹⁵⁷ showed that the government painted the Philippines as a peace-loving country (Evangelista, 2012c; Romero, 2012a). Moreover, the legal initiative could paint the Philippines as an actor abiding by the rules of international law to settle international disputes¹⁵⁸ (Romero, 2012c). Moreover, during the anti-China protests, the Philippine government managed its media tactics to defend and project the image of a democratic country by protecting the freedom of speech of the Filipinos and advising Filipino demonstrators to act peacefully and legally. The media described the demonstrations as a united movement by the Filipinos in the Philippines and around the world, demonstrating a united nation (GOVPH, 2012e). Lastly, quickly deploying moves to guarantee the safety of foreign citizens in the Philippines during the protests built up its prestige in the international community.

1. 4. Can the media be a new way to resolve the crisis?

According to the official principles, media diplomacy, among other tactics, was deployed to further the Philippines' priority of seeking peaceful resolutions to the incident. For example, in the position paper issued during the first stage, the DFA separated the disputed shoal from the Spratly Islands which are referred to as the KIG. By rejecting China's argument that the shoal was part of the disputed Spratly Islands, this disconnected the incident from the other issues in the SCS, partly preventing the issue from becoming complicated.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, in order to minimise the negative impacts on people-to-people and government-to-government relations between the two nations, the result showed that the government managed to send its criticism of the Chinese side via the media, not via the state's channels, while limiting the targeting of Chinese people. However, the SCS issues, and the Scarborough Shoal incident in particular, were impacted by various sets of factors ranging from nationalism, the 2013 mid-term election,

¹⁵⁷ See No 2 of Table D-1 and No 3 of Table D-2 (Appendix 2)

¹⁵⁸ See No 8 of Table D-1 and No 26 of Table D-2 (Appendix 2)

¹⁵⁹ See No 7 and 20 of Table D-2 (Appendix 2)

political culture in relation to Philippine foreign policy towards major powers, making the process of managing the tensions more complicated (Ortuoste, 2013).

CHAPTER VI: MEDIA DIPLOMACY IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA ARBITRATION CASE

This chapter considers media strategies during the SCS arbitration case, in which the Philippines mounted a legal challenge to China's SCS strategy. The argument of the chapter is that as part of its SCS strategies, the Philippines deployed media diplomacy to support its legal case and to gain its WPS goals. China, for its part used a defensive media strategy to handle the legal case and obtain its long-term SCS goals.

PART I: THE PHILIPPINES' MEDIA DIPLOMACY

I. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

1. THE FIRST STAGE (JANUARY 2013 - MARCH 2014)

1. 1. The DFA's media narratives

Playing the role of information and diplomatic channels¹⁶⁰

Manila committed to fully cooperating with the tribunal and keeping the public informed about the case (Lee-Brago, 2013d). In a statement on 22 January, the DFA announced that Manila had filed a case against China and that it had summoned Ma Keqing, the Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines, to send the document and a note verbale inviting China to participate in the case (GOVPH, 2013b). At a press meeting on the following day, Manila said that Judge Rudiger Wolfrum, a German international law expert and justice at the ITLOS, had been appointed to represent the Philippines to the arbitral panel, and the Solicitor General Francis Jardeleza was chosen as the agent or the legal representative of the Philippines in the proceedings. An international legal team was assembled with Paul Reichler of the Washington law firm Foley and Hoag, as the lead counsel (GOVPH, 2013b).

China's first response in the media was a statement issued by the Chinese Embassy in Manila on 23 January. The statement called on the Philippines to return to bilateral negotiations but avoided mentioning the case (Quismundo, 2013b). Beijing's official rejection of the case was published in the Philippines on 2 February (Obedencio, 2013). The media also provided information about the developments of the tribunal and responses from the two sides.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ See No 1, 2, 13 and 18 of Table A-1 and No 6, 9 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁶¹ For instance, from 23 March to 21 June 2013, the ITLOS president appointed the members of the panel to handle the case and the tribunal held the first meeting on 11 July regarding Rules of Procedure (Quismundo, 2013a). On 30 March 2014, the Philippines had submitted a Memorial to the tribunal (Rosario, 2014). Meanwhile, the media stated that MFA summoned the Philippine Ambassador in Beijing to protest the submission and urged the Philippines to back bilateral negotiations (Lee-Brago, 2014a).

Providing information about the Philippines' SCS policy¹⁶²

The Aquino government was committed to protecting national sovereignty and upholding the Philippines' interests in the WPS through a peaceful resolution process, while endeavouring to maintain a stable relationship with China at the first stage (Rosario, 2013b). The DFA stated that the legal move was "the last resort for a peaceful resolution on disputes in the WPS after exhaustion of political and diplomatic approaches," while asserting that the legal initiative would not bring to an end exploring diplomatic avenues with China or diminish the Philippines' efforts to promote a binding COC in the SCS (Rosario, 2013c).

Shaping official narratives on the case¹⁶³

The DFA summarised the key goals and the legal basis of the case. They included asking the arbitral tribunal to rule China's nine-dash line claim invalid and illegal; accusing China of illegally laying claim to, occupying and building facilities on certain maritime features, which were within the Philippine continental shelf and did not qualify as islands; compelling China to respect the Philippines' right to its EEZ and continental shelf; and stopping Chinese incursions into areas in the disputed waters claimed by the Philippines (GOVPH, 2013b). Moreover, the legal bases of Manila's resorting to the arbitral tribunal were explained as the President's constitutional mandate to protect the Philippines' national interests, territory and maritime domain and the principle of a rules-based policy that followed international law, especially UNCLOS, in dealing with the SCS dispute (GOVPH, 2013b).¹⁶⁴

The DFA also asserted that the case could occur even without the participation of China under Article 287 and Annex VII of the 1982 UNCLOS. The Philippines noted China's Declaration of 2006 under Article 298 of UNCLOS and avoided raising subjects or making claims that China has, by virtue of that Declaration, been excluded from arbitral jurisdiction. Manila asserted that the arbitration case was to clarify each claimant's lawful maritime entitlements in the SCS under UNCLOS, particularly fishing rights, rights to resources and rights to enforce their domestic laws within their EEZ, and support peace, security, stability and freedom of navigation operations in the SCS (Lee-Brago, 2013f).

¹⁶² See No 1, 4, and 6 of Table A-1 and No 2, 3 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁶³ See No 3 of Table A-1 and No 23, 24 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁶⁴ See No 8 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

1.2. The media outlets' narratives

Mobilising the support of ASEAN¹⁶⁵

The DFA quickly provided information on the case to fellow ASEAN members, including at the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Brunei, the 20th ARF Ministerial Meeting and the 16th ASEAN-China Summit (Rosario, 2013c). Manila created and circulated common narratives, including the argument for the role of UNCLOS in maintaining peace and stability of the region, and the claim that Manila's resorting to arbitration was an "open and friendly" effort and did not violate the core principles of DOC (DFA, 2014d). Additionally, the DFA also promoted a so-called two-track approach at the ASEAN level, including pursuing arbitration so as to resolve disputes and advocating that the implementation of the DOC and the conclusion of a COC was to manage tensions in the SCS (J. Huang & Billo, 2014).

Mobilising support of allies¹⁶⁶

From the beginning, the DFA communicated that the decision to file a case against China was not influenced by external states such as the US or Japan (Lee-Brago, 2013g). However, Manila sought its allies' help to recognise its legal move as a diplomatic and peaceful means to handle the SCS issue (Katigbak, 2013a). In his call with newly appointed US Secretary of State, John Kerry, in February 2013, Del Rosario succeeded in asking for US support for the Philippines' legal approach (Calica, 2013b). The US government's official support was first released in the media on 21 February (Katigbak, 2013b).¹⁶⁷ US President Barack Obama's call for China to "manage its maritime disputes with its neighbours peacefully, without the use of intimidation or coercion" was reposted in the Philippines as a strong encouragement for their challenge to China's expansionism ("Obama warns China," 2013). Japan also expressed support for the Philippines' legal case at an early date (Calica, 2013a).¹⁶⁸ The media reported that in his meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in May 2013, Del Rosario briefed him on the legal case and discussed other diplomatic and political avenues to address the Philippines' maritime concerns (Lee-Brago, 2013e).

Drawing the attention of third-party stakeholders¹⁶⁹

The DFA tried to attach the legal case to the agenda of diplomatic meetings with third-party stakeholders to mobilise their recognition for its legal move. A group

¹⁶⁵ See No 5, 7, 8, 12, and 18 of Table A-1 and No 6, 9, 11, 12, 13 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁶⁶ See No 9, 10, 16, 21, 29, and 32 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁶⁷ See No 8 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁶⁸ See No 16, 22, 32 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁶⁹ See No 9, 10, 11, 17 of Table A-1 and No 11, 19, 22, 24, 25, 33, 34 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

representing the European Parliament in a trip to Manila in February 2013, after being updated about the legal case, recognised it as a peaceful means to deal with the dispute (Ronda, 2013). In July, the media reported that the European Parliament issued a resolution that supported the SCS case and called on Beijing to commit itself to observing international law and the UN Charter in achieving its international goals.

In addition, the DFA and the legal team internationalised the legal case one month later. The Philippine Ambassador to the UN told the UN chief about the case in a meeting in New York on 19 February 2013, and called for a recognition that it “should not be considered an unfriendly act.” In response, the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, assured the Philippines that he would closely monitor developments in the case (Brago, 2013).

From July 2013, the DFA participated extensively in and gave speeches at international academic fora (Lee-Brago, 2013d). Paul Reichler, a lead counsel of the Philippines’ legal team, presented the SCS case at a forum held in New York in October 2013 (Lee-Brago, 2013a). Meanwhile, the media published international studies that clarified the weaknesses of China’s SCS claim such as Professor John Norton Moore’s study which argued China’s nine-dash line had zero basis in maritime law and was “defenceless” (A. Romero, 2013).

Discussing China’s SCS behaviours and strategy¹⁷⁰

The results of the research show that the media updated China’s reactions but did not focus on China’s legal arguments. The Philippine media reported that China’s media had criticised Manila’s high profile lawsuit and its unwillingness to pursue bilateral negotiations with China (Lee-Brago, 2013b). The media also reposted China’s media narratives that portrayed Manila as an aggressor in incidents such as the Scarborough Shoal crisis and accused it of “illegal occupation” of the Spratly Islands (Delon, 2013). They argued that the Philippines’ plan to relocate major air force and navy bases to the former US naval base in Subic Bay in the WPS was aimed at increasing pressure on China and bringing in more outside forces to the region violating the spirit of the DOC (“China criticized AFP,” 2013). The media also reported China’s increasingly assertive behaviour in the SCS. For instance, Chinese ships started to drop materials for construction on Hasa-Hasa shoal in the Spratlys from March 2013, while Beijing imposed fishing laws in the WPS, and threatened to establish an Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the SCS (Romero, 2014a). Moreover, the media reported that China withdrew its invitation to

¹⁷⁰ See No 1, 18, 19, 28 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

President Aquino to attend the 10th China-ASEAN Expo in China in September 2013 to show its displeasure over the legal case (Ubac, 2013). In this way, the media provided diverse narratives on developments at sea for the public to consider.

Stirring up Philippine nationalist and patriotic sentiments¹⁷¹

After filing the legal case, the DFA started an information campaign regarding the WPS issue, particularly the case, for Philippine audiences by hosting lectures at major cities such as Cebu, Baguio, Mindanao and Palawan and meetings with overseas Philippine communities. Through such activities, the DFA called for Philippine youth to unite, to show their patriotism, and to pay more attention to the nation's foreign affairs, especially the WPS issue (DFA, 2014f).

Meanwhile, in the media, Manila managed to project a message that the WPS policy, particularly the legal track, was a consensus between the government and the Congress and was endorsed by the Philippine people (P. Romero, 2013). Philippine scholars and elites praised the government's legal case as "a wise choice" and "the best option" to resolve the SCS issue as it had eliminated China's military advantage (Sy & Romero, 2013). According to a survey published in February 2014, at least 81 percent of Philippine interviewees agreed with Manila's filing of the case (Calica, 2014d).

The media repeatedly quoted the rhetoric of Philippine officials and elites. Secretary Rosario complained that the nine-dash line aimed at "turning an international body of water into a lake of one nation." In the media, domestic and international scholars described China as a "dangerously aggressive" actor that was attempting to use coercion, bullying and "salami-slicing tactics" to secure its maritime interests in the region (Katigbak, 2014c).¹⁷²

On 24 July 2013, the media reported anti-China rallies led by a new group known as the West Philippine Sea Coalition held in front of the Chinese embassy and consulate in Manila and in various cities worldwide.¹⁷³ The Chinese embassy closed its visa section in Makati City for security reasons (Lee-Brago, 2013c). Meanwhile, the DFA reiterated the rights of Filipinos to express their position and sentiments on the WPS issue in a peaceful manner but denied any connection with the demonstrations (Lariosa, 2013).

It is argued that there was a significant development in Manila's understanding of China's SCS strategy as it initiated the legal case. Firstly, Manila systematically sent timely and essential information to its target audience immediately after finishing the

¹⁷¹ See No 8, 11, 13, 17 of Table A-1 and No 3, 17, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30 and 34 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁷² See No 8 and 13 of Table A-1 and No 17, 22, 24, 33 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁷³ See No 30 of Table A-2 (Appendix 1)

filing process. After completing the necessary steps with the Chinese side, Manila then published all those diplomatic steps and its own preparations for the legal case in the media. Secondly, Manila predicted correctly Beijing's key counterarguments and reactions to the case.

2. THE SECOND STAGE (APRIL 2014 – OCTOBER 2015)

2. 1. The DFA's media narratives

Reporting the Philippines' efforts to follow the arbitral process¹⁷⁴

At this stage, China advanced its tactics to distract the Philippines and the audiences from the legal case. On 1 April 2014, the media reported that Chinese embassy Chargé d'Affaires, Sun Xiangyang, had accused Manila of failing to notify Beijing and neglecting negotiation channels before filing the Memorial, thereby seriously damaging bilateral relations (Lee-Brago, 2014a). To nullify China's tactic of shifting the agenda, Manila emphasised its priority which was to urge China to accept the legal invitation instead of making adverse statements (Calica, 2014f).

On 17 March 2015, the DFA sent a supplemental submission regarding Manila's perspective on the jurisdiction of the tribunal (DFA, 2015n). In April, the Philippines sent a letter to the tribunal to criticise China's massive reclamation projects on the maritime features mentioned in the case, and called for the legal process to get underway as quickly as possible (DFA, 2015l). On 9 June 2015, Manila submitted a 300-year-old map that showed Scarborough Shoal as part of the Philippines to the tribunal ("China-PH maritime dispute," 2015).

When the hearing took place, the DFA issued a statement to summarise what the team presented at The Hague on 8 July and published it via the websites of Philippine embassies around the world (DFA, 2015i).¹⁷⁵ Accordingly, the tribunal judged that the case was not on land ownership, that the case was cognisable and justiciable under UNCLOS, and especially, that China's "non-appearance" did not preclude its jurisdiction (Romulo, 2015).

Shaping discourses on the Philippines' legal action¹⁷⁶

To counter China's arguments in the 2014 Position Paper, the DFA reiterated the Philippines' five principal claims (DFA, 2015k). The first was that China is not entitled

¹⁷⁴ See No 1, 2, 3, 10 of Table B-2 and No 1 – 10 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁷⁵ Accordingly, the tribunal decided that it was constituted and had the authority to consider the Philippines' submissions No. 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 11 and 13, and then reserved consideration of its jurisdiction to decide on submissions No. 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 12, and 14 to the merits stage.

¹⁷⁶ See No 3, 4, 5, 7 of Table B-1 and No 8 to 11, 13, and 15 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

to claim what it calls as “historic rights” over the waters and maritime features beyond the limits of its entitlements under the Convention. The second was that, China’s so-called nine-dash line, based on “historic rights,” is groundless under international law. The third was that, the maritime features that China cited as the basis on which to assert its nine-dash line claim are not islands that could generate entitlement to an EEZ or continental shelf. Rather, some are “rock,” low-tide elevations and permanently submerged under the regulation of Article 121, paragraph 3. Hence, none are capable of generating entitlements beyond 12 nautical miles, and some cannot generate any entitlements. Moreover, Beijing’s reclamation projects cannot legally change the original nature of these features. Fourth, the claim was that China had violated the Convention by interfering with the Philippines’ exercise of its sovereign rights and jurisdiction. Finally, the assertion was that China had damaged the maritime environment by its island-building on coral reefs in the Philippines’ EEZ, preventing fishing practices and harvesting of endangered species (Calleja & Dizon, 2015b).

Additionally, Manila repeated that the case was to clarify maritime entitlements in the SCS, and thus the tribunal had jurisdiction over the case. Moreover, Manila stated that, regardless of whether China was claiming that “historic rights” are recognised or allowable under the Convention because they are not precluded by it, the legal dispute between the two sides over China’s claim to and exercise of alleged “historic rights” was a matter falling under the Convention.

Regarding China’s accusation that Manila’s filing of the case had violated the 2002 DOC, Manila argued that the Declaration encourages states, should they prove unable to resolve their disputes through consultations or negotiations, to do so in accordance with the 1982 UNCLOS, which includes the dispute resolution procedures under Part XV (DFA, 2015k). The DFA officers participated in a campaign to create a narrative that UNCLOS mandates that arbitration or conciliation should be the mode of resolution in almost all maritime disputes, refuting China’s statement that resorting to the international tribunal was not a popular choice for maritime disputes (Punay, 2014c).

Raising the awareness of the public over the WPS issues¹⁷⁷

It is argued that Manila developed their information strategy systematically (Romero, 2014c). A documentary series on the SCS issue, namely *Kalayaan* (“freedom”), and a digital version of the pamphlet, “Ang West Philippine Sea: Isang Sipat”, were released for the first time to provide an accessible and comprehensive data resource on

¹⁷⁷ See No 7 and 9 of Table B- 1 and No 2, 3, 14 and 25 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

the Philippines' sovereignty claim, especially in the national language to serve ordinary Filipinos (DFA, 2015e). The DFA continued hosting multi-sectoral fora such as lectures at universities and media meetings with local people and media channels to discuss the WPS issues (DFA, 2014g).

In September 2014, the DFA launched its Special Kapihans campaign, through which government officials held media meetings with local people and media to inform them about the WPS disputes, starting in Olongapo City, Zambales (DFA, 2014b). Manila also invited foreign journalists to visit and inquire about the WPS dispute with China from local businesses and governments in the Philippines at the meetings (Sison, 2015).

Supporting Manila's tactics towards ASEAN¹⁷⁸

At the ASEAN meetings in Myanmar in 2014, Manila provided an update on the legal proceedings and proposed a so-called Triple Action Plan (TAP) to manage tensions in the SCS. Accordingly, ASEAN, in demonstration of its leadership called for a freezing of provocative activities in the SCS on an immediate basis, promoted the DOC on an intermediate basis, and conducted arbitration cases to give finality to the legal basis for clarification of sovereignty claims (DFA, 2014a). The media reported China's protest against the plan, blaming the Philippines for not conducting negotiations with the relevant parties before resorting to arbitration (Calica, 2014a).

When China publicly promoted the reclamation projects in the SCS in 2015, at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meetings, Manila shifted its focus to the immediate goal of the TAP. It called for a consensus on the practical meaning of the principles of non-use of force or threat of force and self-restraint in the DOC and urged the claimant states to stop any actions aimed at fabricating legitimacy and entitlements in the reclaimed features and halt reclamations, construction and aggressive actions to reduce tensions (Rosario, 2015b).

At the ASEAN-China summit in November 2014, the Philippines used the event to call for China "to clarify maritime entitlements through arbitration" (Porcalla, 2014). Meanwhile, at fora between ASEAN and other external dialogue partners, for example, the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit, Manila used the narratives of promoting freedom of navigation in the region and respecting the rule of law to call for these states' support for its legal case. The Philippines' position was widely supported by the participants (Calica, 2015a).

¹⁷⁸ See No b, 5 of Table B-1 and No 13, 16 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

As the host country of working group-level academic workshops under the ASEAN frameworks such as the 2nd ARF Seminar on UNCLOS in May 2014, Manila set the agenda to focus on clarifying the intricacies of UNCLOS and its provisions and applications; particularly in maritime boundary delimitation, the possibilities for cooperation, and dispute settlements (DFA, 2014e).

2. 2. The media outlets' narratives

Managing the tensions with China on the diplomatic front¹⁷⁹

To call on China to participate in the legal case and to exercise self-restraint at sea, the Philippines repeatedly quoted Beijing's statements on its desire for a peaceful resolution to the SCS issues (Calica, 2014f). The Malacañang welcomed the pronouncements by Chinese Ambassador, Zhao Jianhua, that it was not in the interest of China to go to war with its neighbours. Moreover, the media quoted the words of Chinese diplomats who repeated a consensus between President Aquino and Chinese President Hu Jintao in 2011 that bilateral relations included many facets, and that "contentious issues" could be handled "separately" (Calica, 2014g).

Moreover, the Aquino administration mobilised diplomatic opportunities to re-activate high level dialogue between the two states. From 11 to 15 November, media channels created a friendly environment for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit by sending positive signals such as "ice-breaker," "good light" and "reconciliation" of bilateral relations. The PS reported that in a tête-à-tête during a tree-planting ceremony on 11 November, President Aquino and Chinese President Xi Jinping got the chance to discuss their differences over the WPS, with the Chinese leader expressing hope his Philippine counterpart would deal with the matter "in a constructive way" and go back to "previous consensus" (Calica, 2014b). During the meeting, President Aquino asserted the Philippines' stand on the SCS arbitration case, and called for China to react constructively. However, Manila later said that it would not withdraw the legal case in exchange for an improvement in its relations with Beijing (Romero, 2014b).

Mobilising the support of allies

Vietnam

Vietnam started to pay attention to and become involved in the tribunal procedure. The Philippines denied Vietnam's statement that its "legal interests and rights may be affected" by the legal case, but consented to Vietnam being furnished with copies of all the pleadings and documents relevant to the proceedings and observing the hearing at The

¹⁷⁹ See No 4 of Table B-1 and No 6, 9, 13, 21 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

Hague (PCA, 2015). The media quoted Vietnamese diplomats' admiration for the Philippines' legal case, calling it an "unprecedented" show of courage. In return, the Philippines welcomed Vietnam's following of the case and called on the Vietnamese government to activate the legal track by itself or together with Manila to clarify its claim in the SCS (Katigbak, 2014b).

*The US and Japan*¹⁸⁰

On 1 April 2014, the US State Department promptly reiterated the US' support for the Philippines's submission of the Memorial (Katigbak, 2014a). On 16 April 2014, Japan also expressed its support for the submission (Quismundo, 2014). In its annual report to US Congress, the US State Department described China's territorial claim in the SCS as not being in accordance with international law and urged China to participate in the arbitration (Katigbak, 2014d). On 5 December 2014, the Department released a paper that accused China of being ambiguous on its nine-dash lines claim and denied validity to China's claims regarding "historical title" or "historic rights." In bilateral meetings, for example, a meeting with President Obama in Washington, President Aquino talked about the Philippines' WPS policy and gained support from US President Barack Obama for the legal track (Aquino, 2014).

Reporting developments at sea

Filipino observers argued that after being filed before an arbitration tribunal in January 2013, China had been beefing up some features in the SCS, especially those mentioned in the case¹⁸¹ (Calleja, 2015a). President Aquino ordered his government to handle the issue in a peaceful way, to avoid stoking tension (Romero, 2014a).

After noting China's activities in Mabini Reef in February 2014, the DFA promptly lodged a diplomatic protest against China's actions (Laude, 2015). In August 2014, China's reclamation activities were reportedly at Gaven (Burgos) Reef, Chigua (Kennan) Reef and Cuarteron (Calderon) Reef (Laude, 2014b). Also in that month, the DFA announced the resumption of the repair of works on facilities on Pagasa Island (Romero, 2015b). However, on 4 October, President Aquino ordered a freeze on the works to serve the status quo as stated in the SCS case and to keep the Philippines on a "moral high ground" (Mendez, 2014).

The media quoted a report by a third-party academic organisation, IHS Jane's, a London-based security group, in November 2014 on China's construction activities on

¹⁸⁰ See No 6 of Table B-1 and No 19, 29, 30 and 32 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁸¹ See No 7 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

Fiery Cross Reef which warned of the seriousness of the issue (Salaverria, 2014). In addition to voicing diplomatic protests to China, in April 2015, the Philippines formally brought the project to the tribunal (Calleja & Dizon, 2015a; DFA, 2015l).

At sea, China's aggressiveness continued to escalate, such as in the firing of water cannon on Philippine fishing vessels and firing flares at a Philippine Air Force plane (DFA, 2015m). China maintained the presence of its surveillance and navy ships in the WPS, established communication equipment to observe all naval and maritime activities of the Philippine military based in Palawan, and put markers in Recto Bank (Laude, 2014c). The Philippine government lodged diplomatic protests over these activities while the DND committed to maintaining troops to defend the Philippines' sovereignty (Lee-Brago, 2014c).¹⁸²

Managing Philippine nationalism

China's increasingly aggressive and provocative actions provided more material for narratives of the "China threat" and Philippine victimisation to be articulated in the Philippines ("Playing the victim," 2015).¹⁸³ The government named Beijing's rejection of the tribunal as a "threat" to its efforts to deal with the SCS disputes peacefully and a challenge to the rule of international law (Calleja, 2015b). Meanwhile, the media argued that China's artificial islands at sea were designed to change the status quo to actualise its nine-dash-line claim and to have a stronger bargaining position in the legal case (Calleja, 2015a). The media criticised China's reclamation activities as a violation of "the Philippines' exclusive right to authorise construction of artificial islands, installations or other structures" in its claimed features, generating a "source of air challenges" to Philippine Air Forces, and pushing the region to "the brink of miscalculations" (Anda, 2015).

Moreover, information that China had published a new "ten-dash line" in the SCS, including areas being claimed by the Philippines, stirred up concerns in the Philippines. The Malacañang blamed the Chinese map for being contrary to UNCLOS and criticised China for expressing its "unreasonably expansive claim." The government also cited third-party arguments, for instance, the opposition of US Ambassador Philip Goldberg, protesting China's publication of the map (Romero, 2014b).

The rhetoric from Beijing's high-ranking officials was reposted in Philippinemia. China's Defence Minister, Chang Wanquan warned that China "was ready to use

¹⁸² See No 8 of Table B-1 and No 4, 6 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁸³ See No 8 and 17 of Table B-1 and No 6, 11 and 12 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

its military if needed to safeguard its territory” while a state-run media channel in China aired a video showing off the PLA’s preparations to go to war (Laude, 2014d). Philippine scholars argued that Beijing had made use of the Philippine media to send its threat to use force and to exacerbate and turn Chinese nationalist sentiments into political pressure on the Philippines (Punay, 2014b).¹⁸⁴ However, in the Philippines, it is argued that these narratives stirred up nationalism and patriotism against China’s expansionism.

At some points, Philippine extreme nationalists complicated the tensions by urging the government to deploy troops in the hotly disputed areas or to vow to get back territories that were lost to China (Lei Fontamillas, 2014). The rhetoric from the Philippine leaders in this situation was likely to add fuel to the fire. Vice President, Jejomar Binay, stated Filipino troops were “ready to die” to defend the national territory (Clapano, 2014). At the peak of the movement, anti-China rallies regarding the WPS disputes occurred domestically and globally.

In order to manage these reactions, the Aquino government rejected any connection with anti-China protests as well as extreme nationalist activities (Lee-Brago & Diaz, 2014). To turn nationalist and patriotic sentiments into support for the government’s WPS strategy, particularly the legal case, Philippine state officials made the legal case a symbolic resolution for the WPS dispute by running emotional discourses such as “the memorial is more forceful than the Chinese government’s bullying in the region. It is more powerful than the US’ armada of naval ships” (Calica, 2014f). Moreover, the media quoted the advice of Filipino elites who called on the government to use the Memorial and the legal case via social networking sites, like Facebook, to mobilise favourable international public opinion to support and fortify Philippine claims in the WPS (Punay, 2014a).

Narratives of Philippine fishermen, for instance, those who were hit by Chinese water cannon attacks and others who were forced to leave their traditional fishing zones effectively evoked sympathy from the public.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, the narratives could generate a consensus demand that the government needed to work hard, including implementing the military modernisation plan, to deal with Chinese aggression to defend their fishermen and the country’s fishing industry (Dizon, 2015a).

Together with the Aquino government’s repeated calls for uniting the nation, nationalist activists also ran a discourse that China’s threats awakened and united patriotic

¹⁸⁴ See No 20 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁸⁵ See No 27 and 3 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

Filipinos, who used to be “freedom fighters” in the past, to defend their national sovereignty, territorial integrity and national interests (Shahani, 2015). Until the end of this stage, observers argued that many Filipinos had turned their “sense of frustration and anxiety over Chinese bullying” into a “sense of anger and outraged patriotism” over Chinese expansionism (“It’s complicated,” 2015).¹⁸⁶

3. THE THIRD STAGE (NOVEMBER 2015 - AUGUST 2016)

3. 1. The DFA’s media narratives

Defending the Philippines’ legal requests

The argument that the Philippines had presented at the hearings on the merits of the SCS case from 26 to 30 November 2015 was summarised in the media (Lee-Brago, 2015a). Accordingly, for the Philippines, the legal team argued that under UNCLOS, there was no provision validating China’s historical claim in the SCS and that China’s claim did not belong to its maritime entitlements. They stated that “China had asserted exclusive rights over the areas claimed by the nine-dash line and deprived the Philippines’ fishing and exploration operations.” Then, the Philippine side stated that “China had failed to satisfy the requirements to establish the claim, namely a continuous exercise of exclusive control for a long period of time over the said area.” The team also provided eight maps and pointed out that “the first of which dated back to the Ming Dynasty, showed that China’s territory did not include that which it claims now under the nine-dash line.” Hence, Manila requested the tribunal to declare that China’s claim to “historic rights” in the region covered by the nine-dash line was different from a claim to “historic title” regulated under Article 298 of UNCLOS; hence it was inconsistent with UNCLOS.

Regarding the allegations of China’s aggressive behaviours in the Philippines’ claimed EEZ, Manila cited serious incidents which occurred in April and May 2012 at Scarborough and Second Thomas Shoal as a “deliberate disregard for international law” which endangered maritime vessels. The legal team focused on the damage to the regional environment and the SCS coral reef ecosystem caused by China’s island building, and other harmful fishing practices. They then requested the tribunal to rule that China had violated its obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment under UNCLOS. They also criticised China’s reclamation projects for changing the status quo of the disputed maritime features and presenting the tribunal with a “fait accompli.”

For the characters of the eight features, based on Article 121(3) of UNCLOS, the Philippines argued that none of these features could sustain human habitation or economic

¹⁸⁶ See No 11, 12 of Table B-1 and No 3, 12, 14, 22 of Table B-2 (Appendix 1)

life of its own; hence, these could not generate an EEZ or a continental shelf. The Philippines called on the tribunal to rely on the basis of the facts and the law to decide all of the Philippines' claims, especially relating to the maritime entitlements of the Parties, and the exclusive sovereign rights and jurisdiction of the Philippines within 200 nm of its coasts, except for the 12 nm territorial seas around the disputed features (Rosario, 2015a). By summarising and releasing the key contents via diplomatic remarks, the DFA made sure the media and people were well informed about the development of the legal case, maintaining public support for the campaign without violating the confidential aspects of the legal process.

Raising the awareness of the public

The DFA continued using multi-sectoral fora and media activities to convey the government's WPS narrative to audiences across the country before Secretary Rosario ended his term in March 2016 (DFA, 2015c).¹⁸⁷ The campaign was promoted through diverse activities such as exhibitions of maps, broadcasting of a documentary series and publication of a comic book on the WPS issue. The DFA released 14 maps showing that the territorial border of the Philippines, dating back to the Spanish colonial time, included Scarborough Shoal and that China's territorial extent in the WPS in the past was different from its current claims (DFA, 2015a). The results of the research show that the DFA managed information regarding the case, while the tribunal conducted investigation on the disputed areas (DFA, 2016j). Only key figures such as members of the legal team tried to draw attention to the role of the awards. Under the leadership of President Duterte, the campaign was officially ended.

3. 2. The media outlets' narratives

De-escalating the tensions with China

Evidence showed that both the Aquino and Duterte governments used media diplomacy to de-escalate the WPS tension to fulfil the nation's broader goals of development the economy but in different ways (Rosario, 2015a). Under the Aquino administration, Manila managed to maintain the overall relationship with China while pursuing the legal case. For instance, at the APEC meeting, to re-activate the diplomatic dialogue between the two states, Manila agreed with Beijing to avoid mentioning the WPS issue, particularly the SCS arbitration case (DFA, 2015f). The media reposted Beijing's message describing Xi Jinping's trip as China's wish to improve relations with

¹⁸⁷ See No 12 of Table C-1 (Appendix 1)

its neighbours, generating a favourable environment in order to improve bilateral relations (Lee-Brago, 2015b).

As the nationalist movements were escalating, any economic treaty with China might be considered as a compromise to China, adding difficulties for the Aquino government in managing the tension between the need to develop the economy and simultaneously defend national sovereignty. China's invitation to the Philippines to participate in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank project in 2015 was an example of this challenge. The Aquino government managed to show in the media that it noted the political motivation behind China's suggestion and stated that the government would not sacrifice national sovereignty for short-term benefits. Additionally, Manila reportedly rejected Chinese offers regarding the WPS, for instance, a suggestion of fishery cooperation in the WPS, stating that it wanted to wait for the final award (Torres, 2016a).

Meanwhile, in the media, a discourse persuading China to abide by the ruling of the tribunal became popular for several reasons (Lee-Brago, 2016c). They argued that China was a signatory of UNCLOS, and the side which first cited the UN's authority and jurisdiction to legitimise its claims over the SCS via submitting a note verbale in 2009 with the attached "nine-dash line" map. Hence, China should abide by the ruling of the UN-backed arbitration court ("Encouraging ruling," 2015). They warned that China's persistent rejection of the arbitral proceedings would hurt its international image and that it would suffer "considerable reputational costs" such as international isolation (Serrano, 2016). Additionally, the international community such as the US, ASEAN, EU and G7 also helped to try to persuade China to respect the legal proceedings and comply with the outcome (Lee-Brago, 2016d).

During his presidential campaign, Duterte projected a message of prioritising bilateral relations with China (Vera, 2016). Moments after the PCA issued its final decision, President Duterte convened the Cabinet and told its members that his priorities were to regain access to the Scarborough Shoal for Filipino fishermen and informed China that Manila had been ready for negotiations if China had not insisted on the ownership of the WPS (Ramirez, 2016). On 15 July, President Duterte asked former President Fidel V. Ramos to become his special envoy to China regarding the SCS issue and received his acceptance on 23 July 2015 (Ramos, 2016). On 26 July, in his speech at the State of the Nation Address, President Duterte reiterated his call for the need to address the WPS dispute with China through peaceful negotiations with respect for the outcome of the SCS case (Regalado, 2016).

Engaging China through ASEAN

At the 27th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur in 2015, President Aquino reportedly briefed attendees on the first award of the tribunal and his government's plan for the merit stage and cited the importance of a rules-based approach in settling maritime disputes with other ASEAN leaders (Pazzibugan, 2015). The President also cited China's massive reclamation and building structures in the SCS as disregarding international law and the DOC.

During the investigation stage, the results of this research show that Manila started to lower its voice over the case and shifted the focus to the need for non-militarisation including land reclamation in the SCS. The Aquino government continued urging all sides to push forward with the implementation of DOC and the conclusion of a COC and called for enhancing maritime security and cooperation, for instance, at the Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' meeting in China (DFA, 2016f). After the final ruling, however, at the ASEAN meetings, besides thanking the member states for observing the legal processes and supporting the Philippines, new Foreign Secretary, Yasay, withdrew his suggestion of a reference to the award in a joint statement. This was considered to be part of Duterte's media tactic of keeping a low profile over the SCS case (Romero, 2016b).

Managing the support of allies¹⁸⁸

In bilateral meetings with the US, the Aquino government kept its commitment to Beijing not to mention the SCS issue, but the ally's criticism of China's SCS activities was still cited and released in the Philippine media, keeping the hot topic of the SCS in the public's mind. For instance, on the side-lines of the APEC summit in Manila 2015 and the 2+2 meeting in January 2016 in Washington, the media published the US' criticism of China for building artificial islands and exacerbating tensions in the region and repeated its commitment to help to ease tensions and ensure freedom of navigation in the SCS (Dizon, 2015c).

At the multilateral level, for instance, at the first ever ASEAN-US Summit in California in 2016, President Aquino called on the global community "to demonstrate respect for the rule of law by abiding by the decision of the UN arbitral tribunal" (Dizon & Calleja, 2015). In the "Sunnylands Declaration," the states agreed that the regional countries should respect the sovereignty of every nation as well as abide by the rules provided for under the 1982 UNCLOS and emphasised the need for "non-militarisation and self-restraint in the conduct of activities" in disputed waters without citing China.

¹⁸⁸ See No 17, 18, 20 and 30 of Table C-2 (Appendix 1)

Meanwhile, after sending observers to the hearings, Japan and Australia issued a statement in support of the Philippines' legal effort to settle the maritime dispute and to uphold the rule of law. The media reported in a joint statement after the 6th Japan-Australia Foreign and Defense Ministerial Consultations in November 2015, that the ministers of both sides affirmed that the ruling by the tribunal was "legally binding" and called on other claimant states to "clarify and pursue" their claims based on international law (Dizon & Calleja, 2015).

Japan placed the WPS dispute on the agenda of the G7 Summit, and issued a statement upholding the principles of international law and protesting coercive or provocative unilateral actions in the SCS region (Torres, 2016b). The EU issued a declaration on the SCS dispute emphasising the importance of maintaining peace, stability, freedom of navigation and the role of respecting the rule of law in the region (DFA, 2016b). The DFA officially thanked those third party stakeholders for their critical reinforcement of the Philippines' legal approach (DFA, 2016k; Dizon & Calleja, 2015).

Managing nationalist and patriotic sentiments¹⁸⁹

The award to the jurisdiction stage and the international support for the legal case strengthened the validity of the government's WPS strategy and provided motivation for Filipino nationalist movements. Moreover, the government showed its determination to defend the nation's sovereignty with emotional statements in the media such as: "No State, no matter how powerful, should be allowed to claim an entire sea as its own and to use force or the threat of force in asserting that claim" while ensuring that PH Navy was ready for securing the WPS for any dangerous situation (Dizon, 2016). In his final months in office, Secretary Rosario used rhetoric to criticise extensively China's behaviour in the SCS/WPS. For the first time, the Secretary criticised China's rejection for considering itself above international law (DFA, 2016i). He described China's massive reclamation project as "one of the biggest emerging environmental disasters in the world," publicly denounced China's nine-dash line claim as "illegal" and commented that China was also "more than willing to use force and the threat of force to enforce its perceived entitlements" (Rosario, 2015a).

The media continued to report China's aggressive behaviour at sea, such as conducting a test flight over a newly built airfield on Fiery Cross Reef, building a submarine harbour and runways at Mischief Reef, and deploying surface-to-air missiles on Woody Island (Romero, 2016a). The DFA warned that such activities were steps for

¹⁸⁹ See No 11, 13, 15, 16 and 17 of Table C-1 and No 14, 16, 22, 25, 27 of Table C-2 (Appendix 1)

China to eventually announce ADIZ in the SCS which might overlap the Philippines' EEZ (Laude, Lee-Brago, & Calica, 2016). These statements influenced the Filipinos' perceptions of a "China threat," and stirred nationalist and patriotic sentiments.

The media reported that around 10,000 Philippine youths signed up to a patriotic campaign, called "Kalayaan Atin Ito," "Kalayaan This Is Ours". They planned to mount peaceful protests across the Philippines against China's encroachment on its territories. Those activists used rhetoric such as "the Philippines have lost to China the Kalayaan island group" and "I am ready to die for this country" to stir up patriotic sentiments. Additionally, stories of Filipino heroes and historic victories were widely cited in their media publication to mobilise patriotic, heroic and nationalist sentiments in the Philippines (Farolan, 2015). Such movements caused concern for Beijing, which called on Manila to manage them and accused it of being behind the extremist activities. When Kalayaan protesters arrived close to Pagasa Island, Chinese vessels and helicopters reportedly watched the movement (Aurelio, 2015). To manage the situation, the Aquino administration denied the accusations, but did not formally prevent the protests (Farolan, 2016). In this way, the Aquino government controlled the negative impacts of the extremist nationalist movements on bilateral relations, while simultaneously using them to illustrate Filipinos' determination to act against external threats to violate Philippine sovereignty.

The Duterte government also deployed media diplomacy to manage nationalist sentiments stirred up during the tribunal case. When asked about the next government's WPS policy towards China, President Aquino stated that "Rodrigo Duterte is a "patriot" who will do "what is best for our country" in resolving its maritime row with China," tactically placing political pressure from the nationalist movements in the Philippines on to the Duterte government (Calica, 2016). In response, Duterte described himself as a hero who is ready to sacrifice for the country in the dispute with China, proving that he would never betray the nation's interests (David, 2016a). However, Duterte convinced the public that the Philippines could not go to war against China over the WPS issue because the country was not prepared for that while the US commitment was ambiguous (Ramirez, 2016). Additionally, he argued that the Aquino government's legal track was not viable since it could not deliver on the enforcement of the outcome while "exacerbating tensions and heightening the risk of war or the use of force" (Yasay, 2016). When the tribunal ruled on the final award, the Duterte government managed information

about the outcome and shifted public attention to a demand to develop the nation's economy.¹⁹⁰

Managing information about the tribunal's awards¹⁹¹

Under the leadership of the newly elected President Rodrigo Duterte, Manila altered its media diplomacy to fit its overall WPS strategy. One of the changes was to keep a low profile over the tribunal's awards both in the diplomatic and media fronts. Moments after the PCA issued its final decision, President Duterte told his cabinet not to "flaunt" the victory or "taunt" the losing side (David, 2016b). As a result, the outcome of the tribunal was not discussed in the DFA's statement, and only briefed in the media.¹⁹² The DFA only welcomed the final award on 12 July without claiming a victory, committed to abide by the ruling and called on both sides to exercise restraint on its websites domestically and overseas (DFA, 2016h; Japan, 2016). Only Former President Aquino urged all Filipinos to read and understand the release by the tribunal (Lee-Brago, 2016g). He emphasised the significance of the awards and called the ruling a "victory for all," not just for the country, but also for other Asian countries whose EEZs are overlapped by China's nine-dash line claim (Medina, 2016). There was no further discussion on the implementation of the awards and their significance for the SCS disputes and the stability of the region in the Philippine media discourses.

II. CONCLUSION

1. 1. What were the common media narratives regarding the case in the Philippines and how did they function in the arbitration?

According to the results of the research, common narratives over the SCS case in the Philippines stated that while respecting the relationship with China, after resorting to

¹⁹⁰ See No 28 of Table C-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁹¹ See No 1 of Table C-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁹² Accordingly, the PCA concluded that China's nine-dash line was invalid, illegal, and inconsistent with UNCLOS and China's claim of historical rights was also baseless. It judged that China had interfered with traditional Philippine fishing rights at the Scarborough Shoal and had breached the Philippines' sovereign rights by exploring for oil and gas near Reed Bank; both of which were within the Philippines' EEZ. The arbitrators also stated that Beijing did not prevent the harmful "harvesting of endangered sea turtles, coral and giant clams on a substantial scale" by its fishermen. With regard to the islets that China had been constructing, the tribunal ruled, that based on their original natural situation, none of the features in the Spratly Island were capable of sustaining a population and they could not generate the 200 nautical mile EEZ enjoyed by inhabited land. The tribunal found that it could declare that certain sea areas were within the EEZ of the Philippines, because those areas were not overlapped by any possible entitlement of China. Due to the areas at issue belonging to the Philippines' EEZ, the tribunal found that China's reclamation projects and its interference with Philippine fishing and exploitation activities was illegal, declaring that "China had violated the Philippines' sovereign rights in its EEZ." The tribunal also stated that the projects have "caused severe harm to the coral reef environment, violated its obligation to preserve and protect fragile ecosystems" and destroyed evidence of the natural condition of the features mentioned in the SCS case. However, the arbitrators concluded that they had no jurisdiction over the Second Thomas Shoal dispute because the incident related to military activities (Romualdez, 2016; Romulo, 2015).

all peaceful means without a result, the Philippines had to file a case to the international arbitration tribunal.¹⁹³ By resorting to the legal method, Manila wanted to resolve the SCS issue and protect the national interests in the WPS. To do so, the Philippines tried to confirm that China's claims of "historic rights" and "nine-dash line" were illegal and invalid; that China interfered with the lawful exercise by the Philippines of its rights within its legitimate maritime zones; China's claimed and occupied features in the SCS under the nine-dash line in areas belonging to the Philippines' EEZ were not islands; and China's reclamation projects were illegal, harmful to the coral reef environment and incapable of generating the 200 nm EEZ enjoyed by inhabited land (Romualdez, 2016).¹⁹⁴ Moreover, the legal case was a way to show the Philippines' respect for the rule of law and maintain freedom of navigation in the region.

1. 2. How did the Philippine governments conduct media diplomacy, and what were the objectives during the legal campaign?

Setting goals for media diplomacy

It is argued that there were at least three main goals for Manila's media diplomacy: support for the nation's grand goals, the overall WPS strategy, and the legal campaign (Baviera, 2014). The primary tasks of media diplomacy under the Aquino government were to support the legal track and the other strategies to force China to alter its aggressive behaviour and claims over the SCS, and to regain sovereignty over the Scarborough Shoal. Media diplomacy played a key role in informing about and, legitimising Manila's legal requests and WPS sovereignty claims. In response to China's calls for negotiation, Manila set a precondition that China had to wait for the outcome of the legal case.¹⁹⁵ When the tribunal accepted the case, Manila propagandised its narratives and countered China's criticism of the Philippines (Katigbak, 2014d). Media diplomacy was used to manage popular sentiments and turn them into political pressure on China, domestically and internationally.

Under President Duterte's administration, the priorities were to access the shoal and maintain peace in the SCS, neglecting the sovereignty issue over the area (Ramirez, 2016). Hence, media diplomacy helped both sides to find a common way to put aside the legal case, and to amend relations with China.

¹⁹³ See No 1 to 10 of Table D-1 and 1 to 5 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁹⁴ See No 8 to 14 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁹⁵ See No 2 and 3 of Table D-1 and No 2 and 9 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

Identifying target audiences

For the domestic audience, the goals were to strengthen the Filipinos' perception and understanding of the Philippines' WPS disputes, and build the public's trust and confidence in the government's WPS policy (DFA, 2014a).¹⁹⁶ Manila launched a nationwide information, education and communication campaign on the WPS issue with diverse kinds of media activities.

For the international audiences, the goals included drawing attention to and eliciting sympathy for the Philippines' legal efforts in invalidating China's nine-dash line claim and resolving the SCS disputes, while maintaining the nation's independence and territorial integrity and sovereignty.¹⁹⁷ The Aquino government firmly advocated its WPS position at international and regional fora (Calica, 2014e). Manila mobilised Filipino diplomats abroad to approach overseas Filipinos and the people in the host countries to convey its message. The government invited foreign journalists to visit and study the WPS dispute and created a global connection with prestigious academic and political elites through academic workshops (Sison, 2015).

For the states involved in territorial disputes with China, such as Vietnam and Japan, the Philippines' media campaign aimed to mobilise their criticism of China's SCS sovereignty claims. For the treaty ally, media diplomacy helped Manila to turn the US' support for the legal move and defence commitment into political power that could prevent China from conducting aggressive retaliation against the Philippines (Calica, 2013b). More importantly, third-party stakeholders' support published globally would be an effective way to convey the Philippines' narrative to the Chinese audiences and to have an impact on their understanding in the longer-term.

Limitations of the Philippine government's media diplomacy

Managing nationalist rhetoric

Manila's extensive use of rhetoric to criticise China's SCS behaviour created negative impacts for the Philippines' WPS strategy itself. This rhetoric, such as the PCA's final award which was "a momentous victory that began as a campaign to regain national territory", could exacerbate and create a misunderstanding among the public about the role of the tribunal (David, 2016a). Moreover, such sensitive rhetoric, for instance, President Aquino's comparison of China's SCS behaviour with the Nazis, would anger China and widen the gap between the two nations (Calica, 2014d). Notwithstanding, such

¹⁹⁶ See No 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁹⁷ See No 1, 4, 8, 9, and 10 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

emotional words could have weakened the logic of the Philippines' arguments and threatened its prestige in international media debates (Romulo, 2014).

Reporting narratives on sovereignty claims

Evidence showed that, without mentioning the details, the media only briefed the public on the DFA's information activities such as the publication of a documentary series on Kalayaan (DFA, 2015e). In other words, the DFA failed to involve the media sufficiently in support of its information campaign domestically and to link the domestic campaign with the internationalisation one.¹⁹⁸

Moreover, under the leadership of President Duterte, the DFA did not continue Rosario's information campaign, failing to achieve the goal of enhancing the public's perceptions of the WPS issue (Ramirez, 2016). Additionally, the media in the Philippines did not fully track or summarise the major points of Chinese narratives regarding their SCS sovereignty claim and the legal argument that were promoted through Beijing's international media campaign. Instead, they just focused on developments at sea and on the diplomatic front.¹⁹⁹ This made it hard for the public to understand China's Four-Nos policy as well as the overall political context of the SCS dispute and the legal case.

1. 3. What were the effects of media diplomacy?

Supporting the Philippines' WPS strategy

The ASEAN-centric approach

As a key part of its political and diplomatic tracks to manage the WPS dispute with China, the Aquino administration built a flexible ASEAN-centric approach to engage China such as the two-track approach and the TAP (DFA, 2014a, 2014c).²⁰⁰ At ASEAN meetings, Manila managed to insert its common narratives including the development of the legal case and China's aggressive behaviour, and its suggested resolutions with a focus on DOC and COC. Additionally, Manila encouraged the other claimant states to conduct arbitration cases by themselves to build a legal framework for clarification of sovereignty claims in the SCS.

Through the ASEAN-led mechanisms, Manila aimed at calling the partners to protect freedom of navigation in the region jointly and to convince China to abide by international law, including the tribunal's ruling (Salaverria, 2016). Moreover, with the support of Hanoi, Manila publicly criticised China's tactics towards ASEAN for delaying the development of DOC and COC and pressuring the member states not to take sides on

¹⁹⁸ See No 8 of Table D-1 and No 28 and 31 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

¹⁹⁹ See No 10 and 12 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

²⁰⁰ See No 3, 13, 15, 17 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

the issues regarding the SCS arbitration case (Lee-Brago, 2016a). Through these narratives, Manila also aimed to make the other claimant states reconsider their SCS policy towards China and to stay in line with the Philippines' WPS stance. However, under President Duterte's leadership, Manila agreed with Beijing's stance that the legal case "directly concerns two countries" and kept a low profile over the case as well as the WPS issue (DFA, 2016e). The tactic could not unite the member states on the SCS issue and missed an opportunity to insert the final award into the ASEAN statement.

Managing allies' support for the legal case

By using media diplomacy, Manila brought the WPS issue and the legal case into the agenda of meetings with its allies. Manila convinced its allies that they shared common perceptions about the interests and threats in relation to maintaining freedom of navigation and the rule of law in dealing with territorial disputes in the region. Then, they could raise a common criticism over China's claim and behaviours in the SCS (Romero, 2015a).²⁰¹

The Aquino government succeeded in encouraging allies to publicly recognise the legal track. At the second stage, these states helped Manila to call for China to participate in the legal procedures. At the final stage, they helped Manila to urge China to respect the tribunal's ruling.²⁰² However, after the ruling, when President Duterte aimed at putting aside the legal case, the US' and Japan' continued to highlight the case in the international media. As a result, their high profile comments over the legal case affected the Philippines' efforts to manage tensions with China (Lee-Brago, 2016b).

Moreover, media diplomacy helped the Aquino government to bolster closer Philippine-US security relations and promote its strategic partnership with Japan. Then, by publishing these movements in the media, Manila generated political pressure to handle China's aggressiveness in the WPS (Lee-Brago, 2016e).²⁰³

Utilising Manila's building minimum credible defence posture

It is argued that the Aquino government continued to use media diplomacy to utilise the WPS issues, including the legal case and the asymmetrical relations between China and the Philippines, to push forwards the project. In order to move forwards to sign EDCA and seek military help from other allies like Japan and Australia, Manila mobilised the narratives of China's aggressiveness in the SCS and China's refusal to engage in the legal

²⁰¹ See No 6, 10, 15 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

²⁰² See No 17, 18, 20 and 30 of Table C-2 (Appendix 1)

²⁰³ See No 22, 25, 28, 30 and 32 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

case to shape a common perception of the “China threat” to freedom of navigation in the region and the challenge to their interests there (Doronila, 2014).

Additionally, Manila used media diplomacy to link its efforts in realising the project with its determination to defend the nation’s sovereignty. In the media, there was a discourse that the lack of Filipino naval capabilities to compel China to comply with any decision of the arbitral tribunal would be one of the reasons that made the case futile (Lee-Brago, 2013e). Moreover, Philippine senators ran a narrative that a military agreement with external powers such as EDCA would lead “to an enhanced defence posture in the WPS” and reduce China’s aggressiveness in the WPS (Lee-Brago & Calica, 2016).

Enhancing the Philippines’ international prestige

By resorting to the arbitration case to handle the SCS disputes, the Philippines described itself as a leading claimant state challenging China by using international law. The determination and rationale of the Aquino government in resorting to the legal moves were fully reflected in narratives that recounted the reasons for seeking international consultation, the legal basis for the move, the nature of the legal case, and the contents of the legal requests. The Philippines deployed media diplomacy to take advantage of being the complainant in the case, such as being able to set the agenda of the case in its favour. More importantly, Manila also prepared for the worst-case scenario that China might win the case. For instance, after the hearings, the Philippine legal team sent a message to the tribunal stating that they had the “confidence [that] the court’s “capable hands” would steer the issue to “a truly just solution.” Del Rosario warned that any decision by the tribunal that favoured China would be a “golden key” that allowed Beijing to transfer its nine-dash line in the SCS into a “Berlin Wall of the Sea” controlled by Beijing (Lee-Brago, 2016f). Additionally, Carpio argued that the Philippine’s losing its case with all the evidence supporting it would have meant no maritime or international law could settle the dispute (Dizon & Calleja, 2015). In this way, Manila aimed at shaping a perception that any ruling from the tribunal, that was against the Philippines, was not a failure of the Aquino government since it had fulfilled its tasks at the tribunal, thereby removing the responsibility for potential legal failures from the Aquino government and protecting its prestige. Manila also deployed media diplomacy to counter China’s criticisms against the Philippines such as calling Manila a “troublemaker” (Porcalla, 2013). In managing nationalism in the Philippines, the Aquino government did not formally stop their activities, thus defending the democratic regime in the Philippines.

1. 4. Can media diplomacy be a new way to resolve the crisis?

It is argued that media diplomacy, among other tactics, was used to support the country's priority of seeking peaceful resolutions for the WPS dispute and maintaining the region's stability. On the diplomatic front, the two governments reiterated that the Philippines fully recognised China's role in world affairs and supported its peaceful development while valuing its relations with China (Sicat, 2016). The Aquino government selectively responded to China's relevant statements and turned the tasks of tracking China's media reactions to the media.²⁰⁴ On the media front, the governments in the Philippines managed their media statements so as limit the targeting of the Chinese people, minimising negative impacts on the people-to-people relations. Although the Duterte government stated that it would respect the tribunal's award, it managed information regarding the awards to create a suitable environment for bilateral cooperation with China. However, during the legal case, nationalist sentiments were mobilised deeply in the two societies. Hence, such a temporary settlement did not provide a grassroots solution to the WPS issue.

²⁰⁴ See No 9 and 16 of Table D-1 and No 6, 10 of Table D-2 (Appendix 1)

PART II - CHINA'S MEDIA DIPLOMACY

III. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

1. THE FIRST STAGE (JANUARY 2013- MARCH 2014)

1. 1. The MFA's media narratives

Keeping a low profile over the arbitration case

Three days after receiving Manila's note verbale regarding the case, Beijing acknowledged it at a press conference on 24 January. The MFA criticised the legal move for complicating and aggravating the SCS issue. China also cited the Philippines' illegal occupation of China's SCS islands as the root causes of the dispute, but did not directly refuse to participate in the legal process (Keqing, 2013; Lei, 2013d).

Countering pressure from the legal case

In response to the Philippines' legal invitation, Beijing repeatedly called for the Philippines to consider the larger interests of bilateral relations and its proposal to establish a bilateral regular consultation mechanism on the SCS issues (Lei, 2013d). On 19 February, Beijing formally urged the Philippines to revert to the track of resolving the disputes through bilateral negotiations when the Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines returned Manila's note verbale relating to the legal case (Lei, 2013c).

In reaction to the Philippines' nomination of judges to the arbitration panel, and the establishment of an arbitral tribunal, the MFA continued to urge Manila not to aggravate the maritime issue (Chunying, 2013a; Lei, 2013e). Moreover, instead of directly expressing its protests over the first meeting of the tribunal in July 2013, Beijing called for Manila to focus on settling the disputes through bilateral negotiation (Yi, 2013a, 2013b). It is argued that China was setting the agenda for its own diplomatic media discourses, shifted attention on to its focus and approach (bilateral negotiations) and neglecting its rival's initiative (the legal invitation).

After the first meeting of the tribunal, Beijing started to criticise Manila for making false accusations against China regarding the SCS arbitration, distorting the facts and tainting China, with the objectives of misleading international audiences and attacking China's reputation (Chunying, 2013b).²⁰⁵ For instance, the MFA reacted strongly to the DFA's statement that Manila had "exhausted almost all political and diplomatic avenues for a peaceful settlement of the dispute," stating that such a narrative was untrue (Chunying, 2013b). Beijing claimed that, the Philippines has "gone back on its consensus with China" and cited Manila's failure in the 2012 Huangyan Island stand-off as one of

²⁰⁵ See No 1, 5, 7, 11, 14 of Table A-1 and No 3, 6 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

the political motivations behind the legal tactic (Chunying, 2013d). Moreover, although Beijing denied rumours that China had offered the Philippines incentives in exchange for giving up the case (Gang, 2014b), it sent warnings to the Philippines in the international arena. For instance, at the Second World Peace Forum in June and the ARF Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July 2013, Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, warned the Philippine government not to make the "strategic mis-judgement" of choosing the course of confrontation in the SCS and to reconsider the consequences of filing the arbitration processes against China (Yi, 2013b).

Functioning as the PRC's mouthpiece

There were three major aspects of the CPC's policy towards the SCS arbitration case. Firstly, Beijing stated that it would neither accept nor participate in the arbitration (Keqing, 2013),²⁰⁶ because the core of the SCS disagreement was a territorial dispute which was not a matter related to the interpretation or application of UNCLOS. Moreover, China argued that it had activated the optional exclusions under UNCLOS Article 298 in a declaration in 2006, to opt from UNCLOS' mandatory dispute resolutions including arbitration over territorial disputes. Information regarding Beijing's sending a note verbale to the tribunal on 1 August was not discussed at the MFA's media conferences (F.-K. Liu & Spangler, 2016).

Secondly, the MFA reiterated that China has indisputable sovereignty over the islands in SCS and its adjacent waters based on historical and legal grounds albeit without attaching any document (Keqing, 2013).²⁰⁷ Notably, China did not refer to "historic title" as a basis under Article 298 for the optional exclusion from the compulsory adjudication procedures of UNCLOS (Jayakumar, Koh, & Beckman, 2014).

Lastly, the MFA reiterated that "China will adhere to the means of bilateral negotiations to resolve territorial and maritime delimitation disputes both in accordance with applicable rules of international law and in compliance with the spirit of the DOC" (Chunying, 2013a).

1. 2. The media outlets' narratives

Setting the public agenda to focus on other SCS issues

The challenge for China's media diplomacy was to criticise the Philippines, while keeping a low profile over the legal case. In order to do so, first, the media countered the Philippines' accusations against China regarding developments at sea between the two

²⁰⁶ See No 11 and 22 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

²⁰⁷ See No 1, 3, 4 of Table A-1 and No 2, 3, 4 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

sides.²⁰⁸ The most critical incident occurred in March 2014, just prior to the deadline for submission of the Memorial to the tribunal, when CMS blocked a PN ship from re-supplying and rotating personnel at its outpost on the Second Thomas Shoal (Houlijun, 2014). These narratives shaped a perception of an aggressive and ambitious Philippines. Moreover, they helped the CPC's tactic of keeping a low profile over the arbitration case by shifting the attention of the public to the other events.

Isolating Manila from the ASEAN states

China did not react formally to Manila's bringing the case into the ASEAN arena in June 2013 (Rosario, 2013c). After Manila refused to withdraw its arbitration initiative, Beijing cancelled its invitation to President Aquino to attend the China-ASEAN Expo in September 2013 (Thayer, 2013). In September and October, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang snubbed the Philippines by excluding it from their diplomatic trips to Southeast Asian countries (Xiang & Lidan, 2013). In the media, China ran a narrative that "China and ASEAN countries are fully and effectively implementing DOC and have the full capacity to ensure peace and stability in the SCS," and that it was the Philippines which had broken its commitment to the DOC by its arbitration initiation (Yi, 2013b).²⁰⁹ It is argued that from 2013, Beijing used media diplomacy to isolate the Philippines in the ASEAN arena so as to show its opposition towards the legal move (Liang Jun & Gao Yinan, 2014).²¹⁰

Preventing the involvement of the Philippines' allies

China kept a low profile over the interaction between the Philippines and its allies regarding the legal case but focused on the Philippines' attempts to build up its military force via external support.²¹¹ In reaction to President Aquino's welcome to the US's military presence in the Philippines with the US' re-affirmation of the MDT and Japan's commitment to providing new patrol boats to the Philippines (Bowen, 2013b; Zijuan, 2013), China reposted these states' peaceful commitments to remind them not to pose threats to third-party countries and the stability of the region (Vire, 2013). In the Chinese language, the media accused the Philippines of relying on external powers to challenge China's interests in the SCS and offering them opportunities to intervene in regional politics (Zongze, 2013). Additionally, the media blamed the US and Japan for their influence in the region, which they said sent irresponsible and wrong signals, at such a

²⁰⁸ See No 4 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

²⁰⁹ See No 2 and 7 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

²¹⁰ See No 7, 12, 14, 23, 27 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

²¹¹ See No 12 of Table A-1 and No 12 and 23 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

fraught moment, only emboldening the Philippines to take provocative actions and further worsen the SCS situation. To reassure domestic audiences, the media published the analysis of Chinese scholars who argued that the US would never be willing to participate in combat operations in the SCS due to strategic calculations, particularly the asymmetric military capability between Beijing and Manila (Qingling, 2013).

Handling Manila's nationalism management²¹²

The media ran narratives on the Philippines' anti-China protests, accusing Manila of stirring up nationalism against China, domestically and globally (Xiang & Yu, 2013). When overseas Filipinos called for the holding of anti-China demonstrations worldwide over the SCS issue on 18 July 2013, the Chinese media promptly reported the issue and warned that such protests complicated the situation and jeopardised the stability of the region (Bowen, 2013a). They reported that around 500 Filipinos protested peacefully outside the Chinese consular offices in the Philippines and other countries around the world on 24 July (Fei, 2013). The media stated that the anti-China marches received little response and few participants and that the organisers of the movements only managed to expose the events in the media. They reiterated that the majority of Filipinos remained friendly towards China. English reports quoted the Philippine government's statement that it had nothing to do with the demonstrations, but did not try to interfere. Meanwhile, Chinese editorials accused Manila of holding the anti-China protests so as to maintain the "heat" of the SCS issue and of mobilising nationalist sentiments in order to win the sympathy of the international community, to unite the nation and to pressure China to make concessions on the SCS issue (Kai, 2013).

2. THE SECOND STAGE (APRIL 2014 – OCTOBER 2015)

2.1. The MFA's media narratives

Reporting developments in the legal case²¹³

In reaction to the Philippines' submission of the Memorial to the tribunal, the MFA summoned the Philippine Ambassador to China to make solemn representations. Meanwhile the Chinese embassy in the Philippines held a press conference to reiterate the CPC's stance (Hua, 2014; Lei, 2014a).

On 7 December 2014, the MFA released a Position Paper to assert that China would neither accept nor participate in the arbitration and warned that it reserved the right to make the necessary response to any provocative action unilaterally initiated by the

²¹² See No 28 and 29 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

²¹³ See No 1, 3, 4, 7 of Table A-1 and No 1, 3, 4, 7, 10 of Table A-2 (Appendix 2)

relevant party (Gang, 2014a). On 2 July 2015, Beijing confirmed that it would not send a delegation to join the hearing at The Hague (Lingzhi & Wen, 2015).

When the tribunal concluded the hearing, on 14 July, the MFA soon thereafter reiterated China's position of non-acceptance and non-participation, criticised the Philippines for the unilateral filing and going ahead with the arbitral proceedings and called for a return to bilateral negotiations (Chunying, 2015j). China's backdoor diplomatic efforts at the tribunal during this stage were not revealed (Batongbacal, 2015).

On 29 October 2015, when the tribunal announced the award on its jurisdiction of the case, the MFA released a statement to elaborate on China's solemn position without mentioning any details of the ruling. For the first time, China formally declared the decision of the tribunal to be "null" and "void" (Kang, 2015c).

Shaping China's narrative on the jurisdiction of the tribunal case²¹⁴

At this stage, China developed its official counter-narratives regarding the legal case, especially via the 2014 paper. The media summarised and publicised the key contents of the document. In addition to reiterating China's sovereignty claims, China included narratives on the subject matter of the arbitration, the contents of the Philippines' legal requests, and China's exclusionary declarations (Chunying, 2015j).

Accordingly, China asserted that the subject matter of the arbitration was about the territorial sovereignty over some maritime features in the SCS, which was beyond the interpretation or application of the Convention. The MFA categorized Manila's legal requests into three sections.²¹⁵ The first concerned Philippines' challenge to the consistency of China's assertion of "historic rights" in the SCS under the Convention. China countered that its SCS maritime claims are regulated under a general principle of international law which states that "sovereignty over land territory is the basis for the determination of maritime rights." Thus, the extent of China's SCS maritime claims would be decided in accordance with the clarified extent of China's SCS territorial sovereignty. Secondly, Manila challenged the consistency of China's claim to entitlements based on certain rocks, low-tide elevations and submerged features in the SCS, of 200 nautical miles and more, under UNCLOS. China explained that "the nature and maritime entitlements of certain maritime features cannot be considered in isolation from the issue of sovereignty," but did not clearly present how they were related. The last section responded to Manila's complaint that Beijing illegally interfered with the

²¹⁴ See No 1, 3, 4 of Table B-1 and No 6, 7 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

²¹⁵ See No 2, 6, 7, 14, 15 of Table B-1 (Appendix 2)

Philippines' enjoyment and exercise of its rights. China argued that Manila needed to clarify sovereignty over the relevant maritime features and maritime delimitation before raising this accusation against China's behaviour (GOVCN, 2014c). The MFA reiterated that China has the right to take the stance of not accepting the jurisdiction nor enforcing the rulings of the tribunal according to international law and practice.

Without giving details of the hearing on the merits of the case, Beijing promoted its own discourse. They argued that, what the Philippines had presented in the hearing, contradicted the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Proclamation by disregarding historical facts, international law and international justice. Further, Beijing claimed that the arbitration utilised "the cloak of law" for political goals in order to negate China's sovereignty and rights and interests in the SCS (Chunying, 2015c). In the media, there was criticism of the tribunal's acceptance of the case. The media cited Articles 280, 281, 282, and 283 of the 1982 UNCLOS to argue that there were several procedural preconditions, including prerequisites, in order for their choice to prevail. Those means should be first referenced and exhausted, when a dispute regarding the interpretation or application occurs, and parties should exchange their views. The Chinese argued that although both sides had made a clear choice of the means and procedures for settling the disputes, the Philippines did not conduct an exchange of views or discussion with China before filing the case ("China's stance on SCS," 2016). Therefore, China accused the tribunal of "abusing UNCLOS settlement procedure" by accepting the unilateral request of the Philippines (Yanhong & Jiquan, 2016). Moreover, they argued the tribunal's justification of its decision based on Article 288 and Annex VII was unconvincing because China had made a declaration of optional exception in 2006 in accordance with Article 298 of the Convention (Zexi, 2016).

Legitimising China's activities at sea

From April 2015, when the Philippines brought China's reclamation activities in the disputed areas in the SCS before the tribunal, China started to defend the legitimacy of the projects.²¹⁶ The MFA challenged the Philippines' allegation through its counter narratives. For example, these narratives argued that the construction activities were lawful, reasonable and justified since the features belonged to China's territory; the projects were to meet civilian needs, better fulfil China's international responsibilities and provide more public goods and services to the international community (Chunying, 2015a; Kang, 2015d). Moreover, Beijing launched new criticism of Manila's building

²¹⁶ See No 1 of Table B-1 (Appendix 2)

activities on the disputed islands, including trying to justify its illegal occupation and construction work prior to the signing of DOC, and confessing to the continuation of its illegal construction activities after the signing. Hence, China refused to accept the status quo established by the Philippines' illegal construction activities and called on the Philippines to stop the work immediately (Lei, 2015d).

From June 2015 the MFA announced its plan for setting up military facilities on Chinese artificial islands (Lei, 2015c). In dealing with increasing criticism from external stakeholders, Beijing reiterated that China's maintenance of armed forces on the relevant maritime features was to safeguard regional peace and stability and for defence purposes, not for any "militarising" ambition and that there has never been any problem concerning freedom of navigation in the region (Kang, 2015a).

Countering the Philippines' "ASEANisation"²¹⁷

In May 2014, the Philippines discussed the arbitration case at ASEAN meetings. As a result, ASEAN Foreign Ministers issued a statement expressing "serious concerns" over the SCS disputes. Moreover, in a confidential statement to the tribunal, Vietnam recognised the tribunal's jurisdiction over the legal case and supported the Philippines' statement against the legality of China's nine-dash line claim ("Vietnam's suggestion of a legal case," 2014). In reaction, the MFA reiterated that China would neither accept such illegal claims raised by Vietnam nor the SCS arbitration (Lei, 2014m; "Vietnam's suggestion of a legal case," 2014).

In March 2015, Vietnam also joined with the Philippines to challenge the legitimacy of the nine-dash line at the ASEAN forum (Lei, 2015g). The 26th ASEAN Summit in 2015 issued a statement to express concern over China's reclamation (Lei, 2015b). In response, the MFA shifted the focus to an accusation of large-scale reclamation conducted by the Philippines and other ASEAN members, including Vietnam, on some maritime features of China's Nansha islands. Beijing urged them to "stop all words and deeds that infringe upon China's sovereignty and rights" (Lei, 2015b). The MFA reiterated that the SCS issue was not one between China and ASEAN. China accused the Philippines and Vietnam of "the ASEANisation" of the SCS issue, through which they called on other ASEAN countries to join with them to protest China's aggressive behaviour in the SCS. Finally, Beijing promoted its own "dual-track approach", which meant that the disputes should be resolved by countries directly concerned through negotiation and consultation

²¹⁷ See No 2, 3, 12 of Table B-1 and No 2, 9, 12 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

with the peace and stability of the SCS being jointly managed by China and ASEAN countries (Chunying, 2015b; Lei, 2015a).

2. 2. The media outlets' narratives

Making void the Philippines' nationalist management tactics²¹⁸

China's media recorded that there were at least three waves of anti-China demonstrations in the Philippines during this stage ("Boycott of "Made in China", 2015). For instance, they reported a group of Filipino nationalist activists' landing and raising the Philippine flag on disputed islands and claimed such actions were an attempt at "showing (Filipino) existence, reflecting jurisdiction, and declaring sovereignty" over them. They blamed the Aquino government for provocative efforts in strengthening its administration in the SCS including renaming "Huangyan Island" as "Panatag Reef", and the "SCS" as the "West Philippine Sea," and holding exhibitions of historical maps, and accused it of starting a battle over "words" and "maps" ("The "Map War", 2014). At the peak of the movement, when the Philippines' DFA aired a three-episode film on the SCS, in which the Philippines portrayed itself as a victim bullied by China from 14 to 19 June 2015, the media reported that hundreds of Filipinos held a peaceful protest at the Chinese Consulate in Manila (Xinrui & Guangxia, 2015).

To counter the Philippines' "intensive propaganda," Xinhua reposted third-party media's editions to criticise Manila for exaggerating the narrative of the "China threat" so as to gain the sympathy from international audiences. For instance, Xinhua quoted Philippines' editorials blaming President Aquino for making an outrageous comparison between China and Nazi Germany concerning the SCS disputes to raise public outrage, causing many concerns for the Philippine people about the bilateral relationship with China (Liuyue, 2015). Moreover, they argued that the Aquino government aimed at shifting the domestic audience's dissatisfaction from the nation's economic and social burdens to external pressure and stirring up nationalist and patriotic sentiments to unite the nation. China's media warned that the Philippine government's nationalist management could arouse deep dissatisfaction for the Chinese, damage the relationship and pose a threat to regional stability ("Philippine nationalism," 2015).

Supporting China to counter the Philippines' efforts to gain external help

While keeping a low profile over the US' support for the Philippines' submission in the MFA's media statements, Beijing's media ran a narrative, especially in Chinese language editorials, that the US was an "arbitrator outside the tribunal" from mid-2014,

²¹⁸ See No 11 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

(Batongbacal, 2015). When the US criticised the ambiguous nature of China's nine-dash claim, the MFA just blamed the US for turning a blind eye to basic facts and international jurisprudence (Lei, 2014b). Meanwhile, in reaction to Japan's support for the Philippines's legal case in June 2014, Beijing implied that "some countries" used "the rule of law" to infringe on the legitimate interests of other countries (Gang, 2014c).

From 2015, the MFA directly responded to US criticism, blaming the US for orienting the direction of the tribunal (Kang, 2015e). At sea, besides raising concerns over large scale military exercises between the Philippines and its allies in the SCS, China tracked their military cooperation, particularly, the new defence accord (EDCA) signed with the US, and an agreement over the transfer of defence equipment with Japan (Shangjun, 2014a). To convince the US not to become involved in the SCS issue, China ran a narrative that the US was adopting a two-faced strategy in the SCS, in which it assured support for its allies in their territorial tensions with China, but reiterated to China that it would not become involved in those disputes. Then, China sent a dual message that "the Pacific Ocean is big enough to accommodate both the US and China" and that any confrontation with China in the SCS would be "the biggest strategic mistake" for the US (Zhe & Jiaqi, 2014). Similarly, China interpreted Japan's support for the Philippines as attempts to exert its influence in the region.

Stirring Chinese nationalist sentiments

To stir up Chinese nationalist movements, China conveyed its determination to defend Chinese national interests and rights ("China's determination to safeguard territory," 2014).²¹⁹ The media quoted the rhetoric of Chinese President, Xi Jinping, who vowed, "We will never stir up trouble, but will react in a necessary way to the provocations of countries involved" (Tsoi-lai, 2015).²²⁰ Chinese military editors reiterated a message that if its national interests and rights were not respected, China reserved all rights to deploy a firm policy (Yanping & Bianji, 2014).

Evidence shows that China deployed media diplomacy to interweave the narratives of external threats with a refrain of victimisation (Sutter, 2012). The MFA repeatedly claimed that the Philippines' filing of and pushing for the case was a denial of Beijing's sovereignty in the SCS, and disguised the illegality of Filipino infringement and occupation of China's SCS islands.²²¹ Additionally, China widely accused Manila of

²¹⁹ See No 5 of Table B-1 (Appendix 2)

²²⁰ See No 28 and 30 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

²²¹ See No 1, 2, 7 and 14 of Table B-1 and No 7, 8, 10, 13, 17 and 29 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

wanting to modernise its military force with external help so as to occupy some of China's islands and reefs in the SCS permanently (LiuTian, 2015).²²²

China's media described external criticism of its rejection of the case as an act of using "double standards" and an unfair move to China (Li, 2018).²²³ China deployed media tactics to cover external criticism, especially the theory of China's threat and Manila's victimisation, and used them as evidence for its own narrative that foreign states wanted to damage China's prestige by incorrect accusations, turning the tables on the Philippines. At this stage, Beijing publicly quoted and countered the rhetoric from leaders of external states, such as US president Barack Obama's chastisement of China for using "sheer size and muscle" to push smaller nations in the SCS (Chunying, 2015b). Meanwhile, the media discussed narratives that the Philippines presented itself as a victim of China's threat and that the US and Japan reused Manila's victimisation story to illustrate China's "engaging hegemonism" in the SCS and to encourage them to establish anti-China alliances with the external powers' support (Wangcong, 2015).²²⁴

Calling on the Philippines to negotiate

According to the MFA's statements, China hoped the Philippines would withdraw the legal case and turn back to bilateral negotiations.²²⁵ China cited a joint statement by the two sides in 2011 which illustrated that each side was debarred from unilaterally seeking compulsory arbitration. China cited a series of bilateral instruments²²⁶ to prove that both sides agree to settle the disputes through consultation and negotiation. Moreover, China argued that according to DOC, the SCS claimant states have an obligation to handle issues through negotiations and exclude any other instruments of settlement such as arbitration. Additionally, according to Articles 280, 281 and others under the 1982 UNCLOS, the MFA argued that the two states in a dispute should handle matters through negotiations and "there shall be no recourse to arbitration or other compulsory procedures" (GOVCN, 2014a). Moreover, the MFA added other narratives that "a resort to arbitration does not meet people's expectations for friendship in both China and the Philippines" and "for the Chinese people, to avoid a lawsuit is part of the Chinese culture and tradition" (Hua, 2014).

²²² See No 9 and 12 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

²²³ See No 15 of Table B-1 and No 7, 8, 14 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

²²⁴ See No 11 and 20 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

²²⁵ See No 3, 6, 10, 13, 15, 16 of Table B-2 (Appendix 2)

²²⁶ For instance, the Joint Statement concerning Consultations on the SCS and on Other Areas of Cooperation in 1995 and the Joint Statement of the China-Philippines Experts Group Meeting on Confidence-Building Measures in 1999

3. THE THIRD STAGE (NOVEMBER 2015 - AUGUST 2016)

3. 1. The MFA's media narratives

Managing information regarding the development of the case²²⁷

China released its position on the hearing of the case in three press conferences: on 24 November as the hearing opened, on 1 December as the hearing concluded, and on 21 December as the tribunal released the results of the hearing (Chunying, 2015c; Lei, 2015i). The MFA kept a low profile on the arbitration case at press conferences until the tribunal had finished its investigation procedures and got ready to rule on a final award on 29 June 2016 (Lei, 2016a). Omitting the details of the processes, Beijing focused on urging the tribunal to make fair and objective rulings and reiterated that the ruling would not affect China's interests and claims in the SCS.

On 12 July 2016, the MFA released a statement on the final award of the tribunal and another statement on China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the SCS (GOVCN, 2016b, 2016c). The next day, a white paper was released to express China's stance on the SCS issues (GOVCN, 2016a).

Comprehensively elaborating on China's SCS claims

China presented a comprehensive elaboration of its SCS claims by publishing the Statement of Sovereignty and Maritime Rights on 12 July and the White Paper on 13 July 2016 (GOVCN, 2016b).²²⁸ These statements reiterated that "China's sovereign and related rights in the SCS are historical rights acquired in accordance with customary international law, before the birth of UNCLOS;" hence, "UNCLOS is not a proper standard to assess and judge the legitimacy of China's historical rights" (Chenjipeng, 2016). China called the SCS islands by their Chinese names.²²⁹ Then, Beijing argued that China's sovereignty over Nanhai Zhudao and relevant rights and interests in the SCS was established over the long course of history, under international law and with recognition by the international community²³⁰ (GOVCN, 2016a).

²²⁷ See No 5 of Table C-1 (Appendix 2)

²²⁸ See No 7 of Table C-1 (Appendix 2)

²²⁹ They are Dongsha Qundao (the Pratas), Xisha Qundao (the Paracels), Zhongsha Qundao (Scarborough Shoal and Macclesfield Bank) and Nansha Qundao (the Spratlys)

²³⁰ The document repeated the key narratives regarding the SCS sovereignty claims in Chapter 3. For instance, in terms of history, China stated that "China is the first to have discovered, named, and explored and exploited Nanhai Zhudao and relevant waters, and the first to have continuously, peacefully and effectively exercised sovereignty and jurisdiction over them," citing so-called historical evidence both in literature (such as treaties, maps, history books and documents) and in practice (such as Chinese fishing and other exploration and exploitation activities). China also provided an explanation for its efforts in upholding the sovereignty over Nanhai Zhudao during and after WWII. In terms of international law, China stated that pursuant to China's national law and under international law including the 1982 UNCLOS, based

To elaborate the sovereignty claims, Chinese feature films such as “The History and Present of the SCS” were launched on domestic and foreign media channels to explain to the outside world that “the SCS have been Chinese territory since ancient times” and “the Philippines submitted unilaterally, and the arbitration request is illegal”. CCTV’s Chinese International Channel made a special series, entitled “Ten Questions about the SCS”, discussing the essence of the SCS arbitration from multiple perspectives and showing that China’s SCS sovereignty claim has sufficient historical and legal basis and China’s determination and will to maintain regional peace and stability (Xinrui & Shuai, 2016). Additionally, Chinese ambassadors and diplomats around the world, such as Liu Xiaoming, the Chinese Ambassador to the United Kingdom, cited these arguments in their media activities to convey message to governments and peoples in their host countries (Zhengqi & Yu, 2016).

Rejecting the Philippines’ sovereignty claims over the SCS²³¹

Noting that the territorial scope of the Philippines is defined by a series of international treaties, China cited a series of documents between the US and the Philippines that confirmed the Philippines’ territorial scope never included any part of the so-called Nanhai Zhudao (GOVCN, 2016a). China rejected the Philippines’ preferred legal basis for its sovereignty claims such as “terra nullius,” “trust territory” or “contiguity or proximity.” Especially, China argued that: “No state can extend its maritime jurisdiction to an area under the sovereignty of another; still less can it use such jurisdiction as an excuse to deny another state’s sovereignty or even to infringe upon its territory” (“China’s Position in SCS,” 2016). From the Chinese perspective, the Philippines’ so-called “effective control” based on its illegal seizure was null and void (GOVCN, 2016a, 2016b).

China quoted the Philippines’ national legal basis, not international ones, on which the Philippines anchored its sovereignty claim.²³² Beijing argued that applying the UNCLOS regulation to claim internal waters, archipelagic waters, territorial seas, EEZ and a continental shelf in the SCS, China and the Philippines as states possessing land territory with opposite coasts with less than 400 miles distance, generated an overlapping maritime area, causing a dispute between the two (Lina & Hongyi, 2015b).²³³

on Nanhai Zhudao, China claims internal waters, territorial seas, contiguous zones, EEZ and a continental shelf over the area and has historic rights in the SCS.

²³¹ See No 7 and 12 of Table C-1 (Appendix 2)

²³² For example, the Philippines’ Republic Act No. 387 of 1949 and No. 3046 of 1961

²³³ See No 22 and 27 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

Countering the tribunal's statements

In response to the final award on July 12, Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, presented the “Three illegals” argument, illegal filing at the arbitration, establishing the arbitration court and ruling of the awards, thereby accusing the tribunal of lacking jurisdiction, neutrality and legal basis (S. Zhao, 2018). China’s global media systems as well as Chinese ambassadors and diplomats around the world were mobilised to disseminate its Four-Nos policy through news reports, in-depth commentaries and interview programmes (GOVCN, 2016c).²³⁴ Through civil organisations, such as the Brazilian Association for the Promotion of China’s Peaceful Reunification, Beijing updated its stance and policy on the SCS to overseas Chinese communities, urged them to stand in solidarity with their mother country and help to explain China’s policy to the local communities (L. Le & Hong, 2016). Meanwhile, Chinese think tanks continued hosting academic conferences to assert the Chinese narratives (Zi, Zhiwen, Acura, & Yichun, 2016).²³⁵

The media stated that the arbitration wrongly determined the case regarding the interpretation or application of the Convention and had ignored Articles 288 and 298 of the Convention. They argued that the issue regarding territorial sovereignty is not part of the Convention and that the arbitrators were confusing the concepts of artificial island construction and island reef construction, circumventing China’s 2006 declaration and disparaging factual information that favoured China (Defang & Bianji, 2016b).²³⁶ Moreover, the media claimed that the arbitration accused Chinese fishermen incorrectly. In particular, the claim was that the judges were biased towards the Philippines by considering separately the legal status of the islands and reefs in the Nanhsa Islands. Lastly, it was argued that the tribunal’s approach did not conform to the previous international judicial and quasi-judicial practices (Mu & Hong, 2016). The MFA also criticised the Japanese judge, Shunji Yanai, the former president of the ITLOS, for politicising the tribunal by appointing members of the tribunal in biased and unrepresentative ways (Kang, 2016c; Yanlei, 2016).²³⁷

3. 2. The media outlets’ narratives

Countering the Philippines’ arbitral requests

It is argued that the CPC deployed the media channels to shape and convey its counter-arguments towards the Philippines’ legal requests for its own political goals.²³⁸

²³⁴ See No 4 and 5 of Table C-1 and No 4 and 13 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

²³⁵ See No 3 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

²³⁶ See No 12 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

²³⁷ See No 13 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

²³⁸ See No 1, 16, 19 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

Regarding the “terra nullius” status of the Nansha Islands, China’s media argued that Japan only gave up its rights and claims on the feature after signing the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty, and did not agree to return the islands to any country. Moreover, China does not recognise the Treaty and restored its jurisdiction over the island after WWII (Lina & Hongyi, 2015a).

For the first time, the MFA reiterated that Taiping is an island, not a rock, as the tribunal and the Philippines had argued. Chinese experts and journalists who had visited the site provided evidence that Taiping island has been installed and facilitated with the necessary infrastructure for local people to sustain their habitation and economic life (Jin & Bianji, 2016). The media argued that the tribunal’s view of Taiping Island as a “rock” was to deliberately misrepresent factual information and that the Philippines’ excluding Taiping island from the list of China’s SCS islands and reefs was to violate China’s sovereignty and the one-China principle (“SCS arbitration abuses international law,” 2016).

Regarding China’s historical rights, the media summarised the Philippines’ arguments that Chinese people had conducted no activities in, and therefore had no historical connections with the SCS, and that China had only formulated its claim to its historical rights in 2009, 27 years after UNCLOS was concluded (Chenjipeng, 2016). China’s common counter-arguments included blaming the Philippines for purposefully misinterpreting UNCLOS by stating that it has never discussed historical rights. Moreover, it was argued that China’s activities in the area began over 2000 years ago and China’s sovereign rights to the maritime features and their adjacent waters were repeatedly acquired and claimed by successive governments of China. Additionally, “the tribunal has no right to go beyond the stipulations of UNCLOS to make a judgement on the historical rights acquired based on customary international law” (Chenjipeng, 2016).

Support to prevent external states from intervening in the SCS

The media discourse in China stated that, external states, particularly the US and Japan, mobilised the ASEAN channels to assert their criticism of China. Their common narratives included calls for a conclusion of a COC, concerns on freedom of navigation in the region and requests for China to obeying the ruling (Chunying, 2015h, 2016d; Lei, 2016c). In response, China reiterated that both it and ASEAN states were working to fully and effectively implement DOC and steadily move forward with consultations on the COC.

Notably, in order to de-escalate the tension, China shifted attention to external stakeholders, blaming them for their involvement in the case. China continued its narrative that without the support of the US, the Philippines would not have been able to file and follow the case. They pointed out that US legal experts played a significant role in compiling the Philippines' 3000-page document submitted to the tribunal, encouraging the Philippines to file the case and helping the Philippines during the process (Lirong, 2016).²³⁹

Moreover, China countered external criticism of China's refusal to adhere to the ruling, especially from the US. It argued that the US was not a state party to UNCLOS and was in no position to make such critical remarks about China (Chunying, 2016a). In multilateral arenas, such as the meeting of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue, the G7 and the Shangri-La Dialogue, the US, Japan and Australia, urged China to abide by international law and accept the Tribunal's ruling (Chunying, 2016b). China accused such states of utilising the issue of freedom of navigation to justify their military involvement in the SCS.

Managing nationalist sentiments

Stirring up Chinese public sentiments

It is argued that the final ruling could have posed a challenge for the CPC's prestige and leadership. Hence, Beijing was required to mobilise strong support from the public for its policy on the case, prior to the release of a final ruling. To manage nationalism, first, narratives of external threats and victimisation were developed. In the Chinese editorials, the SCS case was painted as a strategic trap laid by the Philippines, the US and Japan to force China to accept the jointly reorganised situation (L. Feng, 2016). In English editorials, the media spoke of the Philippines' strengthening of military ties with external states as a move towards "militarising the SCS" and "flexing military muscles", forcing China to abide by the court ruling (Alex, 2016; Lei, 2015e).²⁴⁰

The media argued that the tribunal was biased because the Philippines had paid all the service fees for the legal procedures and ran a global campaign to praise the tribunal for the transparent, durable and peaceful dispute resolution mechanism (Yang, 2015). As for the Aquino government's legal tactics, China's media channels ran narratives that the DFA spared no effort to defame China at every opportunity and to enhance the visibility of the arbitration case internationally. Manila used rhetoric against China such as "the

²³⁹ See No 13 of Table C-1 and No 25 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

²⁴⁰ See No 7 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

threat of force” against the Philippines, and “intentionally” creating “one of the biggest emerging environmental disasters in the world” (GOVCN, 2015a). The media claimed that such narratives directly attacked China’s peaceful image. Domestically, the Aquino government was accused of exerting influence on the Duterte government to accept the final awards of the arbitration and provoking nationalist sentiments, damaging relations between the two countries (Z. Feng, 2015).

To strengthen the righteousness of its Four-Nos policy, China positioned itself as a defender of the rule of the law by accusing the Philippines and third-party states of abusing the Convention (Yi & Jiaqi, 2016). Meanwhile, China’s media agencies quoted Filipino people’s criticism of the legal track and hope for a change in bilateral relations with China under the next government (Xiaohui, 2015). This was to prove that the legal track and sentiment opposed to China over the SCS were not the Philippine people’s wish.

The Chinese media repeatedly conveyed a message that China’s territory is only decided by the Chinese people, not by any foreign actors (Dekun & Yongli, 2016). The media argued that China could not accept the court’s ruling because to do so would be renouncing its claim to be a rising power; one which does not recognise the jurisdiction of others in respect to its national interests (S. Zhao, 2018).

Managing public sentiments against the tribunal’s ruling

Before the final award, a topic on Weibo, namely, “中国一点都不能少”²⁴¹ and a nine-dash line map attracted 8.17 million discussions from 11 to 17 July. One hour before the final awards were released, the number of Weibo searches for the term “the SCS arbitration” had reached nearly 4.5 million (Yifei, 2016). In the media the move was described as ways for Chinese netizens to show their patriotism and aspirations for defending national sovereignty and territorial integrity (Yifei, 2016). The support for and solidarity with China of Chinese people globally were published intensively in the media reportage (L. Le & Hong, 2016).²⁴²

After the ruling, the CPC deployed media diplomacy to manage nationalism. President Xi Jinping reiterated the Chinese government’s consistent position on the SCS issue, expressed China’s determination to firmly defend its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, and proposed the correct way to resolve the SCS issue (Xiaowei & Songhui, 2016). Meanwhile, the Chinese National People’s Congress and the PLA expressed support for the CPC’s position (Kun & Juntao, 2016). The MOD

²⁴¹ Meaning China cannot lose even one bit of itself

²⁴² See No 15 and 31 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

announced large-scale military exercises in the SCS from July 5 to 11 and reiterated that the People's Army was fully capable of responding to any threats and challenge (Zijuan & Mu, 2016a) (Yi & Jiaqi, 2016a). The message in such news reports was to show that the Chinese military and related agencies of the government were ready to defend the country's interests (Zijuan & Mu, 2016a).

Moreover, the media also conveyed positive messages such as that the new Philippine government wanted to negotiate with China over the SCS issue (Xiaowei & Songhui, 2016). Support from third-party states for China's stance was also increasingly published in the media, creating a perception that the world was in line with the CPC's policy (Yi & Jiaqi, 2016b).

The media warned that extreme patriotic behaviours in China such as calls for boycotting Philippine-made products would affect negatively the image of the country (Jianting, 2016). To project a united image, they cited the support of Chinese elites and associations for the CPC's policy towards the tribunal, uniting all classes in society under the leadership of the CPC against external threats (Panjie, 2016).²⁴³ In a survey conducted by Global Network, over 90 percent of netizens in China expressed support for China's SCS policies (Yuyu & Jiaqi, 2015).

IV. CONCLUSION

1. 1. What were the common narratives in China, and how did these media narratives function during the legal case?

According to the results of this research, the common narratives regarding the SCS arbitration case were that China has sovereignty over the islands in SCS and its adjacent waters on historical and legal bases;²⁴⁴ that the nature of the SCS issues with the Philippines was caused by the Philippines' illegal occupation of some islands and reefs of China's Nansha Islands, (leading to disputes over maritime rights and interests thereafter);²⁴⁵ and that despite being a victim of the SCS issue, China was committed to resolving it through bilateral negotiations (Chunying, 2015j).²⁴⁶ Throughout the case, being driven by outsiders, the Philippines aimed at posing a threat to China's sovereignty and interests in the SCS. Moreover, the Chinese countered that the tribunal was politicised; hence, the final award was illegal, null and void (Dongdong & Hong, 2016).²⁴⁷

²⁴³ See No 20 and 8 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

²⁴⁴ See No 5, 11 of Table D-1 and No 9 of Table D-2 (Appendix 2)

²⁴⁵ See No 6, 8 of Table D-1 and No 1, 8, 10, 12, 14, 32 of Table D-2 (Appendix 2)

²⁴⁶ See No 2 of Table D-1 and No 3, 5 of Table D-2 (Appendix 2)

²⁴⁷ See No 1, 4, 6, 14 of Table D-1 and No 2, 10, 11, 17, 22 of Table D-2 (Appendix 2)

Therefore, to protect China's legitimate rights, to guarantee national sovereignty and interests and to defend the rule of the international law including the Convention from abuses, China would not participate, accept, or recognise the ruling.²⁴⁸

1. 2. How did China conduct media diplomacy, and what were the objectives?

Setting goals for media diplomacy

It is argued that media diplomacy was deployed to fulfil at least three major tasks: the CPC's national objectives, SCS strategy, and the Four-Nos policy. Its primary goals were to balance the pressure from the Philippines and other stakeholders on China through the legal case while protecting China's international image and strengthening the public's perception of China's sovereignty claims over the SCS.

China reiterated its principled commitment to safeguard China's sovereignty, security and maritime rights and interests and resolve the SCS dispute through peaceful and bilateral consultations and negotiations based on respect for historical facts and international law. China managed information on developments in the legal case while sending calls for negotiation and pre-conditions for the Philippines including withdrawing the legal case. Meanwhile, media diplomacy played a key role in China's SCS strategy, including isolating the Philippines at the regional and international arenas and buying more time to change the status quo of its physical presence and control over the portion of the SCS before the ruling was announced (Tiezzi, 2014). When the tribunal conducted the investigation and released the final award, China launched its massive propaganda to legitimate China's projects in the SCS and its SCS claim, balancing the media agenda with the Philippines and other external stakeholders and shifting its criticism from the Aquino government to external states and supporting bilateral negotiations with the incoming Duterte government. During the process, China also set pre-conditions for negotiations with the Philippines including that the final awards should not be used to bargain with China multilaterally and bilaterally, and accepting China's sovereignty claims over the SCS and statements over the artificial island-building project (Buszynski, 2017).

Identifying the targeted audiences

For the domestic audience, the goals of China's media diplomacy were to convince the public to support China's Four-Nos policy, strengthen China's sovereignty claim and policy in the SCS and prevent them from being influenced by external narratives. Hence,

²⁴⁸ See No 3, 7, 9, 12 of Table D-1 and No 4, 5, 7, 13, 18 of Table D-2 (Appendix 2)

initially, China controlled the flows of information regarding the legal case. After the case began, in order to balance the discourse of the Philippines and the tribunal's ruling, China deployed a massive propaganda campaign to convey its narratives.²⁴⁹ Beijing also worked with international and domestic think tank groups, scholars, lawyers and analysts to compose the arguments put forward in China's official documents (Sohn, Noyes, Franckx, & Juras, 2014).

For the international and regional audience, Beijing raised the issue at bilateral and multilateral diplomatic events to assert its official stance and call for its partners' support while controlling information about such efforts in the media. From 2016, China started a global media campaign of "borrowing the boat to reach the sea," through which Chinese diplomats, ambassadors, and scholars expanded the scale and scope of a tactic to insert the CPC's narratives regarding the SCS case into foreign news outlets with a hope to inform foreign audiences and mobilise their support (Hong, 2016).

For the Philippine audiences, Beijing managed to interact with Philippine media to insert its narratives in order to balance Manila's official narratives. Evidence shows that media diplomacy helped the CPC to take opportunities to bargain with the Duterte government to return to bilateral negotiations. However, it was hard for China's media diplomacy to convince the Philippine public to accept Chinese narratives of the arbitration case and the sovereignty claim over the SCS. Additionally, the CPC was forced to pay attention to communicating with the arbitrators so that their decisions would not threaten China's interests. The Chinese ambassadors in Manila and the Netherlands were mainly responsible for these tasks.

Limitations of the CPC's media diplomacy during the case

Some nationalists criticised the CPC's non-participation policy as a mistake, leading China to miss the opportunity to achieve a more favourable ruling. Others blamed the CPC's "pick and choose" approach towards international norms for constraining the development of the rule of law and justice in the global community (Minzner, 2011). For instance, to invalidate the Philippine's right to file the case, China argued that the DOC bound Manila to negotiate with China and precluded that country from pursuing the tribunal option. However, there was no provision in the DOC that actually prevented signatories from resorting to legal methods and it contains articles that constrained China's SCS activities. For instance, Article 5 states that the parties should "refrain from

²⁴⁹ See No 12 of Table D-2 (Appendix 2)

activities” that would “complicate or escalate dispute” including “inhabiting on the presently uninhabited islands, reefs, and other features.”

In response to the tribunal’s rulings, China ran the form of ad hominem media attacks on the arbitrators, attempted ex parte contact with the arbitrators to pressure them against unfavourable rulings, explored the motives of individuals relating to the selection of arbitrators, and inserted its criticism of the tribunal for abusing the Convention.²⁵⁰ Moreover, a cottage industry of SCS arbitration law publications, a flurry of masters and doctoral theses, and a series of international and domestic conferences from 2015 to 2016 were released in the Chinese media (Kardon, 2018). Most of them supported the PRC and provided evidence to support China’s interpretation of international law. Some included international scholars’ arguments that were neutral or did not completely contradict the CPC’s stance, creating an atmosphere of a credible legal debate on the legitimacy of the arbitration. These commentaries provided the readers with a body of literature that stipulated a smaller scope for UNCLOS-related jurisdiction than the recognised field. In other words, China could shape the future “interpretation and application” of the law of the sea in ways that allow sovereign states greater leeway in defining their own rights and jurisdiction (Kardon, 2018). As a result, in the international media, Western media channels tagged China with a label of “non-compliance with international law,” (Liya & Jianjun, 2016). These narratives directly challenged China’s global prestige and complicated information flows regarding the legal case and the implications of using international law in resolving disputes.

1. 3. What were the effects of media diplomacy?

Functioning as part of China’s SCS salami slicing

Keeping silent while changing the status quo of the situation

It is argued that China deployed its salami slicing strategy to handle the legal case and used media diplomacy to achieve its major goals. At the first stage, when China wanted to convince the Philippines to withdraw the legal case, the MFA kept a low profile over the legal case and its rejection. Until the tribunal started the investigation stage, the results of this research show that the narratives of the Philippines’ legal requests and the tribunal’s ruling were not popular in China, especially at the last stage.²⁵¹ It is argued that first, the CPC deployed media tactics to control information, and exclude the issue from the agenda of diplomatic events in order to divert the attention of the audiences. Secondly,

²⁵⁰ See No 5, 13 of Table D-2 (Appendix 2)

²⁵¹ See No 7 of Table C-2 (Appendix 2)

by projecting its stance of rejection, China aimed to describe the legitimated case as an invalid case, presenting its non-participation in the legal case as a matter of defending the rule of law. At sea, Beijing camouflaged its reclamation projects as activities that supported international public services and protected the maritime environment. After the ruling, in order to change the public's perception of the final awards of the tribunal and its significance and implementation, Beijing managed to shift the priorities to economic development in both China and the Philippines.

Countering the Philippines' arguments

The core of China's salami - slicing strategy was to avoid overt aggression or being dragged into a massive confrontation. It could be argued that China's rejection of the case was a step taken to avoid a direct confrontation with the Philippines at the Hague. In this way, China refused to participate in the "legal war," for which it was not prepared and was a defendant, in order to limit the risks and costs of unpredictable outcomes (S. Zhao, 2018). Evidence shows that Beijing combined tactics of avoiding direct rejection of the legal invitation, then keeping a low profile over the legal case, and pursuing an international and backdoor reaction to the Philippines' attempts. China must have known that the tribunal had no enforcement mechanism, and that the Philippines had only one choice which relied on international pressure to compel China's compliance (Kardon, 2018).

Then, China deployed a tactic of "pick and choose" to reject some of the Philippines' narratives over the case as well as the awards. For instance, China criticised the Philippines for cunningly packaging its case under the guise of questions of maritime entitlement in order to convince the tribunal to arbitrate over an issue that was beyond its competence. China argued that the Philippines' legal demands required the determination of sovereignty via two major arguments (Kardon, 2018). With the argument that the Spratly islands are a geographic unity for the purposes of sovereign title and maritime entitlements, China denounced the Philippines' specification of each feature controlled by China as "an attempt at denying China's sovereignty over the Spratly islands as a whole." By considering the features as a whole, China attempted to redesign the narratives of the legal demands for the arbitrators. The tribunal would thus have to examine the whole group of hundreds of rocks, reefs and other kinds of maritime features occupied in part by China, Vietnam and other claimant states before making any judgements. Additionally, China argued that two of the Philippines' submissions asked the tribunal to examine the nature of a given feature as a naturally formed island or a "low-tide

elevation” in order to determine its sovereignty title. China argued that questions about territorial sovereignty were beyond the scope of the Convention.

Separating the issues to make void the Philippines’ deterrence tactics

In the ASEAN arena, at the first stage, China isolated and pressured the Philippines to give up the legal move. The CPC reiterated that the SCS issues were not a problem between China and ASEAN and advocated a two-faces approach for the SCS disputes (Liutong, 2015). Meanwhile, China reacted softly towards the Philippines’ cooperation with its allies to avoid provoking external powers’ intervention.

To counter the Philippines’ internationalising the SCS issue, via the ASEAN channel, China started to push talks for the DOC and COC and convinced the regional states to accept its SCS resolutions and to set the ruling aside. In addition, China launched a series of naval exercises, and deployed missile destroyers and a missile frigate in the SCS to dissuade regional states from any belief that they could benefit from the case and the ruling (Buszynski, 2017). For the Philippines’ allies, China targeted the Philippines’ ambition rather than third-party stakeholders’ ones. The objectives were to pressure the Philippines to give up its legal case and internationalisation tactics and to prevent these external powers from becoming involved in the SCS issues.

In the last stage, China started to shift criticism from the Philippines to the external powers, particularly the US, accusing them of attempting to use international law to interfere in the SCS issue, to confine the political position of China and to strengthen their strategic role in the region. This tactic helped China to manage tensions with the newly elected President Duterte and save face for the CPC.

Protecting the CPC’s prestige and leadership

The MFA reiterated that legal activities have not been part of Chinese political culture (Hua, 2014). Moreover, being the subject of international arbitration over a maritime territorial dispute for the first time, with the final result being described internationally as a defeat for China, could be considered a humiliation for the Chinese and a challenge to the CPC’s leadership (Bergin, 2016).

To handle this, China’s media diplomacy continued to project an image of China as a peaceful and responsible rising power. The MFA directly denied possible linkages between China’s policy of non-acceptance and its global obligations. It emphasised that: “Being a permanent member of the Security Council does not mean having to accept the illegal ruling” (Kang, 2016b). China continued to assert its commitments to become a builder of international order and a defender of regional peace (Xiaowei & Songhui,

2016). To legitimate its “Four-Nos” policy, Beijing provided the legal basis to explain its decision such as the 2006 Declaration in accordance with Article 298 of UNCLOS and positioned itself as the defender of the Convention from abuses.

Moreover, Beijing altered its media diplomacy by publishing the SCS disputes to draw public attention and arouse nationalist sentiments. After the ruling, the Beijing government managed nationalist sentiments by allowing patriotic movements to occur only on the internet and shifting the attention of the public on to the support of overseas Chinese communities and the global audience for the CPC’s policy. In this way, deploying the nationalist card helped the CPC to unify the whole nation under its leadership against external threats, to cover its “Four-Nos” policy as a consensus of the Chinese and to legitimate its determined SCS policy as a demand from the patriotic Chinese. Finally, the tactic was to effectively create an ambiguity between a message of threatening to use force and a call for peaceful negotiations.

1. 4. Can the media be a new way to resolve the issue between the two countries?

Evidence shows that China used media tactics to call for the Philippines to join peaceful negotiations and to amend the bilateral relationship. At the regional level, in the past, China was an opponent of the DOC being conceived as a binding legal instrument. During the arbitration case, China publicly pledged to reinvigorate the implementation of the 2002 DOC, citing the document as part of its diplomatic pattern to deal with the SCS issue.

After the ruling, the Chinese government ordered the withdrawal of the Chinese Coast Guard from Scarborough Shoal and let Philippine fishing vessels move in. The MFA welcomed President Duterte’s pivot policy towards China and reminder of Sino-Philippine relations (Hua, 2014). All this news created a good atmosphere for the two states to conduct bilateral negotiations over the SCS issues.

However, evidence shows that China did not soften its claim of “indisputable sovereignty” over the SCS (Mogato, 2016). China turned the case into an opportunity to fortify the public’s perception over its sovereignty claims over the SCS by using legal concepts to describe its claims and propagandise globally. In addition, Beijing also used developments in Philippine politics, especially the presidential election, and the division in ASEAN, to assert its own SCS stance, to force these smaller claimant states to shift their priorities to de-escalate the tension, rather than focusing on the solution of differences between them. Importantly, China tactically deployed media diplomacy to

handle the international pressure forcing it to abide by the tribunal's award, enabling China to maintain its stance on UNCLOS. Hence, at grass root levels, the differences between China and the other SCS claimant states remained and the rule of law in resolving the disputes was not respected.

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

By using the theoretical framework of media diplomacy and the method of critical discourse analysis to examine the three crises in the SCS, the study shows some significant findings both in terms of practice and theory. This conclusion provides an overview of the findings and the contributions of the study to the field as well as indicating some limitations and recommendations for future research. The first section of the conclusion summarises the study's findings in response to the research questions and addressing the hypothesis. The contribution of this study to the research on the SCS issues and the media strategies of Vietnam, the Philippines and China are evaluated. Finally, the conclusion indicates some limitations of the study and suggests possible areas for the future research.

I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This thesis used the theoretical framework of media diplomacy and the method of critical discourse analysis to understand the media strategies of the governments in the Philippines, Vietnam and China (Chapter 2). Based on the research method of a case study (Robert, 2013; Stake, 2003), the thesis examined three states in three crises in the SCS (as case study contexts). The three case studies set three different timeframes for data collection: the Scarborough Shoal dispute (April to May 2012); the HD981 oil rig stand-off (May to August 2014); and the SCS arbitration case (February 2013 to July 2016). Data collection and analysis of the media strategy in the crises were conducted in different stages: the beginning, escalating/managing and de-escalating.

The data collection was primarily conducted through retrieving state materials and diplomatic statements and media releases issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and news coverage by the major media channels in each claimant state from Factiva and their websites. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the overlapping claims in the SCS, the developments of the crises, as well as the various state(s)' media policies, secondary resources such as scholarly articles, media reportage of international media channels and studies by international institutes were also reviewed (Chapter 4). The process of finding and collecting data used research techniques such as identifying the groups of keywords and the set criteria (Widdowson, 1998). The process of cleaning data was based on specific conditions as explained in Chapter 2.

A mixed news analysis approach, flexibly combining a qualitative content analysis approach and theories of framing and themes (explained in Chapter 3), was used in the data collection process. For the coding process of media units, qualitative content analysis

was employed to identify the first and secondary topics. The results of the coding process were described via media themes, generating popular themes for each stage as well as the whole crisis. Checking the reliability and trustworthiness of the results was conducted by comparing them with neutral information provided by the international media channels. The process occurred separately for media units of the states and the media outlets. For China (in all three crises) and Vietnam (in the oil rig crisis), media reports in the local languages were also analysed.

In the analysis process, at each stage, based on the popular themes and using the theory of framing and critical discourse analysis, the thesis analysed how the states used their media tools to frame and created their political discourses (for example, by holding press conferences, releasing remarks). Analysis also examined how the states managed relations with the media to popularise narratives and generate public discourse over the crises. The set of research questions were used in this process to shape the analysis and compare the results for the two disputants in a particular crisis. These processes enabled the identification of the popular topics and themes that constructed the common narratives and discourses of the state's channels and of the media in each side at each phase.

The results and concurrent reviews of the states' SCS policy and media policy (in Chapter 4) provided the foundation for an understanding of the states' use of the media in the crises. The research inquiry was able to determine which topics were the governments' priorities, which ones the states sent via the media for its political goals and which ones were geared to the demands of the media and the public. These findings answered the question on the states' media tactics at each stage. Additionally, by examining the two disputants in each crisis together, the thesis analysed how their media tactics played out in the dispute including setting the agenda, framing, selecting words and contents, timing, selecting the appropriate media to send information and other strategies to gain their goals.

II. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The thesis fulfilled its two major research objectives: examining the role of the media in territorial disputes both at the escalation and de-escalation stages using the theoretical framework of media diplomacy and understanding the SCS disputes from the perspective of media diplomacy. It was hypothesised that the governments in China, Vietnam and the Philippines utilised media diplomacy to affect public opinion, domestically and internationally, during the SCS crises. By answering the following research questions, the thesis has proven this hypothesis to be correct.

1. 1. What are the root causes of the re-emerging tensions in the SCS?

Chapter 3 provided a discussion of the two root causes of tensions in the SCS, among others: perception gaps among the claimant states regarding the SCS and the structural changes in the geopolitics in the region. The claimant countries have overlapping claims over the ownership of the disputed areas in the SCS and the value of the SCS, especially the symbolic value, but also hold different perceptions of the others' claims and behaviours. When the geopolitics of the region was changed structurally by the US's pivot and the rise of China, with the existing perception gaps, the claimant states displayed more aggressive policies and the tensions were exacerbated. The three crises examined in this thesis were the most serious ones.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the rise in China's military power provided the CPC with the confidence to conduct its assertive maritime policy and to promote its long-running project to raise the public's maritime consciousness, particularly in the SCS from 2009 onwards (Chubb, 2016). The crises examined in Chapter 4, 5, 6 detailed how China acted and what it stated, reflecting its rise in power and influence, and how the other claimant states perceived and reacted during the crises.

With the perception of "China threats" in the past and the "rise of China" more recently, besides developing their own defence capabilities, Vietnam and the Philippines saw the US pivot strategy as an opportunity to counter China's aggressiveness in the SCS disputes (T. T.-T. Liu & Tsai, 2014). The Philippines managed its media diplomacy to maximise US help under the MDT to strengthen its military capability and to mobilise US support for its legal case against China. Similarly, Vietnam used media diplomacy to manage its hedging strategy with the US against China's aggressiveness during the oil rig crisis. In other words, the US pivot to Asia influenced the claimant states' strategic perceptions over the geopolitics in the SCS and re-shaped their strategies to defend their interests there from the perspective of a rising, aggressive, China. Examining the causes of the SCS issues from the perspective of states' perceptions and identities, and important shifts in the geopolitics in the region, enables a deeper understanding of the disputes, offers new ways to analyse critically the claimant states' behaviours in the crises in the 2010s, and suggests ways for them to manage the disputes in the future.

1. 2. The overlapping media narratives between the claimant countries

According to Gilboa, when using media diplomacy in antagonistic relationships, a government uses the media to explain its policies and actions, to criticise other governments' ones and to balance or counter the rival's propaganda. Based on this

theoretical framework, this thesis identified overlapping narratives of the two claimant states in each crisis to understand their priorities during the crises.

The 2014 oil rig crisis

Defending the legitimacy of the oil rig deployment and its locations

The two sides made different statements about the locations of the rig.²⁵² China stated that the location was in the contiguous zone of China's Xisha Islands,²⁵³ that the drilling activities in the SCS were conducted by a state-run company, not the government, and that it protested against any external disturbance. Meanwhile, Hanoi accused Beijing's oil rig of violating Vietnam's sovereign rights and jurisdiction (MOFA, 2014e).

Strengthening narratives on the claims over the SCS

Vietnam stated that it had sufficient historical and legal bases to assert its sovereignty over the Truong Sa and Hoang Sa Archipelagos, as well as sovereign rights and national jurisdiction over its EEZ and continental shelf in accordance with the 1982 UNCLOS (MOFA, 2014e). China also extensively published media narratives to strengthen its historical titles in the SCS. However, Beijing rejected the role of UNCLOS, arguing that the law governing the sea is an enormous and comprehensive law system, not merely a single UNCLOS (L. Xiongping, 2014).

Framing different discourses on the developments at sea

China reiterated that there was no dispute over the SCS and the current incident at sea was caused by the Vietnamese side. Vietnam had harassed the Chinese oil rig putting it at huge risk and threatening the safety of both the Chinese and Vietnamese personnel at sea. In contrast, Vietnam described China's aggression and its own self-restraint. In recording and conveying narratives of the confrontations at sea, Vietnam sent foreign and Vietnamese reporters to the disputed site and mobilised international and domestic media channels in its campaign. At some moments of high tension, the Vietnamese media coverage created a strong semblance of real war or conflict reports. In contrast, Beijing reused Vietnam's photo and video footage to prove that what Vietnam claimed was an untrue and mobilised its diplomats on the media stage to convey its message internationally.

²⁵² Both sides confirmed that from May 2, 2014, the oil rig was settled down at 15°29'58'' north latitude and then later 111°12'06'' east longitude since May 27 (Bower & Poling, 2014).

²⁵³ China stated the location of the platform was 17 nautical miles from China's Zhongjian Island and some 130 to 150 nautical miles from Vietnam's coast.

Managing nationalism

Each side described itself as a “victim” and the other as “external threat” to their national interests and used rhetoric and other tactics to stir up and manage nationalist sentiments. Vietnam considered China’s deployment of the oil rig within its claimed EEZ as a serious threat to its national security. Meanwhile, China considered any obstructive attempts by external states towards the rig as a challenge to China’s Dream. Moreover, any concession from the government such as the withdrawal of the oil rig from the areas or negotiations over jointly exploring and exploiting would be seen as equivalent to China’s humiliation.

China’s media signalled the CPC’s position that the government had never meant to create trouble in the SCS, but was not afraid of any challenge from other countries and would not sacrifice its territory and sovereignty. Vietnam confirmed that “Vietnam will never barter these sacred things for an unrealisable and dependent peace and friendship” (“PM Dung: defend sovereignty,” 2014).

Hanoi’s victimisation narrative was associated with hostile memories from the past and its narrative of the “China threat” was shared with the other regional neighbours. China’s victim stories were influenced by stories of its humiliation in the past and were developed through the narrative that the smaller claimant states cooperated with external powers, particularly the US and Japan, to restrain China’s ascent and influence. Nationalist and patriotic sentiments were turned into hostile activities on both sides such as protests, boycotts and criticism on the internet. Hanoi described the peaceful anti-China protests as patriotic movements and managed the problems caused by the violent riots through shifting attention to overseas patriotic movements, denying Beijing’s accusations about the protests, and calling for re-establishment of the social order.

The 2012 Scarborough shoal dispute

Framing the discourses of the causes of the incident

Both the government and public in the Philippines believed that the Chinese fishing vessels operated illegally at the shoal when Chinese government vessels prevented the Philippines Navy from approaching and arrested the fishermen. In contrast, China criticised the Philippines Navy’s attempts to arrest the Chinese fishermen as a provocative action and their presence as a violation of Chinese sovereignty and demanded the departure of the Philippine Navy vessels. This created a dilemma for the Philippines: Philippine naval forces were not able to arrest the Chinese fishing vessels, but the

government could not allow or request the Chinese vessels to leave without confiscation or a punishment.

Strengthening the discourses of sovereignty claims

To defend the legitimacy of their actions, both sides asserted their sovereignty claims over the shoal. China considered the shoal as an island of the Nansha/Spratlys, and the Philippines stated that the shoal is not an island or also “not part of the Spratlys”. China’s claims were based on narratives of historical facts and traditional fishing zones, while the Philippines’ claims were founded on legal and administrative evidence (GOVPH, 2012i).

Framing discourses on the governments’ SCS strategies

The two states each explained their moves and interpreted those of its rival. The Aquino government presented its strategy, including developing its naval force, strengthening the Philippine-US alliance and internationalising the tensions, as well as engaging directly with China (Castro & Cruz, 2014b, 2016b). It is argued that since Manila failed to decode China’s salami-slicing strategy, it reported confrontations at sea, the deadlock on the diplomatic front and contradictions on the media front without any analysis of China’s political motivations. In communicating with the media agencies to mobilise domestic support, the Aquino government suffered pressure from diverse public opinions over its SCS strategy, while they were also confronted with China’s accusations over the aggressiveness of the Philippine forces.

China used the media to communicate its tactics of conducting a policy of self-restraint at sea and wish to resolve the tension by diplomatic negotiation. Beijing decoded Manila’s tactics as indicating a hostile attitude. The Philippines described its legal initiative as a fair solution for both sides, but China criticised the move as an escalating tactic. Moreover, Manila reiterated that the development of a minimum credible defence was for peaceful purposes, not about the stand-off, but China accused it of being a threat to its sovereignty and the stability of the region.

Managing nationalism

Both sides had different narratives and tactics to manage popular sentiments to unite the nation, mobilise support for the government’s policy and generate political pressure on its rival. The disputants used narratives of victimisation and external threat(s). However, while the Philippines acknowledged it was militarily too weak to confront China directly, China showed that the Chinese people were ready to fight for national territory and displayed pride in the increasing military power of the country. The two

governments used rhetoric to show their commitment to defending their national sovereignty. At the time of highest tension, the Filipino people took to the streets to demonstrate against China's behaviour in the SCS. Manila described the anti-China protests as legal, peaceful and patriotic movements, but Beijing asked Manila to respond to the negative effects of the movement on bilateral relations. From the Chinese side, the anti-Filipino sentiments were only allowed to occur on the internet and abroad, not in mainland China. However, that was strong enough to put pressure on the Philippine side to de-escalate the stand-off.

After the stand-off, given the perception that the shoal belongs to China's nine-dash line claim in the SCS, China depicted the control of the Scarborough shoal as a victory for the country, supporting its goals. Manila had to mobilise the legal track to manage the domestic audience's frustration over the issue.

The SCS arbitration case

Strengthening the sovereignty claims and the causes of the crisis

The Philippine position was that due to the overlapping claims over the SCS and China's aggressiveness in the region, it had decided to seek third-party arbitration to clarify the maritime entitlements of each side. Manila also criticised Beijing's non-participation in the tribunal, and non-observance of its ruling, as one of the causes of the tensions. In contrast, China said the legal case had internationalised and complicated the SCS issue (Keqing, 2013). Both sides retained their sovereignty claims over the SCS and blamed the other for illegally occupying and violating their claimed territory and sovereignty (Lei, 2013d).

Legal requests and the awards

Manila filed a case against China before an arbitral tribunal under Article 287 and Annex VII of the 1982 UNCLOS, but China deployed the Four-Nos policy: non-admission, non-participation, non-acceptance, and non-implementation, citing the rights of a state to decide to join in an international arbitration case or not and recalling the 2006 Declaration of Article 298 of UNCLOS (GOVCN, 2016e). While Manila based its claim and legal requests on the UNCLOS, the CPC believed that the legal regime was "not a proper standard to assess and judge the legitimacy of China's historical rights" (Yujing, 2016). Both Beijing and Manila kept a low profile in relation to the backdoor activities of the Chinese side with the arbitrators. China pushed its narratives of rejection, criticism of the rival, and principled resolutions on the SCS issue and avoided citing directly the Philippines' legal requests in the MFA's agenda. Meanwhile, the Philippines set the

circulation of information about the developments at the Hague and its legal requests as priorities for the DFA's agenda.

Framing discourses on the rival's other SCS tactics

Both sides committed to resolve the SCS issue through peaceful means while endeavouring to maintain their bilateral relations (Rosario, 2013a). At sea, both sides ran the positive narratives of their military activities such as island-building activities and modernising naval forces as a peaceful determination to defend their national interests and sovereignty, while maintaining the stability in the region, but ran negative narratives about its rival's one. The Philippines succeeded in warning third-party states that China's island-building projects posed a threat to the eco-environment, peace and stability as well as the freedom of navigation in the region. In contrast, Beijing criticised Manila's building activities on the disputed island for trying to justify its illegal occupation and construction work before the signing of the DOC.

From their official statements, both sides committed to pushing forward the DOC and COC in the SCS as a part of their resolutions for the SCS dispute. However, in the media, one of the popular narratives from both sides were accusations that the other was causing division in ASEAN and trying to persuade member states to take positions against its rival. While the Philippines accused China of delaying the process, China blamed the Philippines for violating the DOC in the SCS by filing the case (Chanco, 2014; Lei, 2015d). Moreover, China stated it had no motives and designs for so-called regional hegemony, while criticising the US-Philippines strengthened military cooperation in the name of "jointly dealing with China's threat".

Managing nationalism

Both sides expressed their determination to defend their national interests, citing their policy towards the legal case as evidence. Moreover, through the legal case, the two sides aimed to improve their international prestige and unite the nation. Internationally, the arbitration case was glorified as a noble move to show the Philippines' respect for the rule of international law. Regionally, the Philippines perceived itself as the first claimant state to use a third-party compulsory dispute settlement mechanism to resolve the SCS disputes. Domestically, most of the Philippine people supported the legal case (Courmont, Lasserre, & Mottet, 2017). Meanwhile, China stated the Four-Nos policy was to realise the "great dream of the renewal of the Chinese nation" and, in the media, Chinese people expressed their support for China's SCS policies (Yuyu & Jiaqi, 2015).

Both sides used narratives of external threat and victimisation to manage nationalism. They described their policy towards the legal case as a “defender” and accused the other of being a “threat” to their interests, international law and freedom of navigation in the region. The Philippines considered that Beijing’s rejection of the tribunal was a “threat” to its efforts to deal with the SCS disputes peacefully (“Playing the victim,” 2015). However, China perceived that through the case, with the support of external powers, the Philippines had abused UNCLOS and used it to pose a threat to China’s sovereignty rights and interests in the SCS (Dongdong & Hong, 2016).

As the Philippine people engaged in activities such as taking to the streets, and landing on the disputed islands but not violent riots, the Aquino government defended them on the grounds that Filipinos were free to express their patriotism. Meanwhile, Chinese nationalist movements were evident on the internet and overseas. After the crisis, both sides quickly managed nationalist and patriotic sentiments in order to amend the bilateral relations.

1. 3. How did the governments conduct media diplomacy in the selected cases of the SCS disputes?

From the beginning of the crises, all three states projected peaceful principles and suggestions for resolution. In the escalating stages of the crises, the governments used the media to explain their policies and actions in order to criticise rivals’ actions. Moreover, they deployed media strategy to balance rival propaganda and to generate political pressure to force a rival to change its hostile policy. Vietnam and the Philippines deployed this mechanism in their internationalisation tactics with the hope of convincing the international community to pressure China to alter its hostile actions if it wanted to save its international prestige. Meanwhile, China deployed its global media to convince audiences to accept its narratives and suggestions, and to pressure the other claimant state(s) to alter their determinative counteractions against China in the SCS, in exchange for good bilateral relations with China.

To ameliorate the tension, the states used the media to “influence the moods of government, elites and the public” so as to affect their decisions on de-escalation (Mowlana, 1997, p. 40). Moreover, the media often provided the only channel to break deadlocks and then support communication between the states (Gilboa, 2001). When a breakthrough was achieved, the media could be utilised to propagate and cultivate support from the public. Before and during bilateral meetings to resolve the tensions, media tactics

such as promoting peaceful messages, reducing criticism and suggesting cooperation were repeatedly used to create a good atmosphere.

Vietnam's media diplomacy

Chapter 4 provided a discussion of how the Vietnamese government conducted media diplomacy via its tools and legacy media outlets during the crisis period. It is argued that Vietnam's media diplomacy during the oil rig crisis was structured by combining the state's long-term project of influencing public perceptions over the seas and islands and its hedging strategy in the SCS from 2009 (see Chapter 4).

Before the crisis, the CPV's Seas and Islands campaign had systematically propagandised the narratives of Vietnam's sovereignty claims in the SCS via the national media system (GOVVN, 2009). During the crisis, the narratives were repeated and strengthened with rhetoric and emotional input from diverse civil society groups. In doing so, the Vietnamese government used the crisis to strengthen the Vietnamese people's perceptions and feelings of identity over the SCS and to draw the attention of and convince international audiences to support its narratives over the oil rig stand-off as well as the SCS issue as a whole.

The CPV had experience in managing and utilising nationalism and patriotism to strengthen the legitimacy of the Party's rule from the time of Doi Moi 1986. In the crisis, the CPV used the media to stir up nationalism and patriotism, domestically and overseas, then to generate political pressure on China. When the patriotic sentiments turned into violent riots, the media were used to minimise the negative impact by preventing domestic official information channels from covering the riots. When the crisis was ended, the Party used the media to turn Vietnamese patriotic sentiments into support for the legitimacy of the regime.

Vietnam showed its understanding of its rival and external actors in deploying its media diplomacy. For instance, in its media coverage, Vietnam focused on the lack of a legal and historical basis for China's sovereignty claims. Through the ASEAN channel, Hanoi also mobilised the motivation of the member states, especially the Philippines, to overcome the weakness in ASEAN's decision-making process (Hiep, 2016). Hanoi took advantage of external powers' ambitions, particularly the US and Japan, to get involved in the regional politics to generate pressure on China but did not sign any permanent deal with external powers, avoiding the danger of outright competition and intervention from major external powers (Frost, 2008).

The Philippines' media diplomacy

The Philippines' media diplomacy reflected its legalistic, liberal-institutionalist political culture. For instance, thanks to its knowledge of international law, the Philippines promptly separated the Scarborough Shoal from the other disputed areas in the SCS, emphasising that it had indisputable national sovereignty over it by stating that the shoal is not a part of the Spratlys. This strategy prohibited China's tactic of turning an undisputed area into a disputed one. Moreover, by filing the case for international arbitration, Manila shifted the debate from the confrontation at sea to the battle of legal and public opinion (Minzner, 2011).

During the two crises with China, Manila gained more experience in deploying media diplomacy to support its WPS strategies. Due to the lack of experience in dealing with Beijing's new salami-slicing tactics and a specific strategy for information and communication, Manila's media diplomacy could not support its WPS strategy effectively in the Scarborough Shoal crisis. During the legal case, Manila developed its information campaign by identifying the target audiences and selecting appropriately contents and media channels that were well aligned with the demands of particular audiences. After filing the case, Manila promptly initiated the media and information campaign to support the case and oppose China's anticipated reactions, domestically and globally (See Chapter 6).

During the 2012 crisis, however, Manila's media diplomacy failed to mobilise support for the legitimacy of its behaviours in defending its territorial sovereignty in its claimed EEZ and trying to force China to withdraw its vessels from the shoal and manage the tension in its favour. In the legal case, Manila succeeded in using media diplomacy to defend the legitimacy of the move and to create a dilemma for China: China could refuse to participate in the case but could not keep silent in the media.

In the Scarborough Shoal dispute, Manila wrongly decoded China's behaviours at sea, in the media and on the diplomatic fronts, on a number of occasions. In the legal case, Manila designed its legal requests carefully, provided evidence and arguments to convince the arbitrators, while skilfully using neutral recognition of third-party stakeholders to balance Beijing's media propaganda globally. Although failing to alter China's Four-Nos policy, the Philippines overcame Chinese pressures and followed the legal track.

In the 2012 stand-off, Manila naively assured the public that it could handle the crisis via negotiations and predicted wrongly that China would withdraw from the shoal.

Hence, Manila delayed seeking its allies' support and failed to engage China through ASEAN. In the legal case, Manila detailed Beijing's aims to confound Manila's deterrence plans, then propagandised its reactions together with external states' support for its plan. Manila also developed its narrative for and tactics towards ASEAN, gaining support from the other claimant states in the SCS, particularly Vietnam, by strengthening the narrative of the "China threat" and the calls for respecting the rule of law in resolving the territorial disputes (Amador & Ibarra, 2016). Using the media to manage nationalism was developed through the two crises. Evidence showed that the Aquino government's information campaign was to support the leadership of the government and to unite the nation, rather than putting pressure on China. Moreover, Manila deployed media diplomacy to utilise the two crises for the objectives of improving its defence capability.

President Duterte did not see merit in pressuring China into compliance through legal means and noted the inability of the security alliance with Washington to prevent Beijing's expansionism in the SCS. In the early phase of his term, the President deployed media diplomacy to control information over the outcome to support a strategy focused on confidence-building and finding face-saving ways for both sides to improve Sino-Philippine relations (Lucio, 2018). However, the ways in which President Duterte leveraged the legal awards to further his goals in the relationship with China during his terms is beyond the scope of this study.

China's media diplomacy

China's media diplomacy was a part of its external propaganda and SCS strategy. The Scarborough Shoal dispute and the oil rig crisis are examples that demonstrate how China deployed media strategy offensively, while the SCS case demonstrates how China used the media in a defensive situation. In all cases, China's media diplomacy strictly obeyed the four principles of China's media warfare (Cheng, 2012).

Controlling information while changing the status quo

One common tactic found in the three case studies was that China kept a low profile over the crises and only stated principled policy at the early stage. This tactic was used to fortify its advantageous position in major confrontations including changing the status quo over control of the Scarborough shoal and buying time to deploy the oil rig. In the legal case, China deployed the silent tactic to avoid involvement and sought to change matters by convincing its rival to alter its policy and shifting into other debates.

One of the principles of China's media warfare is to select the optimum time to initiate the media strategy (Cheng, 2012). In offensive contexts, after establishing

advantages on the major front, China quickly provided its own media narratives to counter its rival(s) domestically and globally. In a defensive situation, China kept a low profile until the SCS case officially began, and China had failed to change the situation.

Managing the tensions and altering facts in China's favour

In all cases, China deployed media diplomacy to seek to control information flows and dominance over the media airwaves in order to frame and shape the agenda of the debates. Common narratives included that China was acting legally and peacefully in its legitimate waters and islands; that its actions were to defend the nation's interests; that prevention by the SCS claimant states and criticism from external powers towards China was illegal, biased and ambitious. The objectives were to reject the rival's criticisms, prevent the domestic audience from being exposed to the rival's narratives and messages that did not find sympathy in the public psyche and to protect China's image and the CPC's leadership (Cheng, 2012).

In the SCS case, by refusing to be present at The Hague and publishing its statement in the media, China identified that the subject matters of the crisis were public perception of the legitimacy and the righteousness of the legal narratives from each side on the media front. To manage the tension and decrease the Philippines' will to fight, China first created other fronts such as island-building at sea and communicating via international, regional and bilateral channels. The goals were to distract the Philippine government from the legal case and to alter the facts of the situation at sea. While waiting for opportunities to change the situation, China released its narratives over the legal case in the media with a relatively low density to shape the public's perceptions gradually. After making sure that its rival agreed to set aside the tribunal's awards, China started to propagandise its narratives to strengthen public perception over the topics.

Undermining enemies' will to fight

China used the tactic of sending ambiguous and dual messages by combining peaceful and aggressive actions. One of the most useful tools was nationalist management. The goals were to attack the rival(s)' psychology, delay their processes of understanding China's tactics and decision-making to counter them. China's tactic seemed to be effective thanks to its multiple approaches and diverse resources to support it. Before offering cooperation with the Philippines, both in the Scarborough Shoal crisis and the legal case, China deployed media diplomacy to reduce the Philippines' deterrence such as imposing informal sanctions, isolating the Philippines from other regional countries, and suggesting sharing interests in the region with the Philippines' allies. For

Vietnam, China's dual message was cooperation and the party-to-party relationship versus being ready to go to war. China might impose economic sanctions on Vietnam to generate political pressure on Hanoi. However, besides seeking other foreign markets, Vietnam handled such political pressure by controlling information over the sanctions and running the discourse of escaping from China's orbit to manage the public's concerns over the consequences of the sanctions. China failed to isolate Vietnam from the ASEAN community since it cooperated with the Philippines. The most useful way for China to force Vietnam to accept its suggestions was through the party-to-party relationship. China effectively forced its rivals to choose between the sovereignty issues and their other grand goals. As a result, the rivals were in a disadvantaged position, and forced to de-escalate the crisis or accept conditions for negotiations (Cheng, 2012; Halper, 2013b).

To make void the rivals' internationalisation tactics, China's media diplomacy managed to project a stable situation at sea and criticise the rivals' ambitions while warning external actors not to become involved in the bilateral disputes via messages describing the benefits from cooperation with China and the danger of confrontation.

Creating and strengthening its narratives over the newly established status quo

In the offensive context, the goals of China's media tactics were to force the rival(s) to end the crises in its ways and to convince the public to accept its narratives in favour of its peaceful image. In the defensive context, when the opportunity came, (for instance, in the legal case, the opportunity arose when presidential candidate Duterte showed his intention to pursue bilateral negotiations), China quickly deployed its media strategy to change its disadvantaged situation. When both sides accepted the conditions for ending the crises, China ran narratives to defend its own image afterwards and strengthen public perceptions over the new status quo.

Protecting China's image

In all cases, at the first stage, China set the principles and preconditions for negotiations and published them in the media to set the standards for minimally acceptable solutions that were in line with the Chinese government's commitments to its domestic audiences. Moreover, China constantly called on its rivals to conduct self-restraint and resolve the tension via bilateral negotiations and consultations. In this way, China's media diplomacy was used to project an image of a peace-loving country (Cheng, 2012). Moreover, China improved its media tactics to protect China's image during anti-China movements in the crises. In the 2012 stand-off, China circulated images of the Filipino protesters, but it became more skilful by keeping a low profile over the peaceful

anti-China protests by the Vietnamese. Moreover, China deployed a common message that the people in the hostile countries remained friendly towards China and such protests were backed by the rival government(s) or their political groups to pressure Beijing regarding the SCS issues.

1. 4. What were the effects of media diplomacy on the bilateral relationships between the countries?

According to the theoretical framework of media diplomacy, a state in a dispute with other(s) conducts media diplomacy toward foreign communities, including its rival(s). The hope is that the people in those countries can accept their media messages in its favour, and consequently urge their government(s) to alter their policy in relation to the disputes. As this study did not focus on how the people interacted with the media and the government(s), it could not prove how the public, including those in third-party countries and the rival country, convinced the government(s) to adopt a contrary policy based on their belief in a rival's narratives. However, it is argued that the claimant states understood and mobilised this logic in deploying their media diplomacy during the crises. For instance, in convincing the government and people in the Philippines to set aside the Tribunal rulings, China repeatedly cited one of the major concerns of the Philippines which was economic development. For their part, Hanoi and Manila repeated China's narrative of it being a peaceful ascendant power in the international arena to remind the CPC and the Chinese of it. In doing so, these states hoped that the domestic and global audience would question the CPC about its aggressiveness in the SCS and the China dream, forcing the CPC to alter its SCS policy in order to defend its national image in the future.

All claimant states were actively engaged in attempting to affect international audiences when their diplomats and foreign policy experts expressed their views in the media around the world, and their overseas citizens participated in public demonstrations to show support for their governments' SCS policy. They claimed repeatedly that they won the support of the international community for their SCS policies.

The analysis of the findings showed that the governments continued to nurture public nationalist sentiments for multiple purposes, especially to support the regime, and unite the nation and counter external threats. All sides used the crises to demonstrate their sovereignty claims over the SCS based on legal and historical arguments. The rival claimants all described the islands and waters in the SCS as vital parts of the national homeland that could not be compromised. In addition, the disputes were viewed through

an historical lens. It is important to note that the media agencies in each country described their nation as a deliberate, rational and wise actor and the opponent as aggressive, irrational, dangerous and ambitious.

The above media tactics widened the existing gaps in perception and identity among the people in these countries. As a result, although the incidents were repressed and relations between state-to-state relations continued, the public in each country retained a negative perception of the rival, challenging the governments' efforts to solve the SCS issue and develop bilateral relations. Survey figures demonstrate the extent of the remaining feelings of negativity. 84 percent of Vietnamese who participated in a 2014 Pew research poll answered that they felt fearful that China's territorial ambitions could lead to armed conflict with their country. This number in the case of the Philippines was 93 percent. In the survey in 2015, up to 93 percent of Filipinos and 83 percent of Vietnamese were worried about the prospects of war with China in the disputed sea with 58 percent of Filipinos and 74 percent of Vietnamese considering China to be a threat (Center, 2014, 2015).

1. 5. Can the media be a way to resolve the crises?

It is certainly apparent that the governments utilised media diplomacy in the de-escalation stage of the crises. For instance, the claimant states kept a low profile over the crises to distract the public at the last stage.

After the SCS case, there has been no crisis between China and the other claimant states, although tensions remain. Moreover, the conflict management mechanisms between the claimant states have not improved significantly, including bilateral and trilateral efforts as well as regional initiatives like the ASEAN-China dialogue and DOC and COC (Hayton, 2020). Most importantly, so far, the claimant states' overall claims in the SCS have remained unchanged. The Philippines did not give up its sovereignty claim over the Scarborough Shoal and never accepted China's statement. China withdrew the oil rig but reiterated that the area belongs to its territory and the deployment of the rig was legal. Moreover, China denied the legitimacy of the tribunal and the rulings. In short, media diplomacy partly helped these states to de-escalate the crises but failed in resolving the disputes over sovereignty in SCS fundamentally. At the grassroots level, it is argued that the demands for the claimant states to make more efforts to handle the SCS disputes have increased since the perception gaps among the countries have been widened. The research suggests therefore that media diplomacy assisted the settling of disputes in the short term, but did not resolve issues for the long term. Furthermore, media diplomacy

appears to have exacerbated sentiments of national identity and suspicions about rival claims in the SCS.

III. CONTRIBUTION TO THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For the literature of IR, the thesis has contributed examples on how to explore the role of the media in international territorial disputes. The challenges for claimant states in an international territorial dispute are the perceptions about sacred territory and the potential for the involvement of extreme nationalism, which can escalate the tension (Holmes, 2016). Hence, the claimant states are required to put extra efforts into managing the tensions domestically and internationally, including on the media front. The thesis examined three different models of the theoretical framework of media diplomacy in the context of territorial disputes that were complicated by prevailing nationalist movements.

With the discussion of the SCS legal case, the thesis is one of the first studies that tests the theoretical framework in relation to a territorial dispute submitted to international arbitration. The inclusion of the legal case enabled the exploration of media discourses and narratives of each claimant state in a battle of words and arguments rather than confrontation at sea.

For the media study, Chapter 2 identified popular mechanisms for a media strategy, including the framework of media diplomacy, that states can deploy to handle an antagonistic relationship over a specific issue. The thesis analysed how the disputants used media diplomacy to stir up, escalate, manage and de-escalate the crises (Yaping Wang, 2018). It concluded that the media on its own could not help to resolve the territorial disputes in the SCS.

The thesis showed that the framework of media diplomacy facilitates an examination of media strategies in relation to the characteristics of the political culture of nation(s). China's media diplomacy during the crises was examined as a part of its SCS policy, external propaganda, and foreign policies. The Philippines' media diplomacy was used to support Aquino's balancing strategy between China and the US and Vietnam's media strategy was structured by combining the hedging strategy and domestic campaign regarding the sea and maritime issues.

Moreover, the thesis contributes to the theoretical framework by examining media propaganda between the two communist regimes during a crisis period. There are studies examining the media discourses of Vietnam and/or China in the oil rig crisis, such as those of Nhung (2017) and Yaping Wang (2018). However, Nhung looked only at Vietnam while Wang made China the objective of their research while the other claimant

states were also mentioned. These studies applied diverse theoretical frameworks in media studies, but did not use media diplomacy. Furthermore, none of these studies was designed to reflect the differences between the two Communist parties in the use of media propaganda. The thesis addressed these gaps by demonstrating commonalities and differences between their media diplomacy and explaining the reasons as well as the impact of such differences on the development of the crises.

For instance, although three basic functions of the media were not deployed fully in China and Vietnam due to their control of the media, Vietnam legitimised its narratives and behaviour by inviting third-party stakeholders to participate in reporting and recording the development at sea. For its part, China mobilised diplomats on the media stage and sent documents to the UN to counter Vietnam's accusations. Doing so meant China could project the narrative of a stable situation at sea to its domestic audience. Moreover, to handle the nationalist movements, while Hanoi was limited to cite the topic on the agenda of the MOFA to limit the burdens, Beijing exacerbated the issue by placing it in on the agenda of the MFA's press conferences.

Additionally, the differences in using media diplomacy between a democratic state and an authoritarian state, which were neglected in the previous studies mentioned in Chapter 4, were detailed in this thesis (Pagulong & Serafica, 2016; Yaping Wang, 2018). During the two crises, three basic functions of the media in politics were applied in the Philippines (Joseph, 2014). The media in the Philippines were free to report the demonstrations domestically and overseas. The freedom of expression in the country helped the Aquino government make void Beijing's accusation of it having a hand in the nationalist movements. Meanwhile, Beijing had to shift the nationalist movements to overseas Chinese communities and maintained the SCS issues only in the media and the internet. In the SCS legal case, by examining the two sides together, their skill at agenda-setting could be compared. While Manila set the narratives for the legal requests on the diplomatic agenda of the DFA, Beijing decreased the importance of these legal requests by skipping over them in the MFA's agenda and discrediting them via the media channels.

IV. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. 1. Recommendations for resolving the SCS disputes

Resolution of the SCS disputes is an important topic in the study of conflict management and resolutions from the IR perspective, but not from that of media studies (Amer & Zou, 2011; Liaolei & Mengli, 2014a). In theory, there are seven distinct approaches by which parties can live with, or dissolve a conflict (Wallenstein, 2012). First, the parties may

change their goals and shift their priorities. This mechanism had been applied in the SCS dispute when all sides had shifted their priorities to economic development and a peaceful environment for their development after the Cold War. However, this shift in priorities has not helped to resolve the disputes so far. In the second approach, the parties can stick to their goals but find a point at which resources can be divided. However, this approach seems to be difficult to apply to the SCS disputes, because the disputed zones include islands that are inhabited by people who will have their own interests, and the areas contain a huge potential in terms of resources. In the third approach, each claimant state could take an entire piece of the area and the others take the other, instead of making complicated division. This approach could be used to resolve the SCS disputes, if China did not persistently claim over eighty percent of the SCS. Fourthly, the SCS may be ruled as a condominium, where decisions require the consent of both parties. This approach requires a degree of trust, which is currently lacking amongst the claimant states. The fifth way is to leave control of the SCS to a third actor so that the warring parties agree not to rule the island(s) themselves. The sixth way is to resort to conflict resolution mechanisms, for example, arbitration or other legal procedures that the parties can accept. Lastly, issues can be left to later or even abandoned.

Scholars of peace journalism have argued that in conflict management and peacebuilding, the media can provide assistance but are obviously not able to eliminate armed conflicts on their own. There are, however, some potential ways that the claimant states should use media diplomacy in conflict management and peace building in the SCS disputes. They should pay attention to the functions of local and international media at the reconciliation stage, as a successful reconciliation step is the best guarantee against the resurrection and re-emergence of dispute. By directly influencing people and the resolution of conflicts, local media can raise the level of trust and hope about the future of the country and the capacity to resolve tensions at the domestic level (Bajraktari & Parajon, 2008). Additionally, the governments should mobilise the function of agenda-setting in the international media which has the potential to influence the other claimant states and international organisations for their reconciliation goals. The governments should also focus on the role of the new media and invest in communication technology to convey their peaceful messages to target audiences (Kuusik, 2010).

Based on the analysis of this study, there are some suggestions for the claimant states to manage tensions and maintain peace in the SCS from the perspective of media diplomacy. First, the results of the research have showed the common narratives over the

resolutions among the states including bilateral negotiations, trilateral efforts and regional initiatives such as the DOC (Wiranto, Juwana, Sutisna, & Buntoro, 2017). In the future, by repeatedly presenting these initiatives in the media, the audiences will be reminded about peaceful discourses and the demand to resolve the SCS disputes peacefully will be strengthened.

Moreover, the states should pay attention to the role of the media in shaping public perceptions during the non-crisis period. For instance, the Aquino government committed to bringing the WPS issue into the education programme, focusing on managing and exploiting natural resources and protecting the environment and ecosystem, and not “brainwashing” the people. This could be an initiative for the other claimant states to consider. Additionally, the way that the Vietnamese government omitted sensitive topics regarding the Sino-Vietnam clashes in the SCS in the past could be applied to manage the situation after the oil rig crisis. By doing so, the sides can control the influence of public sentiments on conflict management and minimise the negative impact on bilateral relations between the countries when a crisis happens. Moreover, the perception gaps between them over the SCS issue would, at the very last, have not been widened.

1. 2. Recommendations for Vietnam’s media diplomacy

Hanoi mobilised the territorial issue to manage nationalism and patriotism by using the narratives of external threats, particularly the theory of the “China threat” and of “escaping China’s orbit” (“Vietnam: SCS in examination,” 2014). Such a media strategy has shaped China’s image in the eyes of the Vietnamese people. A survey conducted by Pew Research Centre, showed that only 16 percent of the Vietnamese surveyed said they treated China as a friend while 74 percent considered China as the biggest threat to Vietnam’s sovereignty, despite China being the biggest economic partner of Vietnam (*Asian views*, 2014). When converted into foreign policy, such a highly negative sentiment towards China amongst the Vietnamese public would constrain Vietnamese policy makers’ ability to normalise bilateral relations with China. To manage this challenge, Hanoi needs to manage its media strategy towards the SCS issues. Vietnam should use the warning function of the media to tell the audience that there are risks of disputes over some overlapping areas in the SCS, including its own EEZ and continental shelf. With an understanding of the risk of wars, the public would act more rationally in case of a crisis. Moreover, the government should focus on other narratives such as protecting the environment, maintaining freedom of navigation and respecting the rule of law. Additionally, Hanoi should continue to allow young Vietnamese intellectuals to

express their views and be exposed to diverse perspectives about the disputes. By doing so, they can judge the issue by themselves based on international laws. The younger generation who are open-minded and well-educated about the disputes, can learn from the failures of the previous generations and may be more able to find a comprehensive solution to the SCS disputes.

1. 3. Recommendations for the Philippines' media diplomacy

Manila should develop a long-term WPS strategy. Such a long-term strategy can limit the effects of shifts in the popular mood or changes in leadership. Moreover, consistency in Manila's WPS strategy could provide the public with a clear vision on the SCS disputes, and send a solid message to China and the other claimant states, as well as external powers. By updating the public on the SCS issue with a clear and consistent stance, Filipinos could avoid extreme actions that could pose threats to people-to-people relations. Moreover, Manila should distinguish the media campaign for its domestic audiences from its tactics towards the other claimant states in the SCS, particularly China. In doing so, the state could alter its strategy flexibly to handle pressure from external states without neglecting its domestic goals. To support the internationalisation tactic, Manila should learn to use the media to connect with regional states, especially the other claimant states, to reach a consensus over the SCS issues. Moreover, the Philippines should learn from what Vietnam did after the crisis with China. For instance, Vietnam reiterated its media tactics domestically and internationally in order to bargain with China in the negotiations.

1. 4. Recommendations for China's external propaganda and media diplomacy

China's media strategy in the SCS as well as external propaganda indicated some limitations. During the crises, China repeatedly used ambiguous concepts, particularly the nine-dash line, and dual messages to challenge its rival(s). However, after decoding China's political ambitions, the other claimant states reacted strongly, adding more challenges to China's strategy and complicating the crises. Moreover, foreign states criticised China's ambiguity in the SCS as one of the causes of the tensions, challenging its international position. Additionally, evidence showed that the rival(s)' internationalisation tactics undermined China's silent and camouflaging tactics, balancing Chinese media propaganda. In short, China's media strategy in the SCS disputes complicated the tensions, damaging efforts to build its international image (Nye, 2012, 2015).

Moreover, it is argued that China's external propaganda has two major limitations. Surveys conducted in both Western and Asian societies show that opinions about China's influence are predominantly negative (Nye, 2012, 2015). Firstly, this is because the CPC relies on nationalist management, which helps to protect the legitimacy of its leadership in China. In the SCS disputes, Beijing staked national dignity and prestige on its claim to ownership in the region. By doing so, this limited the universal appeal of Xi's "Chinese Dream," while supporting policies in the SCS that antagonise neighbouring countries. In all three crises, China described most of the SCS as a sacred territory that has belonged to the Chinese people since antiquity and made themselves accountable to nationalist sentiment. Hence, it will be difficult for China to withdraw the maritime claims altogether for fear of fuelling Chinese protests. Therefore, it is suggested that the CPC should withdraw from pressing its claims in the media, shelving them quietly and slowly for the sake of regional amity.

Secondly, instead of improving the credibility of its media system, China took advantage of an uncensored civil society to operate its external propaganda to further its influence (Nye, 2012, 2015). China should think about the role of non-governmental organisations, such as individuals, the private sectors and civil society, in generating its international influence and prestige. Publishing their critical and uncontrolled reactions can compensate for China's assertive policies. Doing so may seem too risky for the CPC regime, but so far China has found no way to prevent its assertive policy in the SCS disputes from damaging its international prestige (Nye, 2012, 2015).

1. 5. Recommendations for third-party states

The thesis has shown that the claimant states used the stances and media narratives of third-party actors to mobilise international and domestic support and legitimise their behaviours. Moreover, third-party actors' statements provided a neutral and prestigious information for people to know about the crises.

Third-party actors included the regional countries that do not have claims to the disputed areas, but have vital interests, such as sovereign rights in the waters and jurisdiction over their EEZs and Continental Shelves in the SCS. The actors also include countries which have an interest in ensuring freedom of navigation and maritime safety in the SCS, particularly the US and the Pacific countries like Japan, Australia and New Zealand. There are some messages for the other claimant states in the SCS as well as non-claimant ones.

For the governments in third-party countries, they need to maintain good relations with the claimants and non-claimant states and design their media strategies for this purpose. Moreover, by expressing a neutral and peaceful stance, these states can facilitate diplomatic meetings between the claimant states, and help to break diplomatic deadlock between the disputants. Additionally, the states could help to manage rhetorical narratives that may be used tactically by the disputants to complicate the tensions.

The international scholars based in these countries should follow actively the developments in the SCS and provide timely analysis and advice for policymakers in their countries. For the media in these countries, they should check the facts in every message before informing their audiences about the disputes. Sending their representatives to the disputed zones to witness, to collect neutral information, and then recreate their own media narratives is one of the best ways to follow the SCS issue. The media should play a warning function at all stages, projecting narratives about the costs of wars and calling on the disputants to exercise self-restraint. For the audiences in these states, they should double-check before expressing their opinion about the SCS issues. One of the priorities they should focus on is peaceful resolutions of the SCS disputes.

1. 6. Recommendations for future research

The study has some limitations. For the research subject, the SCS disputes have been affected by not only the claimant states, but also external states. In the future, there is a need to examine the other claimant states, and the influence of relations between the claimant states and external states on the disputes.

The timeframe of this study did not allow for an examination as to how these governments used media diplomacy to amend relations between the countries after the crises, and how they continued to struggle to resolve the disputes. Topics such as how the claimant states can use the media to prevent the resurgence of SCS tensions, and resolve the SCS issue, will be interesting subjects for researchers who want to work on the study of the media as well as the SCS issues.

The thesis used complex theoretical frameworks and methodologies from both IR and media studies. In the future, in order to be applicable to other case studies, these methodologies can be further refined and developed.

Due to limitations of time and data resources, the process of data collection had some limitations. First, although each media report was coded for the first and secondary topics, the writer did not mention them in the analysis so as to keep the writing concise. The results of the coding processes can be shared and explored in future research on the

relevant topics. Moreover, the thesis just focuses on the national media outlets without the social media fields because there was no way of obtaining reliable information of this field in China and Vietnam. Therefore, the research could not portray a perfect picture of the media battle between the nations. Finally, the controversy over the SCS is a good placeto start examining the concept of media diplomacy. In the near future, researchers could further examine and apply the framework to more complicated cases in other regions.

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APPENDICIES

APPENDICES OF CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The terms used in the data collection

The data collection process in this study used the concepts of topics or themes. Van Dijk (1989, 2013) has argued that in reading a news articles, with subjective and social variations, newspaper readers can tell what a text or conversation was about and can summarise complex units of information in one or a few sentences. These sentences are assumed to capture the themes or topics of the information and illustrate what is most important in a text. The primary topic or main theme refers to the general subject matter in each story or news report

In written news reports, the first paragraph usually conveys the primary topic. The subsequent paragraphs present the rest of the topics in decreasing order of importance, based on journalistic principles and on the production principles or writing strategies.

It should be noted that this thesis deals with meaning and references and not with syntactic form, style or rhetorical devices, or with the local meaning of isolated words or sentences. The process of data collection in this study focused on the meaning of larger fragments of text, or an entire text. Moreover, there is not just one topic in a text, but several. The identification of topics or themes needs to be subject to some form of testing in order to minimise subjectivity. In this study, the assignment process was oriented and sharpened by the research questions and the use of frames in the manual coding process.

In coding the findings of the data collection into the final results in preparation for the analysis process, the thesis used the theory of frames (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Frames are systems of pre-conceived ideas used to organize and interpret new information. To frame, a writer or speaker selects a topic that they want to present, determines the issues that the prospective audience may think about and how they may think about those issues. Based on the framing theory, this study assumed that topics/themes (both primary and secondary ones) from the collected media units were created and oriented through framing tactics of the state(s) and the media agencies for political goals. These goals included balancing the rival's narratives and shaping the public's perception over the issues, domestically and globally. For instance, in order to explain their policies toward the crises, the governments published narratives on the armed clashes in the past, the sovereignty claims of each side, and international audience's opinion on the issue. In doing so, these communicationsexercise a selective influence over how people understand reality and shape people's perception over the issue.

Keywords

Table 1 includes a group of keywords that were used in the data collection. For the case of the Scarborough Shoal dispute in 2012, the study examined media archives published from April to June 2012. For English editorials, the study used the keywords of “Scarborough Shoal”, “Panatag shoal”, “West Philippine Sea”, “South China Sea” and “Huangyan Island” to collect media reports from the Philippines Star, Philippine Daily Inquire, and Xinhua from the Factiva. Meanwhile, for the People’s Daily channel, in addition to to the English keywords, a group of Chinese ones including “黄岩岛” (Huangyan Island) and “南海” (Nanhai Sea - South China Sea in English) were used to find English and Chinese media reports from the website.

For the case of the oil rig crisis, the study collected media archives published from 1 May to 31 August 2014. For English news articles, the study collected news articles of the VNA and Xinhua from the Factiva with keywords of “East Sea”, “Xisha Islands,” “South China Sea,” and “981 oil rig”. Besides these English key words, Chinese keywords of “南海紧张局势” and “海洋石油981” were used to find Chinese ones from the website of the People’s Daily. Meanwhile, the study used keywords of “South China Sea” or “Biên Đông”, “HD981 oil rig” or “giàn khoan 981” to find relevant English and Vietnamese news reports from the official website of VOV.

For the SCS arbitration case, the time frame was from January 2013 to July 2016. A different group of keywords including “South China Sea,” “South China Sea arbitration case” were used to collect English news reports and a group of Chinese key words including “南海争” (South China Sea issue), and “国际仲裁” (international arbitration) were used to find Chinese ones.

Major news agencies

1. Vietnam

In each state, based on their large national circulation, two legacy news agencies were selected to collect data. In Vietnam, this study examines news coverage of the Voice of Vietnam and Vietnam News Agency. These two media agencies were selected because they have a very large audience and readership within Vietnam. They are also under supervision or direct control of the government. These authorised channels provide the government with a tool to communicate its media diplomacy to domestic and international audiences. Both the news agencies can be considered as true barometers of Vietnam’s official political climate on a daily basis. As the mainstream information

source, the VNA and VOV play a key role in guiding opinion, supplying a strategic and trustworthy information source for the Party and State, and supporting national development and security ("VNA," 2018).

2. *China*

The thesis study examined media reports published by Xinhua and the People's Daily. The two outlets were selected because the contents of media coverage are designed for mass audiences, both domestic and overseas, yet are highly scripted and vetted by their general editorial and management boards as they are considered "mouthpieces" of the Communist Party (Chubb, 2016; D. T. M. Le, 2015; Nhung, 2017). The two media outlets function to cover and transfer the Chinese government's message to the domestic and overseas audience. On the other hand, as a part of the "go global" campaign, since the 2000s, these two media agencies received a massive investment for their infrastructure from the state to meet to make sure China's messages reach foreign audiences (Xiaoling, 2010). Examining the media archives of these state mouthpieces not only helps to find what the CPC preferred news frames are, but also supports insights into how the frame flows between the governments and the news media outlets are developed. The state-run media outlets with their editorials and commentary articles can be seen as reflecting the "correct reading" and understanding of the states' policies (Chubb, 2016; Nhung, 2017).

3. *The Philippines*

The study examined news reports of the Philippine Star (PS) and the Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI) to find common discourses in the cases of the Scarborough Shoal dispute and the SCS arbitration case. Privately-owned, the PS and PDI are the leading English newspapers which developed after the end of the regime of President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 (Kadrich, 2008). Their daily circulation reaches 150,000 to 300,000 copies and their online offerings registered around 35 million views per month ("PDI,"). These newspapers partly constructed "realities" in their news coverage. By examining the news frames of each media outlet over the disputes, and comparing these with the state preferred framings, the writer can interpret the government's use of media diplomacy in the disputes. The research also includes related media reports from well-known international media as a way to collect more neutral and objective information on the disputes.

Table 1: Key words will be used in retrieving news reports from the Factiva

Case study	States	Media channel	Keywords	Language
The Scarborough Shoal dispute	China	Xinhua; People's Daily	South China Sea, Scarborough Shoal, and Huangyan Island, 南海 (Nán Hǎi - South Sea)	English; Chinese
	The Philippines	Philippine Daily Inquirer; The Philippine Star	Scarborough Shoal, Panatag shoal, West Philippine Sea, South China Sea	English
The oil rig stand-off	Vietnam	Voice of Vietnam; Vietnam News Agency	South China Sea; Biển Đông (the East Sea); HD981 oil rig; giàn khoan 981;	English; Vietnamese
	China	Xinhua; People's Daily	South China Sea; 南海 (Nán Hǎi - South Sea); “南海紧张局势” and “海洋石油981”	English; Chinese
The SCS arbitration	China	Xinhua; People's Daily	South China Sea, South China Sea arbitration case; 南海争 (South China Sea issue), and 国际仲裁 (international arbitration)	English; Chinese
	The Philippines	Philippine Daily Inquirer; The Philippine Star	West Philippine Sea; South China Sea; South China Sea Arbitration	English
	Others	CNN, BBC, Euro news, Aljazeera, etc.,	South China Sea	English

APPENDICES OF CHAPTER IV: THE OIL RIG CRISIS

Appendix 1: Vietnam's media diplomacy

The first stage

This stage examined 3 MOFA press conferences and 61 English and 73 Vietnamese news reports.

Table A-1: Results of the MOFA's publications

No	Contents	Total
1	Updating the developments of the crisis	3
2	Discussing Vietnam's sovereign rights and national jurisdiction over the area to show Vietnam's consistent determination in defending its sovereignty	3
3	Protesting China's actions, demanding China stop the actions; calling to refrain from conducting similar activities	3
4	Informing of Vietnam's diplomatic and defensive efforts	2
5	Reiterating that Vietnam loves peace, respects friendship with China, abides by the laws	2
6	Countering China's statements (historical evidence, legal basis, and oil resources and exploration activities)	2
7	Negative description of China's actions (illegal and aggressive actions, threatens peace, hurts friendship, violates Vietnam's rights)	2
8	Quoting third-party states' calls for self-restraint and respect for the law, DOC/COC, or bilateral agreements	2
9	Accusing China of incorporation in settling the crisis	1
10	Calling for support of VN's stance, nationalism	1
11	Thanking for/mentioning the third party's support	1
12	Quoting third-party states' expressing concerns over the issue	1
13	Quoting third-party states' call for conducting actions to solve the issue peacefully	1

Table A-2: Results of VOV and VNA articles

No	Contents	VOV VI (73)	VOV EN (27)	VNA (34)	Total (134)
1	Quoting international publications on China's SCS ambitions	27	11	16	54
2	Quoting VN public's concerns about the crisis	26	7	9	42
3	Reporting the state's efforts to protest about China and determination to protect its sovereignty	17	9	14	40
4	Quoting the state's negative portrayal of China's actions at sea	20	7	11	38
5	Quoting third party states' discussion on consequences of the stand-off	21	5	11	37
6	Reporting the government's information from the conflict site	17	6	11	34
7	Quoting Vietnamese people's criticism of China's SCS ambition and strategies	22	4	5	31
8	Quoting Int'l news agencies reporting over the stand-off	19	5	6	30
9	Quoting international voice over the SCS strategies of the major and relevant countries ²⁵⁴	23	4	2	29
10	Reporting the government's stance on peaceful settlement	13	5	7	25
11	Quoting US official and experts' concerns	13	5	7	25
12	Quoting Vietnamese people's support of the VN government's peaceful strategies	17	2	5	24
13	Quoting Vietnamese discussion on historical and legal evidence	17	3	3	23
14	Analyses/ ideas/ voices over the stand-off by VN scholars/civil society groups	15	3	4	22
15	Reporting international discussion on Vietnam's strategy	14	2	4	20
16	Quoting international support of Vietnam's stance and actions	10	2	6	18
17	Quoting the state's statements confirming Vietnam's sovereign rights in the SCS	12	0	0	12
18	Reporting the Chinese side's statements	7	1	3	11
19	Reporting Vietnamese officers' diplomatic efforts in foreign countries	3	5	3	11
20	Using the state's information on VN fishermen	11	0	0	11
21	Reporting peaceful anti-China protests in Vietnam ²⁵⁵	12	1	1	14
22	Quoting the government's portrayal of a peace-loving country	4	1	5	10
23	Quoting the government's accusation that China's action hurts the truth between China-Vietnam	8	0	0	8
24	Discussing the use of legal measures	5	0	1	6
25	Quoting discussion of China's historical argument (nine dotted line map)	2	2	2	6
26	Reporting activities to strengthen Vietnam's administration over the islands	2	0	0	2
27	Quoting the state's calls for domestic calm /patience/ unity	1	0	0	1
28	Quoting the state's warning on consequences of the stand-off	1	0	0	1
29	Reporting activities to raise/educate/show nationalism & patriotism	1	0	0	1

²⁵⁴ Such as the US, Japan, the Philippines, and other ASEAN member states

²⁵⁵ Including 3 articles on overseas anti-China protests

The second stage

This stage examined 16 MOFA press conferences and 269 English and 396 Vietnamese news reports.

Table B-1 Results of MOFA's publications

No	Contents	Total
1	Updating the developments of the crisis	16
2	Negative description of China's actions (illegal/aggressive/threaten peace, hurts friendship, violates Vietnam's rights)	12
3	Informing of Vietnam's diplomatic and defensive efforts	9
4	Thanking for/mentioning the third party's support	8
5	Reiterating that Vietnam loves peace, respects friendship with China, abides by the law	7
6	Protesting the actions, demanding to stop the actions; calling to refrain from conducting similar activities	7
7	Quoting third-party states' calls for self-constraint and respect for the law, DOC/COC, or bilateral agreements	7
8	Quoting third-party states' expressing concerns over the issue	6
9	Accusing China of incorporation in settling the crisis	6
10	Calling for support for VN's stance, nationalism	6
11	Updating anti-China protests; the government's reactions	4
12	Discussing Vietnam's claims over the area; showing Vietnam's consistent determination in defending its sovereignty	3
13	Quoting third-party states' supporting Vietnam's stance, and helping VN to call China to abide by the law	2
14	Countering China's statements (historical evidence, legal basis, and oil resources and exploration activities)	1
15	Quoting third-party states' call for conducting actions to solve the issue peacefully	1
16	Quoting third-party states' agreement with Vietnam's goodwill	1

Table B- 2: Results of VOV and VNA articles

No	Contents	VOV VI (396)	VOV EN (150)	VNA (119)	Total
1	Quoting Vietnamese people's criticism of China's SCS ambition and strategies	131	42	30	203
2	Quoting Vietnamese people's support of the VN government's peaceful strategies	142	31	23	196
3	Analyses/ ideas/ voices over the stand-off by VN scholars/ civil society groups	145	25	16	186
4	Reporting the state's efforts to protest China and determination to protect its sovereignty	104	42	36	182
5	Quoting the government's statements on the negative portrayal of China's action at sea	94	33	27	154
6	Quoting international publications on China's SCS ambitions	95	27	24	146
7	Quoting the government's peaceful settlement of the stand-off and call for support	82	30	25	137
8	Quoting third party states' discussion of consequence of the stand-off	73	32	27	132
9	Quoting the state's warning on consequences of the stand-off	83	14	21	118
10	Reporting the government's information from the conflict site	57	26	31	114
11	Quoting international voices over the SCS strategies of the major and relevant countries	77	11	9	97
12	Discussing peaceful protests by overseas Vietnamese communities ²⁵⁶	48	28	14	90
13	Quoting international news agencies reports on the stand-off	65	10	12	87
14	Reporting activities to raise/educate/show nationalism & patriotism	84	0	0	84
15	Reporting peaceful anti-China protests	66	7	10	83
16	Quoting the state's statements confirming Vietnam's sovereign rights in the SCS ²⁵⁷	81	0	0	81
17	Reporting international discussion of Vietnam's strategy	53	12	9	74
18	Reporting VN officers' diplomatic efforts in foreign countries	19	35	15	69
19	Quoting the state's calls for domestic calm /patience/ unity	45	9	7	61
20	Reposting the state's information on VN fishermen	60	0	0	60
21	Reporting activities to strengthen Vietnam's administration over the islands	58	0	0	58
22	Quoting discussion of China's historical argument (9 dotted line map)	52	3	3	58
23	Reporting the government's statement on anti-China protests, and the state's efforts to stabilise	26	12	17	55
24	Quoting Vietnamese discussion of historical and legal evidence	36	9	5	50
25	Quoting the state's warning on consequences of the stand-off	39	6	4	49
26	Quoting US official and experts' concerns	28	9	7	44
27	Quoting international support for Vietnam's stance and actions	24	10	7	41
28	Discussing the use of legal measure	26	5	7	38

²⁵⁶ Including 22 articles discussing foreigners joining in peaceful protests held by overseas Vietnamese

²⁵⁷ Including 37 news reports quoting the state leaders' remarks

The third stage

This part examined six press conferences and 46 news reports by the MOFA and 578 English and 799 Vietnamese news reports.

Table C- 1: Results of MOFA's publications

No	Contents	Total
1	Updating the developments of the crisis	33
2	Negative description of China's actions	29
3	Discussing Vietnam's sovereign rights and national jurisdiction over the area, to show Vietnam's consistent determination in defending its sovereignty	19
4	Reiterating that Vietnam loves peace, respects friendship with China, abides by the laws	19
5	Protesting the actions, demanding to stop the actions; calling to refrain from conducting similar activities	18
6	Informing of Vietnam's diplomatic and defensive efforts	16
7	Thanking for/mentioning the third party's support	15
8	Calling for support for VN's stance, nationalism	15
9	Quoting third-party states' expressing concerns over the issue	15
10	Quoting third-party states' calls for self-restraint and respect for the law, DOC/COC, or bilateral agreements	12
11	Accusing China of incorporation in settling the crisis	10
12	Updating anti-China protests; the govt's reactions	10
13	Quoting third-party states' support for Vietnam's stance, and helping VN to call on China to abide by the law	8
14	Countering China's statements (relating to historical evidence, legal basis, and oil resources and exploration activities)	7
15	Quoting third-party states' agreement with VN's goodwill	3
16	Quoting third-party states' call for conducting actions to solve the issue peacefully	1

Table C-2: Results of VOV and VNA articles

No	Contents	VOV VI (799)	VOV EN (298)	VNA (280)	TOTAL
1	Reporting the state's protests to China ²⁵⁸ and determination to protect sovereignty	306	122	103	531
2	Quoting the state's negative portrayal of China's action at sea	288	92	74	454
3	Reporting the government's information from the conflict site	203	94	102	399
4	Discussing third party's concerns over the stand-off	192	97	70	359
5	Reporting the government's stance on peaceful settlement ²⁵⁹	203	75	74	352
6	Quoting international publications on China's SCS ambitions	232	45	54	331
7	Quoting Vietnamese people's support for peaceful strategies	176	46	61	283
8	Analyses/ ideas/ voices over the stand-off by Vietnamese scholars/civil society groups	189	45	43	277
9	Quoting Vietnamese people's criticism of China's SCS ambition and strategies	163	51	58	272
10	Quoting the state's statements confirming Vietnam's sovereign rights in the SCS	256	0	0	256
11	Quoting international voice over the SCS strategies of the major and relevant countries	175	24	30	229
12	Reporting the state's information on VN fishermen	186	0	0	186
13	Quoting international news agencies reporting on the stand-off	141	20	21	182
14	Reporting activities to strengthen Vietnam's administration over the islands	179	0	0	179
15	Reporting VN officers' diplomatic efforts in foreign countries	54	71	34	159
16	Reporting activities to raise/educate/show nationalism & patriotism	157	0	0	157
17	Quoting Vietnamese discussion of historical and legal evidence	90	31	27	148
18	Quoting the state's warning on consequences of the stand-off	72	30	36	138
19	Reporting international discussion of Vietnam's strategy	75	28	29	132
20	Quoting discussion of China's historical argument (9 dotted line map)	111	11	8	130
21	Quoting US official and experts' concerns	91	17	16	124
22	Quoting international support of Vietnam's stance and actions	70	26	20	116
23	Discussing the use of legal measures	53	22	18	93
24	Discussing statements from Chinese media and official sources	59	18	15	92
25	Discussing peaceful protests in Vietnam	64	10	12	86
26	Reporting the Chinese side's statements	64	10	6	80
27	Quoting the government's portrayal of a peace-loving country	46	13	12	71
28	Discussing peaceful protests by overseas Vietnamese communities ²⁶⁰	29	19	14	62

²⁵⁸ Including 29 reports quoting the government's blaming China's action for hurting the truth/friendship

²⁵⁹ Including 48 ones quoting the state's leaders' speeches

²⁶⁰ Including 24 articles discussing foreigners who joined in peaceful protests held by overseas Vietnamese

29	Reporting peaceful anti-China protests in Vietnam ²⁶¹	21	18	16	55
30	Quoting the state's calls for domestic calm /patience/ unity	27	10	9	46

²⁶¹ Including 3 ones reporting anti-China protests overseas

The fourth stage

This part examined six MOFA regular and irregular press conferences held by the MOFA and 283 English and 156 Vietnamese news reports.

Table D-1: Results of MOFA's publications

No	Contents	Total
1	Reiterating that Vietnam loves peace, respects friendship with China, abides by the law	6
2	Informing of Vietnam's diplomatic and defensive efforts	5
3	Updating the developments of the crisis	5
4	Protesting the actions, demanding to stop the actions; calling to refrain from conducting similar activities	4
5	Quoting third-party states' support for Vietnam's stance, and helping VN to call China abide the law	4
6	Discussing Vietnam's sovereign rights and national jurisdiction over the area, to show Vietnam's consistent determination in defending its sovereignty	3
7	Negative description of China's actions	3
8	Quoting third-party states' calls for self-restraint and respect for the law, DOC/COC, or bilateral agreements	3
9	Thanking for/mentioning the third party's supports	2
10	Calling for support for VN's stance, nationalism	2
11	Quoting third-party states' expressing concerns over the issue	2
12	Updating anti-China protests; the government's reactions	1

Table D-2: Results of VOV and VNA articles

No	Contents	VOV VIE (156)	VOV EN (91)	VNA (192)	Total
1	Reporting the state's efforts to protest against China and its determination to protect sovereignty	71	52	55	178
2	Discussing third parties's on consequences of the stand-off	42	28	38	108
3	Quoting international voice over the SCS strategies of the major and relevant countries	48	12	40	100
4	Reporting the government's peaceful stance	43	21	31	95
5	Reporting the government's information from the conflict site	13	39	39	91
6	Quoting international publications on China's SCS ambitions	48	12	25	85
7	Quoting US official and experts' concerns	26	15	25	66
8	Quoting the state's warning on consequences of the stand-off	4	16	43	63
9	Quoting the government's statements on negative portrayal of China's action at sea	32	17	13	62
10	Discussing China's historical arguments	39	5	10	54
11	Quoting the state's statements confirming Vietnam's sovereign rights in the SCS	45	0	0	45
12	Analyses/ ideas/ voices over the stand-off by Vietnamese scholars/civil society groups	19	6	20	45
13	Quoting Vietnamese people's support of Hanoi's peaceful strategies	15	7	19	41
14	Quoting international news agencies reporting of the stand-off	28	3	8	39
15	Quoting international support of Vietnam's stance	25	6	7	38
16	Reporting international discussion on Vietnam's strategy	11	9	17	37
17	Quoting Vietnamese discussion on historical and legal evidence	15	7	14	36
18	Reporting the Chinese side's statements	16	7	12	35
19	Quoting the government's blaming of China's actions for threatening the friendship	1	23	10	34
20	Reporting activities to raise/educate/show nationalism & patriotism	30	0	0	30
22	Reporting the state's information on VN fishermen	27	0	0	27
23	Discussion of statements from Chinese media and official sources	15	2	10	27
24	Quoting Vietnamese people's criticism of China's SCS ambition and strategies	8	2	15	25
25	Reporting activities to strengthen Vietnam's administration over the islands	24	0	0	24
26	Reporting VN officers' diplomatic efforts in foreign countries	11	1	7	19
27	Discussing the use of legal measures	10	1	6	17
28	Quoting the government's portrayal of a peace-loving country	4	7	4	15
29	Discussing peaceful protests by overseas Vietnamese communities ²⁶²	2	2	4	8
30	Quoting the state's calls for domestic calm /patience/ unity	7	0	0	7
31	Reporting the state's efforts to stabilise anti-China riots	0	1	5	6
32	Reporting peaceful anti-China protests in Vietnam	0	0	3	3

²⁶² Including 1 articles discussing on foreigners joined in peaceful protests held by overseas Vietnamese

The general Results

This part examined 8 remarks and 4 international press conferences and 148 news reports by the MOFA and 1186 English and 1424 Vietnamese news articles.

Table E – 1: Results of the MOFA’s publications

No	Contents	Total
1	Updating the developments of the crisis	57
2	Negative description of China's actions (illegal/aggressive/threaten peace, hurt friendship, violate Vietnam’s rights)	46
3	Reiterating that Vietnam loves peace, respects friendship with China, abides by the laws	34
4	Informing about Vietnam’s diplomatic and defensive efforts	32
5	Protesting the actions, demand to stop the actions; call to refrain from conducting similar activities	32
6	Discussing Vietnam’s claims over the area, to show Vietnam’s consistent determination in defending its sovereignty	28
7	Thanking/mentioning the third party's support	26
8	Calling for support for VN's stance, nationalism	24
9	Quoting third-party states’ expressing concerns over the issue	24
10	Quoting third-party states’ calls for self-restraint and respect for the law, DOC/COC, or bilateral agreements	24
11	Accusing China of incorporation in settling the crisis	17
12	Updating anti-China protests and the govt’s reactions	15
13	Quoting third-party states’ support for Vietnam’s stance, and help to VN to call on China abide by the law	14
14	Countering China's statements (historical evidence, legal basis, and oil resources and exploration activities)	10
15	Quoting third-party states’ agreement with Vietnam’s goodwill	4
16	Quoting third-party states’ call for conducting actions to solve the issue peacefully	3

Table E – 2: Results of VOV and VNA articles

No	Contents	VOV VIE 1424	VOV EN 566	VNA 625	Total
1	Reporting the state's efforts to protest against China ²⁶³ and determination to protect sovereignty	498	225	208	931
2	Quoting the government's negative portrayal of China's action at sea	434	149	125	708
3	Quoting third party states' discussion of consequences for the region and for China itself	333	164	144	641
4	Reporting the government's information from the conflict site	290	165	183	638
5	Quoting international publications on China's SCS ambitions	402	95	119	616
6	Reporting the government's stance on peaceful settlement of the stand-off and call for support	341	131	137	609
7	Quoting Vietnamese people's support of the Vietnamese government's peaceful strategies	350	86	108	544
8	Quoting Vietnamese people's criticism of China's SCS ambition and strategies	324	99	108	531
9	Analyses/ ideas/ voices about the stand-off by Vietnamese scholars/civil society groups	368	79	83	530
10	Quoting international voices about the SCS strategies of the major and relevant countries	323	51	81	455
11	Quoting the state's statements confirming Vietnam's sovereign rights in the SCS	394	0	0	394
12	Reports by international news agencies on the stand-off	253	38	47	338
13	Using the state's information on Vietnamese fishermen	284	0	0	284
14	Reporting Vietnamese officers' diplomatic efforts in foreign countries	87	134	62	283
15	Reporting activities to raise/educate/show nationalism & patriotism	272	0	0	272
16	Reporting activities to strengthen Vietnam's administration over the islands	263	0	0	263
17	Reporting international discussion of Vietnam's strategy	153	51	59	263
18	Quoting US official and experts' concerns	158	46	55	259
19	Quoting Vietnamese discussion of historical and legal evidence	158	50	49	257
20	Quoting the state's warning on consequences of the stand-off	116	52	83	251
21	Quoting discussion of China's historical argument (9 dotted line map)	204	21	23	248
22	Quoting international support of Vietnam's stance and actions	129	44	40	213
23	Discussing peaceful protests in Vietnam	140	18	25	183
24	Discussing peaceful protests by overseas Vietnamese communities ²⁶⁴	81	49	33	163
25	Discussing the use of legal measures	94	28	32	154
26	Discussing statements from Chinese media and official sources	92	30	32	154
27	Discussing China's statements	93	22	24	139
29	Quoting the state's calls for domestic calm /patience/ unity ²⁶⁵	80	20	23	123

²⁶³ Including 54 reports quoting the government's accusation that China's action hurts the truth between China and Vietnam

²⁶⁴ Including 48 ones mentioning foreigners who joined in the demonstration

²⁶⁵ Including 92 ones quoting the state leaders' speeches

Appendix 2: China's media diplomacy

The first stage

This part examined 10 MFA press conferences, the two Navigation Notices and 20 English and 8 Chinese news articles.

Table A- 1: Results of the MFA's press conferences

No	Contents	2 out of 10
1	Informing about the government's actions	4
2	Discussing other SCS issues	2
3	Discussing the oil rig incident	2
4	Asserting China's sovereignty over the SCS	2
5	Blaming the relevant country/ies and calling for a stop to such actions	2
6	Affirming the legitimacy of China's actions	1
7	Discussions on the anti-China protests	0

Table A – 2: Results of Xinhua and People’s Daily articles

No	Contents	PD CN (8)	PD EN (9)	Xinhua (11)	Total
1	Discussing the CPC’s commitments on the SCS issues	4	9	3	16
2	Discussing the US Pivot strategies	1	6	7	14
3	Asserting China's sovereignty over the islands and waters in the SCS	4	4	4	12
4	Reporting diplomatic efforts with Vietnam to solve the incident	1	5	6	12
5	Portraying China as a peaceful country	1	5	6	12
6	Countering third party actors’ criticisms over China's actions	1	5	5	11
7	Discussing the oil rig incident	3	2	3	8
8	Discussing the issues in the SCS	3	4	0	7
9	Discussing the Philippines' SCS strategies	2	2	3	7
10	Reporting on Chinese officers’ comments abroad regarding the incident	0	4	3	7
11	Criticising VN's actions by negative words	2	3	1	6
12	Calling for Vietnam to stop disturbing, responding to Vietnam’s words	1	2	3	6
13	Emphasising benefits from cooperating with China in other fields	0	2	4	6
14	Affirming that China's action was legal	3	0	0	3
15	Discussing multi/bilateral trust and mistrust	0	1	2	3
16	Quoting academic arguments that benefited China	0	0	3	3
17	Reporting developments at sea	2	0	0	2
18	Citing nationalist rhetoric	1	1	0	2
19	Confirming there was no “clash” over the SCS	1	0	1	2
20	Analysing VN's SCS strategies	0	2	0	2
21	Portraying China as a victim	0	1	1	2
22	Discussing Japan's SCS strategies	0	1	1	2
23	Discussing the ASEAN member states’ strategies	1	0	0	1
24	Quoting third party states’ views that benefited China	0	1	0	1

The second stage

This part examined 14 MFA press conferences and remarks and 162 English and 12 Chinese news articles.

Table B- 1: Results of the MFA's press conferences

No	Contents	11 out of 14
1	Informing about the government's actions	11
2	Blaming the relevant country/ies and calling for a stop to such actions	11
3	Discussing the oil rig incident	11
4	Discussing the anti-China protests	8
5	Affirming the legitimacy of China's actions	5
6	Asserting China's sovereignty over the SCS	5
7	Discussing other SCS issues	2

Table B – 2: Results of Xinhua and People’s Daily articles

No	Contents	PD CN (12)	PD EN (73)	Xinhua (89)	Total
1	Criticising VN's actions by negative words	7	37	56	100
2	Discussing the anti-China riots in Vietnam	6	36	52	94
3	Discussing the oil rig incident	9	34	50	93
4	Calling for Vietnam to stop disturbing	6	41	45	92
5	Asserting China's sovereignty over the islands and waters in the SCS	8	32	51	91
6	Discussing negative consequences from the riots	5	35	51	91
7	Affirming that China's action was legal	4	32	48	84
8	Discussing the CPC's commitments on the SCS issues	10	45	27	82
9	Analysing Vietnam's SCS strategies	4	27	28	59
10	Reporting diplomatic efforts with Vietnam to solve the incident	2	16	38	56
11	Emphasising benefits from cooperating with China in other fields	7	27	20	54
12	Portraying China as a peaceful country	5	18	19	42
13	Quoting Vietnamese official's statements, words	2	10	23	35
14	Reporting developments at sea	5	16	7	28
15	Countering third-party actors' criticisms over China's actions	1	17	10	28
16	Discussing the US Pivot strategies	4	14	9	27
17	Portraying China as a victim	3	10	11	24
18	Quoting academic arguments that benefited China	3	12	6	21
19	Discussing the Philippines' SCS strategies	3	12	5	20
20	Discussing the issues in the SCS	4	11	4	19
21	Discussing the ASEAN member states' SCS strategies	0	11	7	18
22	Quoting third party states' views that benefit China	2	5	5	12
23	Confirming there was no “clash” over the SCS	1	2	9	12
24	Reporting Chinese officers' comments abroad regarding the incident	4	2	4	10
25	Citing nationalist rhetoric	3	4	0	7
26	Discussing multi/bilateral trust and mistrust	2	2	1	5
27	Discussing Japan's SCS strategies	1	1	2	4
28	Discussing China's stance on UNCLOS	0	2	0	2

The third stage

This part examined 33 MFA press conferences and remarks and 23 Chinese and 167 English news reports.

Table C – 1: Results of the MFA’s press conferences

No	Contents	15 out of 31
1	Information about the government's actions	14
2	Discussing other SCS issues	12
3	Discussing the oil rig incident	12
4	Blaming the relevant country/ies and calling for a stop to such actions	11
5	Affirming the legitimacy of China’s actions	8
6	Asserting China's sovereignty over the SCS	8
7	Discussing the anti-China protests	2

Table C-2: Results of Xinhua and People’s Daily articles

No	Contents	PD CN (28)	PD EN (94)	Xinhua (72)	Total
1	Discussing the CPC’s commitments on the SCS issues	23	68	17	108
2	Portraying China as a peaceful country	14	57	37	108
3	Asserting China's sovereignty over the islands and waters in the SCS	16	36	34	86
4	Discussing the oil rig incident	20	39	23	82
5	Analysing VN's SCS strategies	12	37	31	80
6	Criticising VN's actions by negative words	17	29	30	76
7	Affirming that China's action was legal	13	30	31	74
8	Emphasising benefits from cooperating with China in other fields	13	39	16	68
9	Calling for Vietnam to stop disturbing	8	29	24	61
10	Countering third party states’ criticisms over China's actions	8	23	24	55
11	Quoting academic arguments that benefited China	12	24	15	51
12	Portraying China as a victim	13	25	9	47
13	Discussing the US Pivot strategies	12	22	13	47
14	Discussing the issues in the SCS	8	24	9	41
15	Reporting diplomatic efforts with Vietnam to solve the incident	7	12	20	39
16	Discussing Japan's SCS strategies	6	14	12	32
17	Discussing the Philippines' SCS strategies	7	15	8	30
18	Discussing the anti-China riots in Vietnam and in other countries	1	14	13	28
19	Discussing negative consequences from the riots	1	14	13	28
20	Discussing the ASEAN member states’ strategies	2	10	14	26
21	Citing nationalist rhetoric ²⁶⁶	5	18	1	24
22	Confirming there was no “clash” over the SCS	5	12	4	21
23	Discussing multi/bilateral trust and mistrust	5	15	0	20
24	Quoting third party states’ voice that benefited China	1	10	9	20
25	Reporting development at sea	4	10	4	18
26	Quoting Vietnamese officials’ statements, words, etc.	4	4	8	16
27	Reporting on Chinese officers’ comments abroad regarding the incident	0	10	5	15
28	Discussing China's stance on UNCLOS	1	7	2	10

²⁶⁶ Including the contents of “reminding hostile events to threaten VN”: People’s Daily EN: 8 items, People’s Daily CN: 4 items; “mentioning the SCS as China’s core interests”: People’s Daily EN: 2 items; “Citing the map”: People’s Daily EN: 3 items, People’s Daily CH: 5 items, and Xinhua 4 items.

The fourth stage

This part examined 34 MFA press conference, and 81 English and 35 Chinese news reports.

Table D- 1: Results of MFA 's press conferences

No	Contents	7 out of 34
1	Informing about the government's actions	7
2	Asserting China's sovereignty over the SCS	5
3	Discussing the oil rig incident	5
4	Affirming the legitimacy of China's actions	4
5	Discussing other SCS issues	4
6	Blaming the relevant country /ies and calling for a stop to such actions	4

Table D-2: Results of Xinhua and People’s Daily articles

No	Contents	PD CN (36)	PD EN (52)	Xinhua (29)	Total
1	Discussing the CPC’s commitments on the SCS issues	33	34	9	76
2	Portraying China as a peaceful country	13	32	16	61
3	Emphasising benefits from cooperating with China in other fields	12	27	11	50
4	Asserting China's sovereignty over the islands and waters in the SCS	21	16	12	49
5	Affirming that China's action was legal	20	10	8	38
6	Discussing the oil rig incident	21	11	3	35
7	Discussing the US Pivot strategies	11	18	5	34
8	Countering third-party actors’ criticisms over China's actions	14	13	6	33
9	Discussing the issues in the SCS	8	13	11	32
10	Discussing the ASEAN member states’ SCS strategies	8	12	10	30
11	Quoting academic arguments that benefited China	10	10	6	26
12	Portraying China as a victim	8	13	0	21
13	Analysing VN's SCS strategies	5	7	5	17
14	Confirming there was no “clash” over the SCS	7	3	4	14
15	Criticising VN's actions by negative words	4	7	3	14
16	Discussing multi/bilateral trust and mistrust	1	12	1	14
17	Reporting developments at sea	9	0	4	13
18	Discussing the Philippines' SCS strategies	7	5	1	13
19	Quoting third party states’ voice that benefited China	2	4	6	12
20	Reporting diplomatic efforts with Vietnam to solve the incident	1	6	5	12
21	Discussing Japan's SCS strategies	3	6	1	10
22	Citing nationalist rhetoric	6	1	1	8
23	Calling for Vietnam to stop disturbing	2	3	1	6
24	Discussing the anti-China riots in Vietnam	0	4	1	5
25	Discussing negative consequences from the riots	0	4	1	5
26	Discussing Chinese officers abroad	3	0	1	4
27	Quoting Vietnamese officials’ statements	1	0	2	3
28	Discussing China's stance on UNCLOS	0	2	0	2

The general results

This part examined a total of 89 MFA remarks and press conferences, one position paper and two documents that China submitted to the UN regarding the issue. Additionally, it analysed 84 Chinese and 429 English news reports.

Table E- 1: Results of MFA press conferences

No	Contents	28 out of 89
1	Informing about the government's actions	38
2	Blaming the relevant country/ies and calling for a stop to such actions	31
3	Discussing the oil rig incident	28
4	Discussing other SCS issues	24
5	Asserting China's sovereignty over the SCS	19
6	Affirming the legitimacy of China's actions	17
7	Discussing the anti-China protests	10

Table E - 2: Results of Xinhua and People’s Daily articles

No	Contents	PD CN 84	PD EN 228	Xinhua 201	Total 513
1	Discussing the CPC’s commitments on the SCS issues	70	156	56	282
2	Asserting China's sovereignty over the islands and waters in the SCS	46	90	104	240
3	Discussing the oil rig incident	51	89	82	222
4	Portraying China as a peaceful country	34	110	74	218
5	Affirming that China's action was legal	38	77	93	208
6	Criticising VN's actions by negative words	29	78	94	201
7	Emphasising benefits from cooperating with China in other fields	33	94	47	174
8	Calling for Vietnam to stop disturbing	16	75	74	165
9	Analysing VN's SCS strategies	22	71	64	157
10	Discussing the anti-China riots in Vietnam	7	54	66	127
11	Discussing negative consequences from the riots	6	53	65	124
12	Countering third-party actors’ criticisms over China's actions	24	55	42	121
13	Discussing the US Pivot strategies	29	56	30	115
14	Reporting diplomatic efforts with Vietnam to solve the incident	10	38	66	114
15	Discussing the issues in the SCS	24	52	28	104
16	Quoting academic arguments that benefited China	25	47	27	99
17	Portraying China as a victim	24	49	20	93
18	Discussion of the ASEAN member states’ strategies	10	33	34	77
19	Reporting developments at sea	27	30	15	72
20	Discussing the Philippines' SCS strategies	20	34	16	70
21	Quoting Vietnamese official's statements	7	14	32	53
22	Confirming there was no “clash” over the SCS	13	18	19	50
23	Discussing Japan's SCS strategies	10	22	16	48
24	Citing nationalist rhetoric	17	23	6	46
25	Quoting third party states’ views that benefited China	6	19	20	45
26	Discussing multi/bilateral trust and mistrust	8	31	2	41
27	Discussing Chinese officers abroad	9	12	10	31
28	Discussing China's stance on UNCLOS	1	11	2	14

APPENDICES OF CHAPTER V: THE SCARBOROUGH SHOAL STAND-OFF

Appendix 1: China's media diplomacy

The first stage

This part examined 16 MFA remarks and press conferences together with 157 Chinese and 56 English news reports.

Table A-1: Results of the MFA's press conferences

No	Contents	Total
1	Discussing the Scarborough Shoal issues	16
2	Asserting China's sovereignty claims over the region	14
3	Criticising the Philippines' actions and claims	13
4	Informing about China's diplomatic actions	10
5	Reminding of China-Philippine friendship and calling for diplomatic negotiations	10
6	Calling for respect for China's sovereignty and protecting peace and stability of the region	10
7	Citing the government's commitments to protect sovereignty and citizens	9
8	Updating developments at sea	7
9	Rejecting the Philippines' sovereignty claims over the region	6
10	Calling for third party states to stay neutral (ASEAN and US)	6
11	Refusing the Philippines' accusations that threatened China's image	5
12	Rejecting the Philippines' legal bid and the role of the UNCLOS in the SCS disputes	5
13	Discussing other SCS issues	2
14	Threatening to use military approaches	0
15	Discussing anti-China protests in the Philippines and around the world	0
16	Discussing China's fishing ban over the Shoal	0
17	Discussing the Philippines' suggestions to de-escalate the tension	0

Table A-2: Results of Xinhua and People's Daily media articles

No	Contents	Xinhua (27)	PD EN (29)	PD CN (157)	Total
1	Reporting the government's commitment to defend sovereignty by diplomatic means	16	18	75	109
2	Reporting the Chinese government's diplomatic and media activities	22	12	71	105
3	Discussing the legitimacy of China's fishing and government vessels	15	13	66	94
4	Reiterating China's sovereignty over the Shoal and confirming the traditional fishing area over the waters	17	14	62	93
5	Describing the Philippines' activities with negative words ²⁶⁷	18	16	55	89
6	Reporting the Chinese side's call for the PHL to negotiate	14	9	57	80
7	Criticising the Philippines' overall aggressive and contradictory SCS policy	11	11	57	79
8	Quoting Philippine media reports regarding the incident	9	7	60	76
9	Quoting and rejecting the PHL's statements and diplomatic activities	7	5	62	74
10	Updating/reporting developments at sea	3	7	53	63
11	Criticizing the PHL's internationalizing the tensions	7	7	43	57
12	Discussing historical and legal evidence of China's sovereignty claims over the Shoal	12	8	33	53
13	Calling for support for the CPC's SCS policy	0	2	44	46
14	Quoting scholars' support/arguments regarding the dispute	1	3	41	45
15	Reporting nationalist and patriotic discourses in China ²⁶⁸ and anti-Filipino protests on the internet and overseas	0	2	40	42
16	Criticising the US's pivot strategy as a cause of the tension	2	1	38	41
17	Portraying China as a victim of the US and the SCS claimant states	2	0	39	41
18	Rejecting the PHL's sovereignty claims over the Shoal	6	3	31	40
19	Urging the PHL side to stop illegal activities and leave the area	5	5	26	36
20	Reporting other SCS issues	3	5	28	36
21	Calling for third party actors to stay neutral	3	5	23	31
22	Rejecting the PHL's legal bid	6	1	23	30
23	Quoting Chinese officers' talking about the incident abroad ²⁶⁹	3	2	24	29
24	Quoting the voice of fishermen on their situation	6	7	15	28
25	Rebutting theory of the "China threat", describing China as a peace-loving country	5	8	15	28
26	Criticizing the PHL for stirring up nationalist and patriotic sentiments against China ²⁷⁰	2	0	20	22

²⁶⁷ Such as "illegal", harassment, "violation of China's sovereignty", and violation of the COC and DOC

²⁶⁸ China's nine-dotted line map was cited in 6 Chinese news reports; the Chinese netizen's discussion was published in 10 news reports

²⁶⁹ Including those in the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines and in ASEAN

²⁷⁰ Ex: anti-China protests, threats to impose economic sanctions

27	Discussing China's position on UNCLOS	5	3	13	21
28	Reporting the PHL's de-escalating initiatives	3	1	14	18
29	Criticising the PHL's neglect of China's suggestion for peace	2	3	13	18
30	Quoting international newspapers	0	0	15	15
31	Reminding of the roles of DOC, COC in the SCS issues	4	3	6	13
32	Discussing economic benefits from cooperation with China	0	4	9	13
33	Criticizing the PHL's overall aggressive and contradictory SCS policy	4	0	0	4
34	Reposting that the PHL people wanted to negotiate with China	3	1	0	4
35	Discussing China's counter measures ²⁷¹	0	0	4	4

²⁷¹ Ex: economic sanctions, cancelling tourism, military force

The second stage

This part examined 28 MFA remarks and 480 Chinese and 89 English news reports.

Table B-1: Results of the MFA's press conferences

No	Contents	Total
1	Discussing the Scarborough Shoal issues	25/28
2	Discussing China's sovereignty claims over the region	15
3	Discussing China's diplomatic actions	15
4	Reminding of China-Philippine friendship and calling for diplomatic negotiations	14
5	Criticising the Philippines' actions and claims	13
6	Citing the government's commitments to protecting sovereignty and citizens	10
7	Refuting Philippine accusations that threatened China's image	10
8	Calling for respecting China's sovereignty and protecting peace and stability of the region	9
9	Rejecting the Philippines' sovereignty claims over the region	8
10	Updating developments at sea	5
11	Rejecting the Philippines' legal bid and the role of the UNCLOS in the SCS disputes	4
12	Discussing anti-China protests in the Philippines and around the world	4
13	Threatening to use military approaches	4
14	Discussing other SCS issues	3
15	Calling for third party states to stay neutral (ASEAN and US)	3
16	Discussing the Philippines' suggestions to de-escalate the tension	3
17	Discussing China's fishing ban over the Shoal	1

Table B-2: Results of Xinhua and People’s Daily articles

No	Contents	Xinhua (37)	PD EN (52)	PD CN (439)	Total
1	Reporting the government's commitment to defend sovereignty by diplomatic means	25	29	175	229
2	Criticising the PHLs’ overall aggressive and contradictory SCS policy	20	23	165	208
3	Reiterating China's sovereignty over the Island and confirming the traditional fishing area over the waters	15	24	159	198
4	Reporting the Chinese government's diplomatic and media activities	23	23	148	194
5	Quoting PHL media reports regarding the incident	14	18	149	181
6	Reporting the Chinese side's call for the PHL to negotiate and to honour their commitments; calls for considering friendship and the peace of the region	10	19	147	176
7	Criticising the PHLs’ stirring up of nationalist and patriotic sentiments against China	18	12	132	162
8	Criticizing the PHLs’ internationalising the tensions	8	15	119	142
9	Quoting scholars' support/arguments regarding the dispute	8	12	104	124
10	Calling for the third-party states stay neutral	5	13	98	116
11	Reporting the PHLs’ de-escalating initiatives	2	7	101	110
12	Reporting nationalist and patriotic discourses in China ²⁷² and anti-Filipino protests on the internet and overseas	3	6	99	108
13	Quoting and rejecting the PHLs' statements and diplomatic activities	15	10	82	107
14	Calling for supporting the CPC's SCS policy;	2	4	101	107
15	Discussing the legitimacy of China's fishing and government vessels	8	17	81	106
16	Describing the Philippines’ activities with negative words	11	22	70	103
17	Discussing historical and legal evidence of China's sovereignty claims	5	16	68	89
18	Discussing China's countering measures	8	15	59	82
19	Discussing economic benefits from cooperation with China	7	5	69	81
20	Criticizing the US pivot strategy as a cause of the tension	2	6	69	77
21	Rejecting the Philippines' legal bid	8	8	48	64
22	Rebutting the theory of the “China threat”, describing China as a peace-loving country	5	10	46	61
23	Criticizing the PHL’ neglect China's suggestion for peace	4	7	45	56
24	Rejecting the PHL’ sovereignty claims over the Island	3	11	40	54
25	Reporting other SCS issues	3	1	48	52
26	Urging the PHL side to stop illegal activities and leave the area	4	5	30	39
27	Portraying China as a victim of the US and the SCS claimant states	1	2	34	37

²⁷² There were 6 reports that cited the Shoal as “core interests”

28	Updating/reporting development at sea ²⁷³	2	2	30	34
29	Quoting Chinese officers' talking about the incident abroad	1	6	25	32
30	Discussing motivations behind the PHLs' SCS strategy	4	3	22	29
31	Quoting the voice of fishermen, informing their situation	5	2	21	28
32	Quoting international newspapers	0	0	22	22
33	Discussing China's position on the UNCLOS	0	4	16	20
34	Posting that the PHL people wanted to negotiate with China/ or protesting US	2	1	15	18
35	Reminding of DOC, COC	1	0	8	9

²⁷³ Accordingly, there were 11 Chinese vessels including 2 law enforcement and 2 sea surveillance vessels and 7 fishing boats versus 7 Philippine vessels including 1 Philippine Coast Guard and 1 Philippine Fisheries Bureau vessels and 5 fishing boats.

The third stage

This stage examined 23 MFA remarks and 181 Chinese and 25 English news reports.

Table C-1: Results of the MFA's press conferences

No	Contents	Total
1	Discussing the Scarborough Shoal issue	8/23
2	Discussing other SCS issues	7
3	Reminding of the China-Philippine friendship and calling for diplomatic negotiations	7
4	Discussing China's sovereignty claims over the region	6
5	Updating developments at sea	6
6	Citing the government's commitments to protecting sovereignty and citizens	5
7	Rejecting the Philippines' sovereignty claims over the region	4
8	Calling for respect for China's sovereignty and protecting peace and stability of the region	4
9	Discussing China's diplomatic actions	3
10	Criticising the Philippines' actions and claims	3
11	Refusing the Philippines' accusation that threatened China's image	1
12	Discussing China's fishing ban over the Shoal	1
13	Call for third party states to stay neutral (ASEAN and US)	0
14	Rejecting the Philippines' legal bid and the role of the UNCLOS in the SCS disputes	0
15	Threatening to use military approaches	0
16	Discussing anti-China protests in the Philippines and around the world	0
17	Discussing the Philippines' suggestions to de-escalate the tension	0

Table C-2: Results of Xinhua and People’s Daily articles

No	Contents	Xinhua (12)	PD EN (13)	PD CN (181)	Total 206
1	Reporting the Chinese government's diplomatic and media activities	12	4	62	78
2	Quoting PHL media reports regarding the incident	4	10	62	76
3	Reporting the government's commitment to defend sovereignty by diplomatic means	10	6	58	74
4	Calling for third party states to stay neutral	2	6	64	72
5	Reiterating China's sovereignty over the Shoal and confirming the traditional fishing area in the waters	8	6	55	69
6	Quoting scholars' supports/arguments regarding the dispute	0	2	67	69
7	Criticising the PHL's overall aggressive and contradictory SCS policy	5	4	52	61
8	Criticising the US pivot strategy as a cause of the tension	1	4	55	60
9	Reporting other SCS issues	0	0	60	60
10	Rebutting the theory of the “China threat”, describing China as a peace-loving country	1	3	54	58
11	Discussing the legitimacy of China's fishing and government vessels	7	3	41	51
12	Portraying China as a victim of the US and the SCS claimant states	0	2	46	48
13	Reporting the Chinese side's call for the PHL negotiations and to honour their commitments; calls for consideration of friendship and the peace of the region	4	4	37	45
14	Quoting and rejecting the PHL's statements and diplomatic activities regarding the incident	4	1	39	44
15	Reporting the PHL's de-escalating initiatives	1	8	35	44
16	Criticizing the PHL's internationalising the tensions	1	5	35	41
17	Describing the PHL's activities with negative words	3	4	31	38
18	Calling for supporting the CPC's SCS policy;	0	0	33	33
19	Updating/reporting developments at sea	2	0	27	29
20	Quoting Chinese officer’s talking about the incident abroad	0	3	20	23
21	Reporting nationalist and patriotic discourses in China	0	1	22	23
22	Discussing economic benefit from cooperation with China	1	0	21	22
23	Quoting international newspapers	0	0	21	21
24	Quoting the voice of fishermen, informing about their situation	3	0	15	18
25	Urging the PHL side to stop illegal activities and leave the area	1	0	16	17
26	Discussing historical and legal evidence of China's sovereignty claims over the Island	0	1	14	15
27	Discussing motivations behind the PHL's strategy	0	0	15	15
28	Reminding of the DOC, COC	2	1	11	14
29	Reposting that the PHL people wanted to negotiation with China/ or protesting US involvement	0	1	13	14
30	Criticising the PHL's neglect China's suggestion for peace	0	1	10	11
31	Criticising the PHLs’ stirring up nationalist and patriotic sentiments against China	1	0	9	10
32	Discussing China's position on the UNCLOS	0	3	7	10
33	Discussing China's counter measures	0	2	8	10

34	Rejecting the PHL's sovereignty claims over the Island	0	2	7	9
35	Rejecting the PHL's legal bid	1	0	4	5

The general results

This part examined 55 MFA remarks and 181 English and 820 Chinese news reports.

Table D-1: Results of MFA remarks and press meeting

No	Contents	Total
1	Discussing the Scarborough Shoal incident	49/67
2	Discussing China's sovereignty claims over the region	32
3	Reminding of the China-Philippine friendship and calling for diplomatic negotiations	32
4	Discussing China's diplomatic actions	26
5	Criticising the Philippines' actions and claims in the Shoal	26
6	Citing the government's commitments to protecting sovereignty and citizens	22
7	Call for respecting China's sovereignty and protecting peace and stability of the region	22
8	Refusing the Philippines' accusations that threatened China's image	16
9	Reporting developments at sea	16
10	Rejecting the Philippines' sovereignty claims over the shoal	14
11	Discussing other SCS issues	13
12	Calling for third party states to stay neutral (ASEAN and US)	12
13	Rejecting Philippines' legal method and the UNCLOS	7
14	Discussing anti-China protests in the Philippines and around the world	4
15	Discussing the Philippines' suggestions to de-escalate the tension	4
16	Threatening to use military approaches	4
17	Discussing China's fishing ban over the Shoal	2

Table D-2: Results of Xinhua and People’s Daily articles in general

No	Contents	Xinhua (79)	PD En (102)	PD Cn (820)	Total (1001)
1	Reporting the government's commitment to defend sovereignty by diplomatic means	51	51	327	429
2	Reporting the Chinese government's diplomatic and media activities	57	57	306	420
3	Reiterating China's sovereignty over the Shoal and confirming the traditional fishing area in the waters	40	40	302	382
4	Criticizing the PHLs' overall aggressive and contradictory SCS policy	36	36	290	362
5	Quoting PHL media reports regarding the incident	27	27	291	345
6	Reporting the Chinese side's call for the PHL negotiations and to honour their commitments; calls for considering friendship and peace of the region	28	28	260	316
7	Discussing the legitimacy of China's fishing and government vessels	30	30	204	264
8	Quoting and rejecting the PHL's statements and diplomatic activities	26	26	199	251
9	Criticising the PHLs' internationalising the tensions	16	16	215	247
10	Quoting scholars' supports/arguments regarding the dispute	9	9	224	242
11	Describing the PHLs' activities with negative words	32	32	173	237
12	Calling for third party states to stay neutral	10	10	196	216
13	Criticising the PHLs' stirring up nationalist and patriotic sentiments against China	21	21	172	214
14	Calling for supporting the CPC's SCS policy;	2	2	189	193
15	Criticising the US pivot strategy as a cause of the tension	5	5	175	185
16	Reporting nationalist and patriotic discourses in China ²⁷⁴	3	3	169	175
17	Reporting the PHLs' de-escalating initiatives	6	6	157	169
18	Discussing historical and legal evidence of China's sovereignty claims	17	17	130	164
19	Reporting other SCS issues	6	6	148	160
20	Rebutting the theory of the “China threat,” describing China as a peace-loving country	11	11	119	141
21	Updating developments at sea	7	7	118	132
22	Portraying China as a victim of the US and the SCS claimant states	3	3	124	130
23	Rejecting the PHLs' legal bid	15	15	94	124
24	Discussing economic benefits from cooperation with China	8	8	100	116
25	Rejecting the PHLs' sovereignty claims over the Shoal	9	9	90	108
26	Urging the PHL side to stop illegal activities and leave the area	10	10	72	92
27	Discussing China's countering measures	8	8	71	87
28	Criticising the PHLs' neglect of China's suggestion for peace	6	6	73	85
29	Quoting the voice of fishermen on their situation	14	14	52	80
30	Quoting Chinese officer’s comments about the incident abroad	4	4	72	80
31	Quoting international newspapers	0	0	63	63

²⁷⁴ Including requesting harder measures towards the Philippines, citing the 9 dotted line map and updating anti-Filipino protests on the internet and overseas

32	Discussing China's position on the UNCLOS	5	5	46	56
33	Discussing motivations behind the PHLs' strategy	8	8	38	54
34	Reminding of the DOC, COC	7	7	31	45
35	Reporting that the PHL people wanted to negotiate with China or protesting against the US	5	5	28	38

Appendix 2: The Philippines' media diplomacy

The first stage

This part examined 7 DFA statements and 108 news reports.

Table A-1: Results of the DFA's media narratives

No	Contents	Total
1	Criticising China for illegal and assertive activities and rejecting China's inaccurate information	5/7
2	Reporting the PHL government's peaceful efforts/commitment to settle the incident	5
3	Reporting/updating events at sea	3
4	Confirming the Scarborough Shoal as PHL territory	3
5	Confirming the legitimacy of the PHL government's activities/strategies ²⁷⁵	3
6	Providing evidence and citing law to prove the PHLs' sovereignty over the shoal	2
7	Informing of a gap in perception over the fishing vessels and sovereignty issues between the two governments	2
8	Criticising China's contradictory actions that affected a peaceful resolution	2
9	Discussing the legal method or ITLOS	2
10	Citing the law domestically and internationally (UNCLOS)	2
11	Criticizing China's actions as a violation of the PHL sovereignty	1
12	Criticizing China's action (as violation of the ASEAN-China DOC and the UN Charter)	1
13	Rejecting China's claims over the shoal (historical titles/traditional fishing waters)	1
14	Informing the PHL government's request to China to withdraw the ship	1
15	Rhetoric of PHL officials towards China's actions	0
16	Internationalisation of the tension (by linking with freedom of navigation, peace of the region)	0
17	Ensuring domestic public	0
18	Asking for US help and international support	0

²⁷⁵ For example: to protect the marine environment and resources in the Scarborough Shoal and to assert Philippine sovereignty and sovereign rights

Table A-2: Results of the PDI and PS media articles

No	Contents	PDI (78)	PS (30)	Total
1	Reporting the PHL government's media & diplomatic activities	28	17	45
2	Updating developments at sea ²⁷⁶	30	10	40
3	Quoting the PHL government's stance on peaceful resolutions	27	13	40
4	Quoting the PHL's sovereignty claims over the shoal	21	12	33
5	Criticizing/ discussing China's SCS strategy	23	9	32
6	Reporting the Chinese government's actions and statements	19	12	31
7	Quoting the PHL government's reports on Chinese vessels at sea	20	10	30
8	Discussing the US' possible role regarding to the incident ²⁷⁷	22	6	28
9	Quoting the PHL government's accusations of illegal Chinese fishing operations	16	10	26
10	Discussing the PHL's overall national security policy ²⁷⁸	18	4	22
11	Quoting the PHL government's information on Philippine vessels at sea	14	8	22
12	Discussing the PHL leader's and officials' peaceful stance and efforts in the tension	15	6	21
13	Discussing the PHL government's internationalising strategy	15	5	20
14	Discussing the PHL sovereignty claims over the shoal ²⁷⁹	16	3	19
15	Reporting non-state actors' activities to defend the sovereignty/ nationalist activities ²⁸⁰	15	3	18
16	Citing the government's legal methods	9	8	17
17	Quoting the PHL government's commitment to defend PHL sovereignty	9	7	16
18	Admitting the PHL' lack of military or naval capability and calling for an upgrade	11	4	15
19	Discussing the legal basis of the PN's operation at the shoal	8	7	15
20	Reporting Chinese nationalist movements	8	6	14
21	Discussing influences from the incident on bilateral relations	11	2	13
22	Reporting the PHL government's blame of China's actions for violating the PHL sovereignty	8	3	11
23	Reporting the PHL government's policy to seek US help	8	3	11
24	Reporting the PHL government's internationalisation policy towards ASEAN, the UN, etc.	7	4	11
25	Quoting the PHL government's reports on Filipino fishermen at the shoal	6	5	11
26	Quoting the PHL government's call for support for its policy/showing patriotism/or staying calm	4	7	11
27	Discussing the PHL government's legal initiative	9	1	10
28	Citing both sides' sovereignty claims on the shoal	8	2	10

²⁷⁶ At least 6 articles quoting the authorities' words who stated that the situation at the shoal was stable

²⁷⁷ Including 8 PDI and 2 PS articles protesting the PHL government's involving the US in the territorial dispute with China

²⁷⁸ Including 2 articles expressing elites' disappointment with the government's WPS strategy

²⁷⁹ Including 5 PDI and 2 PS articles rejecting China's claims over the shoal

²⁸⁰ Including reports on anti-China protests in and abroad, re-naming the shoal, etc.

29	Quoting the Filipino elites'/citizen's commitment to defending national sovereignty	6	2	8
30	Quoting rhetoric from nationalist, military left, other parties	5	2	7
31	Quoting calls for China to act as a superpower	3	3	6
32	Discussion on joint exploration, cooperation with China	2	3	5
33	Quoting international news agencies	4	0	4
34	Quoting the PHL government's requests to China to leave	2	2	4
35	Quoting rhetoric from the government	2	2	4
36	Discussing strategy to raise the public's awareness on the tension	1	3	4
37	Quoting the US' stance	2	1	3
38	Discussion of a Chinese threat	2	0	2

The second stage

This part examined 10 DFA remarks and 211 news reports in the Philippines.

Table B-1: Results of the DFA's press statements

No	Contents	Total
1	Reporting the PHL government's peaceful efforts/commitments to settle the incident	8/17
2	Internationalisation of the tension (by linking with freedom of navigation, peace of the region)	7
3	Discussing the legal method	5
4	Ensuring domestic public	4
5	Citing the law domestically and internationally (UNCLOS)	4
6	Confirming the Scarborough Shoal as PHL territory	3
7	Criticising China's actions as a violation of the PHLs' sovereignty	3
8	Criticising China's action (as a violation of the ASEAN-China DOC and the UN Charter...)	3
9	Confirming the legitimacy of the PHL government's activities/strategies	2
10	Criticising China for illegal and assertive activities and rejecting China's inaccurate information	2
11	Asking for US help and international support	2
12	Reporting/updating events at sea	1
13	Criticising China's contradictory actions that affected peaceful resolution	1
14	Informing the PHL government's request to China to withdraw the ship	1
15	Rhetoric of PHL officials in relation to China's actions	1
16	Providing evidence and citing law to prove the PHL sovereignty over the shoal	0
17	Rejecting China's claims over the shoal (historical titles/traditional fishing waters)	0
18	Informing of a gap in perception over the fishing vessels and sovereignty issues between the two governments	0

Table B-2: Results of the PDI and PS articles in general

No	Contents	PDI (145)	PS (66)	total
1	Reporting the PHL government's media & diplomatic activities	54	36	90
2	Criticism/discussion of China's SCS strategy	52	21	73
3	Citing both sides' sovereignty claims on the shoal	48	17	65
4	Quoting the government's statement on seeking a peaceful resolution and calling for China to negotiate	38	25	63
5	Influences from the incident	32	23	55
6	Discussion on the PHL leaders' stance and efforts over the tension	30	23	53
7	Reporting on the Chinese government's reactions and claims	30	18	48
8	Reporting other non-state actors' activities to defend the sovereignty/nationalist activities	35	10	45
9	Quoting the PHL's sovereignty claims over the shoal	24	21	45
10	Quoting the government's commitment in firm defence of PHL sovereignty	19	20	39
11	Citing legal method and mentioning UNCLOS	23	12	35
12	Stating that the shoal is within Philippine territorial waters and EEZ that belongs to the Filipino people	26	8	34
13	Quoting the US' stance	21	11	32
14	Discussion on the role of the US (US pivot, Balikatan)	22	8	30
15	Discussion on the PHL's overall national security policy	24	5	29
16	Quoting the government's report on CMS at sea	16	12	28
17	Committing to defend national sovereignty	21	6	27
18	Discussing the legal methods	18	8	26
19	Informing the PN at sea	18	7	25
20	Discussion of a Chinese threat	16	5	21
21	Quoting nationalist reaction from Chinese people	14	7	21
22	Accusing China of illegal fishing operations and violations	11	10	21
23	Seeking US help	10	11	21
24	Admitting the PHL's lack of military or naval capability and calling for an upgrade	10	10	20
25	Discussion on joint exploration with China	14	5	19
26	Calls for China to act as a superpower in the "people-to-people" exchanges	15	3	18
27	Updating developments at sea	14	4	18
28	Reporting Filipino fishing activities at the site	10	8	18
29	Seeking help from third party states (ASEAN, etc.)	8	10	18
30	Calls for tougher actions against China in the SCS	15	0	15
31	Discussion on the government's multilateral resolutions (COC, ASEAN, UN)	10	5	15
32	Quoting the legal basis of the PN's operation	7	7	14
33	Accusations of violating the PHL sovereignty	7	5	12
34	Calling on Filipinos to support the government as a way to show love for the country/ stay calm	5	4	9

35	Raising awareness of the tension	3	3	6
36	Requesting China to leave	4	0	4
37	Quoting the Philippine leaders' rhetoric	2	2	4
38	Quoting international news agencies	1	3	4

The third stage

This stage examined 21 DFA remarks and 150 news reports.

Table C-1: Results of the DFA's press statement

No	Contents	1	2	Total
1	Not mentioning the crisis			13/21
2	Reporting the PHL government's peaceful efforts/commitments to settle the incident	5	3	8
3	Reporting/updating events at sea	4	3	7
4	Internationalisation the tension (by linking with freedom of navigation, peace of the region)	2	4	6
5	Asking for US help and international support	0	4	4
6	Assuring the domestic public	1	1	2
7	Confirming the Scarborough Shoal as PHL territory	0	1	1
8	Criticising China's action (as a violation of DOC and the UN Charter...)	0	1	1
9	Confirming the legitimacy of the PHL government's activities/strategies	0	1	1
10	Criticising China's actions as a violation of the PHL sovereignty	0	0	0
11	Providing evidence and citing law to prove the PHL sovereignty over the shoal	0	0	0
12	Rejecting China's claims over the shoal (historical titles/traditional fishing water)	0	0	0
13	Criticising China for illegal and assertive activities and rejecting China's inaccurate information	0	0	0
14	Informing a gap in perception over the fishing vessels and sovereignty issues between the two governments	0	0	0
15	Criticising China's contradictory actions that affected peaceful resolutions	0	0	0
16	Informing of the PHL government's request to China to withdraw the ship	0	0	0
17	Discussing the legal method or ITLOS	0	0	0
18	Citing the law domestically and internationally (UNCLOS)	0	0	0

Table C-2: Results of the PDI and PS articles

No	Contents	PDI (100)	PS (50)	Total
1	Reporting the PHL government's media & diplomatic activities	53	33	86
2	Quoting the government's statement on seeking a "peaceful resolution" and call for China to negotiate	31	15	46
3	Criticism/discussion on China's SCS strategy	30	15	45
4	Discussion on the PHL leaders' stance and efforts on the tension	27	10	37
5	Citing both sides' sovereignty claims on the shoal	22	12	34
6	Discussion of seeking US help	18	15	33
7	Influences from the incident	21	11	32
8	Reporting on the Chinese government's reactions and claims	20	8	28
9	Quoting the US' stance	18	10	28
10	Quoting the PHL's sovereignty claims over the shoal	15	10	25
11	Admitting the PHL' lack of military or naval capability and calling for an upgrade	15	10	25
12	Discussion on the PHL's overall national security policy	21	3	24
13	Informing the PN at sea	11	12	23
14	Reporting Filipino fishing activities at the site	16	6	22
15	Updating developments at sea	14	8	22
16	Quoting the government's report on CMS at sea	10	12	22
17	Seeking help from third party states (ASEAN, the US, etc.)	9	13	22
18	Quoting the government's commitment to firmly defend PHL sovereignty	14	6	20
19	Citing legal methods and mentioning the UNCLOS	10	9	19
20	Discussion on the role of the US	12	6	18
21	Reporting other non-state actor's activities to defend the sovereignty/ nationalist activities	11	1	12
22	Accusing China of illegal fishing operations and violations	6	5	11
23	Quoting nationalist reaction from Chinese people	7	2	9
24	Committing to defend national sovereignty	5	3	8
25	Discussing the legal methods	5	2	7
26	Discussion on joint exploration with China	5	2	7
27	Discussion on a Chinese threat	4	2	6
28	Discussion on the government's multi-lateral resolution (COC, ASEAN, UN)	3	3	6
29	Requesting China to leave	5	0	5
30	Philippine territorial waters and the 200 EEZ belong to the Filipino people	4	1	5
31	Calling on Filipinos to support the government and stay calm	2	3	5
32	Quoting the legal basis of the PN's operation	3	1	4
33	Calls for China to act as a superpower	3	1	4
34	Quoting international news agencies	1	3	4

35	Raising awareness of the tension	2	1	3
36	Accusations of violating PHL sovereignty	2	0	2

The general results

This part examined 44 DFA remarks and 468 news articles.

Table D-1: Results of DFA's press statements

No	Contents	1	2	Sum
1	Not mentioning the tension	22		22/44
2	Reporting the PHL government's peaceful efforts/commitments to settle the incident	13	7	20
3	Internationalisation of the tension (by linking with freedom of navigation, peace of the region)	5	8	13
4	Reporting/updating events at sea	8	3	11
5	Criticising China for illegal and assertive activities and rejecting China's inaccurate information	7	1	8
6	Confirming the Scarborough Shoal as PHL territory	5	2	7
7	Confirming the legitimacy of the PHL government's activities/strategies	5	2	7
8	Discussing the legal method or ITLOS	5	2	7
9	Asking for US help and international support	1	6	7
10	Ensuring domestic public	5	1	6
11	Citing the law domestically and internationally (UNCLOS)	2	4	6
12	Criticising China's action (as a violation of DOC and the UN Charter)	3	2	5
13	Criticising China's actions as a violation of the PHL sovereignty	3	1	4
14	Criticising China's contradictory actions that affected peaceful resolution	3	0	3
15	Providing evidence and citing law to prove the PHLs' sovereignty over the shoal	2	0	2
16	Informing of a gap in perception over the fishing vessels and sovereignty issues btw the two governments	2	0	2
17	Informing of the PHL government's request to China to withdraw the ships	2	0	2
18	Quoting rhetoric of PHL officials towards China's actions	1	1	2
19	Rejecting China's claims over the shoal (historical titles/traditional fishing water)	1	0	1

Table D-2: Results of the PDI and PS articles

No	Contents	PDI (323)	PS (145)	Total
1	Reporting the PHL government's media & diplomatic activities	136	87	223
2	Criticism/discussion on China's SCS strategy	106	48	154
3	Quoting the government's statement on peaceful resolution and calls for China to negotiate	99	53	152
4	Discussion on the PHL leaders' stance and efforts over the tension	73	41	114
5	Citing both sides' sovereignty claims on the shoal	79	31	110
6	Reporting on the Chinese government's reactions and claims	71	39	110
7	Quoting the PHL's sovereignty claims over the shoal	61	43	104
8	Influences from the incident	60	36	96
9	Quoting the government's report on CMS at sea	48	35	83
10	Updating developments at sea	55	23	78
11	Discussion on the PHL's overall national security policy	64	13	77
12	Discussion on the role of the US	56	21	77
13	Reporting other non-state actor's activities to defend the sovereignty/ nationalist activities	61	14	75
14	Quoting the government's commitment in firm defence of PHL sovereignty	42	33	75
15	Informing about the PN at sea	44	27	71
16	Citing the legal method and mentioning the UNCLOS	42	29	71
17	Seeking US help	36	29	65
18	Quoting the US' stance	39	22	61
19	Admitting the PHL' lack of military or naval capability to repeal China and calling for an upgrade	36	24	60
20	Stating that Philippine territorial waters and EEZ belongs to the Filipino people	46	13	59
21	Accusing China of illegal fishing operations and violations	34	25	59
22	Reporting Filipino fishing activities at the site	32	19	51
23	Seeking help from third party states (ASEAN, etc.)	24	26	50
24	Quoting nationalist reaction from Chinese people	29	15	44
25	Committing to defend national sovereignty	32	11	43
26	Discussing the legal methods	32	11	43
27	Discussion of the government's multilateral resolution (COC, ASEAN, UN)	28	14	42
28	Discussion of a Chinese threat	32	7	39
29	Discussion of joint exploration with China	21	12	33
30	Quoting the legal basis of the PN's operation	18	15	33
31	Calls for China to act as a superpower	21	7	28

32	Calling on Filipinos to support the government as a way to show love for the country	11	15	26
33	Calling for tougher actions against China in the SCS	20	4	24
34	Accusations of violating the PHL sovereignty	16	8	24
35	Raising awareness of the tension	7	8	15
36	Requesting China to leave	12	2	14
37	Quoting international news agencies	6	6	12
38	Quoting rhetoric of the DFA towards China	4	4	8

APPENDICES OF CHAPTER VI: THE SCS ARBITRATION CASE

Appendix 1 – The Philippines’ media diplomacy

The first stage

This part examined 287 DFA press conferences and 468 news reports.

Table A-1: Results of DFA’s press statements

No	Contents	Total (287)
1	Reporting the PHL government’s commitments to defend sovereignty	67
2	Introducing the PHL's SCS strategy	46
3	Explaining the legal basis and meanings of the arbitration initiative	39
4	Reiterating the PHL's advocacy for a rules-based settlement of disputes and for friendship with China	32
5	Quoting support of third-party stakeholders for the PHL's filing of the case	25
6	Reiterating PHL sovereignty claims over the disputed areas	22
7	Explaining the PHL's stance on DOC and quoting support of external states for the stance	21
8	Criticising China's SCS behaviours and linking them with threats to peace and stability in the region	16
9	Reporting PHL’s new efforts through media and academic channels	16
10	Quoting PHL officers’ speeches and words	14
11	Quoting the public’s support	11
12	Calling for China to engage in other regional channels	10
13	Quoting leaders'/ officers' calls for patriotic, nationalist sentiments	8
14	Discussing the plan of minimum credible defence posture	8
15	Discussing other issues including non-traditional security threats	8
16	Reporting China’s policy and action regarding the SCS arbitration case	7
17	Criticising China's self-proclaimed nine-dash line	7
18	Reporting the development of the tribunal	7
A	Regarding the relations between PHL and the other ASEAN states	41
D	Regarding the bilateral relations between the PHL and other states	27
F	Regarding the PHL – China relations	23
C	Regarding the PHL- US relations	19
B	Regarding the PHL – India relations	4
E	Regarding the PHL – Japan relations	4

Table A-2: Results of the PDI and PS articles

No	Contents	PDI (182)	PS (286)	Total
1	Reporting the SCS arbitration	69	85	154
2	Reporting the PHL government's legal track	52	63	115
3	Reporting the government's sovereignty claims and commitment to defend sovereignty	47	64	111
4	Reporting the PHL government's SCS/WPS efforts	40	70	110
5	Quoting the PHL government's statement on China's assertive actions	43	51	94
6	Quoting the PHL government's statement on peaceful purposes of the arbitration	42	45	87
7	Citing the PHL arbitration requests ²⁸¹	31	51	82
8	Discussing other issues in the WPS	41	37	78
9	Reporting China's SCS claims and principled policy	37	41	78
10	Calling for peaceful resolutions, including DOC and COC	18	41	59
11	Reporting the Chinese government's reactions towards the tribunal case	28	29	57
12	Third party stakeholders' support for the legal case	22	28	50
13	Reiterating the jurisdiction of the case	11	36	47
14	Criticising ASEAN for not uniting/calling for unification over the SCS issue	16	29	45
15	Quoting analysis of the PHL's SCS strategy	17	23	40
16	Discussing the plan of minimum credible defence posture	18	17	35
17	Quoting PHL scholars' analysis on China's SCS strategy	15	20	35
18	Discussing the US-PHL military cooperation	15	19	34
19	Quoting rhetoric of the PHL officers	18	16	34
20	Quoting third party states' support for the PHL and national defence	11	19	30
21	Quoting the need for the legal move	11	17	28
22	Reporting calls on cooperation between the two countries	14	13	27
23	Calling for the public's support for the PHL government's WPS strategy	8	19	27
24	Reporting PHL's SCS strategy and activities towards the US	9	15	24
25	The US pivot strategy and neutral policy towards the SCS issues	7	16	23
26	Reporting the US' support for the PHL legal case	8	15	23
27	Quoting the PHL sovereignty claims over the WPS	6	13	19
28	Recalling the past hostile events	11	8	19
29	Reporting PHL scholars' arguments in relation to the legal track	11	8	19

²⁸¹ Including 33 PDI and 36 PS reportage discussing the nine-dash line claim

30	Reporting activities of Filipino fishermen	0	12	12
31	Reporting the PHL's SCS strategy and activities towards Japan	5	7	12
32	Reporting nationalist movements	0	10	10
33	Regarding economic issues in the PHL	6	4	10
34	Reporting the government's efforts to strengthen the sovereignty claims	6	1	7
35	Building the PHL's international image	0	3	3

The second stage

This part examined 548 DFA press conferences and 759 news articles.

Table B-1 Results of DFA's press statements

No	Contents	Total (548)
1	Introducing the PHL's SCS strategy (two components)	190
2	Reporting the PHL government's SCS policy and its commitments in defending national sovereignty in the SCS	107
3	Explaining the legal basis and meanings of the arbitration initiative	92
4	Reiterating the PHL's advocacy for a rules-based settlement of disputes and for friendship with China	61
5	Explaining the PHL's stance on DOC in the SCS and quoting support of external states for the stance	46
6	Quoting support of third-party stakeholders to the PHL's filing the case	46
7	Reiterating PHL sovereignty claims over the disputed areas	38
8	Criticising China's SCS behaviours by linking with threats to peace and stability in the region	36
9	PHL's new efforts through media and academic channels	31
10	Reporting the development of the tribunal	31
11	Quoting leaders'/ officers' calls for patriotic, nationalist sentiments	24
12	Quoting public support	22
13	Quoting PHL officers' speeches and words	21
14	Calling for China to engage in other regional channels	21
15	Discussing the country's minimum credible defence posture	19
16	Criticising China's nine-dash Line	16
17	Reporting on China's policy and action regarding the SCS arbitration case	12
18	Discussing non-traditional security threats	7
A	Regarding the PHL – China relations	77
B	Regarding the relations between PHL and the other ASEAN states	75
C	Regarding the bilateral relations between the PHL and other states	40
D	Regarding the PHL – US relations	31
E	Regarding the PHL – Japan relations	15
F	Regarding the PHL -India relations	6

Table B-2: Results of the PDI and PS articles

No	Contents	PDI (320)	PS (439)	Total
1	Reporting the SCS arbitration	113	114	227
2	Reporting the PHL government's SCS efforts	90	101	191
3	Reporting the government's sovereignty claims and commitment to defend sovereignty	85	99	184
4	Quoting the PHL government's statement on China's assertive actions in the SCS	68	76	144
5	Reporting the PHL government's legal track	60	74	134
6	Reporting China's SCS claims and principled policy	64	64	128
7	Discussing other issues in the WPS ²⁸²	58	63	121
8	Citing the PHL arbitration requests ²⁸³	51	66	117
9	Quoting the PHL government's statement on peaceful purposes of the arbitration	35	64	99
10	Quoting analysis of the PHL's WPS strategy	46	38	84
11	Reporting the Chinese government's reactions towards the tribunal case	47	34	81
12	Quoting PHL scholars' analysis of China's SCS strategy	27	42	69
13	Calling for peaceful resolutions, including DOC and COC	27	41	68
14	Calling for the public's support	26	34	60
15	Reiterating the jurisdiction of the case	32	20	52
16	Criticising ASEAN member states for not uniting/calling for unification over the SCS issue	22	26	48
17	Quoting third party states support for the PHL's legal case	23	23	46
18	Reporting PHL scholars' arguments about the legal track	29	14	43
19	Discussing the US pivot strategy and neutral policy towards the SCS issues	16	23	39
20	Reporting nationalist movements ²⁸⁴	18	21	39
21	Reporting calls for cooperation between the two countries	15	22	37
22	Quoting the Philippines' sovereignty claims over the WPS	26	8	34
23	Establish minimum credible defence posture	15	17	32
24	Discussing the US-PHL military cooperation	12	18	30
25	Reporting the government's efforts to strengthen the sovereignty claims	18	9	27
26	Quoting the need for the legal move	13	13	26
27	Reporting activities of Filipino fishermen	18	7	25
28	Quoting rhetoric of the government officers	21	4	25
29	Reporting the PHL's SCS strategy and activities towards the US	10	14	24
30	Reporting the US' support for the PHL legal case	7	14	21

²⁸² Including 95 PDI and 77 PS reportages discussing China's reclamation projects

²⁸³ Including 12 PDI and 21 PS mentioning the Chinese "nine-dash line" claim

²⁸⁴ 10 reportages informing about Chinese nationalist movements against the Philippines regarding the WPS disputes

31	Quoting third party states' support for the PHL and national defence	8	8	16
32	Reporting the PHL's SCS strategy and activities towards Japan	7	9	16
33	Recalling the hostile events in the past	11	1	12
34	Regarding economic issues in the PHL	6	2	8
35	Building the PHL's international image	3	1	4

The third stage

This part examined 187 DFA remarks and 342 news reports.

Table C-1: Results of DFA's press statements

No	Contents	Total (187)
1	Reporting the PHL government's SCS policy and its commitments in defending sovereignty in the SCS	46
2	Introducing the PHL's SCS strategy	44
3	Explaining the legal basis and meanings of the arbitration initiative	42
4	Reporting the development of the tribunal	28
5	Reiterating the PHL's advocacy for a rules-based settlement of disputes and for friendship with China	23
6	Quoting support of third-party stakeholders for the PHL's filing of the case	22
7	Explaining the PHL's stance on DOC in the SCS and quoting support of external states for the stance	13
8	Calling for China to engage in other regional channels	13
9	Quoting PHL officers' speeches and words	11
10	Reporting China's policy and actions regarding the SCS arbitration case	11
11	Criticising China's SCS behaviour by linking with threats to peace and stability in the region	10
12	Discussing the country's minimum credible defence posture	6
13	Criticising China's self-proclaimed nine-dash line	5
14	Reporting PHL's new efforts through media and academic channels	5
15	Quoting leaders'/officers' calls for patriotic, nationalist sentiments	5
16	Reiterating PHL sovereignty claims over the disputed areas	5
17	Quoting public support for the legal move	4
18	Discussing non-traditional security threats	3
A	Regarding the relations between PHL and the other ASEAN states	24
B	Regarding the PHL – China relations	22
C	Regarding the bilateral relations between the PHL and other states	16
D	Regarding the PHL- US relations	7
E	Regarding the PHL – Japan relations	4

F	Regarding the PHL – India relations	0
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Table C-2: Results of the PDI and PS articles

No	Contents	PDI (141)	PS (201)	Total
1	Reporting the SCS arbitration	51	86	137
2	Reporting the government's sovereignty claims and commitment to defend sovereignty	35	66	101
3	Reporting the PHL government's SCS efforts	28	62	90
4	Reporting China's SCS claims and principled policy	32	56	88
5	Discussing other issues in the WPS	30	50	80
6	Quoting the PHL government's statement on China's assertive actions in the SCS	27	49	76
7	Reporting the PHL government's legal track	24	45	69
8	Citing the PHL arbitration requests	14	35	49
9	Calls on cooperation between the two countries	16	29	45
10	Quoting analysis of the PHL's SCS strategy	17	26	43
11	Reporting the Chinese government's reactions towards the tribunal case	15	28	43
12	Quoting the PHL government's statement on peaceful purposes of the arbitration	12	30	42
13	Quoting PHL scholars' analysis of China's SCS strategy	17	24	41
14	Reporting Filipino nationalist movements	7	21	28
15	Establish minimum credible defence posture	9	16	25
16	Reporting PHL scholars' arguments on the legal track	8	14	22
17	Reporting US-PHL military cooperation	8	12	20
18	The US pivot strategy and neutral policy towards the SCS issues	7	12	19
19	Reiterating the legitimacy of the case	5	14	19
20	Reporting the PHL SCS strategy and activities towards the US	7	11	18
21	Quoting rhetoric of the government officers	2	15	17
22	Reporting activities of Filipino fishermen	5	11	16
23	Criticizing ASEAN member states for not uniting/calling for unification over the SCS issue	6	8	14
24	Quoting third party states' support for the PHL legal case	6	8	14

25	Reporting the government's efforts to strengthen the sovereignty claims	4	8	12
26	Calling for peaceful resolutions, including DOC and COC	2	10	12
27	Calling for the public's support	0	11	11
28	Regarding economic issues in the PHL	5	5	10
29	Quoting third party states' support for the PHL and national defence	4	4	8
30	Quoting the PHL sovereignty claims over the WPS	4	4	8
31	Reporting the US' support for the PHL legal case	2	6	8
32	Reporting the PHL's SCS strategy and activities towards Japan	3	4	7
33	Recalling past hostile events	1	3	4
34	Quoting the need for the legal move	0	3	3
35	Building the PHL's international image	0	1	1

General results

This part examined 1021 DFA remarks and 1176 news reports.

Table D-1: Results of DFA's press statements

No	Contents	Total 1021
1	Introducing the PHL's WPS strategy	280
2	Reporting the PHL government's WPS policy and its commitment to defend sovereignty in the SCS	220
3	Explaining the legal basis and meanings of the arbitration initiative	173
4	Reiterating the PHL's advocacy for a peaceful and rules-based settlement of disputes and for friendship with China	116
5	Quoting support of third-party stakeholders for the PHL's filing of the case	93
6	Explaining the PHL's stance on COC, DOC in the SCS and quoting support of external states for the stance	80
7	Reporting on the developments of the tribunal	66
8	Reiterating PHL sovereignty claims over the disputed areas	65
9	Criticising China's SCS behaviours by linking with threats to peace and stability in the region	62
10	PHL's new efforts through media and academic channels	52
11	Quoting PHL officers' speeches and words	46
12	Calling for China to engage in other regional channels	44
13	Quoting public support for the government's WPS strategy	37
14	Quoting leaders'/officers' calls for patriotic, nationalist sentiments	37
15	Discussing the country's minimum credible defence posture	33
16	Reporting China's policy and action regarding the SCS arbitration case	30
17	Criticising China's self-proclaimed Nine-Dash Line	28
18	Discussing non-traditional security threats	18
A	Regarding the relations between PHL and the other ASEAN states	140
B	Regarding the PHL – China relations	123
C	Regarding the bilateral relations between the PHL and other states	83
D	Regarding the PHL- US relations	57
E	Regarding the PHL – Japan relations	23
F	Regarding the PHL -India relations	10

Table D-2: Results of the PDI and PS articles

No	Contents	PDI (268)	PS (908)	Total
1	Reporting the legal procedures	233	285	518
2	Reporting the government's sovereignty claims and commitment to defend sovereignty and interests	167	229	396
3	Reporting the PHL government's SCS efforts (on the media, diplomatic fronts and at sea)	158	233	391
4	Reporting the PHL government's activities to support the legal track	136	182	318
5	Quoting the PHL government's reactions to China's assertive actions in the SCS	134	176	310
6	Reporting China's SCS claims and principled policy	133	161	294
7	Discussing other issues in the WPS	129	150	279
8	Citing the PHL arbitration requests ²⁸⁵	96	152	248
9	Quoting the PHL government's statements on the peaceful purposes of the arbitration	89	139	228
10	Reporting the Chinese government's reactions towards the tribunal case	90	91	181
11	Quoting academic analysis over the PHL's SCS strategy	79	87	166
12	Quoting PHL scholars' analysis of China's SCS strategy	59	86	145
13	Calling for peaceful resolutions, mentioning the DOC and COC in the SCS	47	92	139
14	Reporting the PHL government's arguments for the legal requests and the case	48	70	118
15	Reporting third-party stakeholders' support for the legal case	51	59	110
16	Calls for cooperation between China and the PHL	45	64	109
17	Criticising the ASEAN member states's SCS policy and calling for unification over the SCS issue	44	63	107
18	Calling for the public's support for the government's WPS policy	34	64	98
19	Discussing the government's strategy of establishing "minimum credible defence posture"	42	50	92
20	Discussing the US-PHL military cooperation ²⁸⁶	35	49	84
21	Reporting PHL scholars' arguments about the legal track	48	36	84
22	The US pivot strategy and its neutral policy towards the SCS issues ²⁸⁷	30	51	81
23	Reporting nationalist and patriotic movements	25	52	77

²⁸⁵ Including 48 PDI and 57 PS news reportages discussing the nine-dash line claim

²⁸⁶ Including 11 PS and 6 PDI reportages mentioning negative opinion towards US-PHL military cooperation

²⁸⁷ Including 2 PDI and 11 PS negatively discussing the US pivot strategy

24	Quoting rhetoric of the government officers	41	35	76
25	Reporting the PHL's SCS strategy and activities towards the US	26	40	66
26	Quoting the PHL sovereignty claims over the WPS	36	25	61
27	Quoting the need for the legal move	24	33	57
28	Quoting third party states' support for the PHL and national defence	23	31	54
29	Reporting activities of Filipino fishermen	23	30	53
30	Reporting the US' support for the PHL legal case	17	35	52
31	Reporting the government's media efforts to strengthen the sovereignty claims	28	18	46
32	Reporting the PHL's SCS strategy and activities towards Japan	15	20	35
33	Recalling past hostile events	23	12	35
34	Regarding economic issues in the PHL	17	11	28
35	Building the PHL' international image	3	5	8

Appendix 2: China's media diplomacy

The first stage

This part examined 67 MFA remarks regarding the SCS issues and 163 English and 92 Chinese news reports.

Table A- 1: Results of the MFA's press conferences

	Contents	Total	
		SCS	Arbitration
A	Discussion of the SCS issues	67	18
B	Discussing on the SCS dispute with the PHL	60	16
1	Informing about China's stance over the SCS issues (opposition/objection)	30	16
2	Calling for the other claimant state(s) to respect their commitments ²⁸⁸	47	16
3	Reiterating China's sovereignty claims over the disputed areas in the SCS	31	13
4	Informing of China's peaceful principles	43	13
5	Criticising the PHL's actions ²⁸⁹	26	10
6	Informing of the Chinese government's reactions	26	9
7	Explaining the causes of the SCS disputes	22	8
8	Reiterating the CPC's commitment to defending national sovereignty	25	8
9	Warning the PHL not to internationalise the issues	15	5
10	Projecting a stable situation in the SCS	4	2
11	Denying the PHL's arguments in the legal case	2	2
12	Discussing the intervention of third-party actor(s) ²⁹⁰	3	1
13	Citing historical evidence for China's claims of historic rights	1	1
14	Citing the 2006 Declaration filed by China under Article 298 of the Convention	1	1
15	Discussing other SCS disputes ²⁹¹	0	0

²⁸⁸ Such as relevant bilateral agreements and DOC in the SCS

²⁸⁹ Such as seriously infringing upon China's territorial sovereignty and violating the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC)

²⁹⁰ Including the US and Japan or other states supporting for China

²⁹¹ Including other incidents such as the oil rig crisis/Test Flight to newly-built Airport on Yongshu Jiao/International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

Table A-2: Results of Xinhua and People’s Daily media articles

No	Contents	Xinhua (62)	PD EN (101)	PD CN (92)	Total
1	Informing about the legal case	11	27	14	52
2	Quoting the Chinese government's stance over peaceful means	8	21	10	39
3	Reporting the Chinese government's diplomatic and media activities	7	20	11	38
4	Reporting the PHL government's military, diplomatic and media activities	6	15	11	32
5	Reporting the CPC’s claims over the SCS and commitment to defend sovereignty	7	14	9	30
6	Quoting the criticism of the state and calls for the PHL to stop provocative actions	8	14	8	30
7	Criticizing the PHL for violating DOC in the SCS and threatening the region’s peace	4	13	10	27
8	Quoting the PHL government's official statements	4	10	10	24
9	Describing PHL as a provocative actor by analysing PHL's SCS strategy	3	14	6	23
10	Reminding the PHL of its commitment not to complicate the issue/bilateral relationship	5	12	6	23
11	Reporting the Chinese government 's rejection of the case and its arguments	6	7	7	20
12	Quoting analyses of PHL internationalisation tactics	3	10	4	17
13	Describing PHL's failures in its attempts to go against China	2	8	2	12
14	Reminding of economic relations between China and ASEAN	0	8	3	11
15	Analysing the PHL's sovereignty claims as groundless	3	7	1	11
16	Quoting scholars' support for the government's peaceful stance and “Four Nos” policy	2	7	1	10
17	Quoting scholars' warning messages to PHL to withdraw from the move	2	6	1	9
18	Reporting the support of third party actor(s) for the PHLs’ legal moves	3	4	1	8
19	Quoting the government's information about the stable situation in the SCS	1	5	2	8
20	Analysing PHL legal arguments as self-contradictory/wrong	3	5	0	8
21	Quoting scholars' criticisms of the PHLs’ legal moves	2	6	0	8
22	Citing the CPC’s viewpoint on UNCLOS and jurisdiction of the arbitration	2	4	2	8
23	Sending the Chinese govt's message to third party actors ²⁹²	0	7	0	7
24	Explaining that China's increasing military presence in the SCS was because of Manila's provocative moves	1	4	2	7
25	Quoting a discourse that the legal move was a challenge China's nine-dash line claim	1	3	3	7
26	Quoting historical evidence to support China's sovereignty claims	1	4	0	5
27	Quoting the support of a third party for China’s policy ²⁹³	0	3	1	4
28	Discussing Chinese/Philippine nationalist sentiments ²⁹⁴	0	3	1	4

²⁹² Including ASEAN, the US, Japan, etc.

²⁹³ Including those published by international media channels

²⁹⁴ China’s nationalism: 23 PD CN, 11 PD EN, and 1 Xinhua, only one of them using the word of “core interests”
The Philippines’ nationalism: 5 PD CN, 3 PD EN, and 1 Xinhua

29	Reporting anti-China protests by the Filipinos and anti-tribunal demonstrations by the Chinese	1	2	1	4
30	Recalling hostile events in the past	2	0	0	2
31	Quoting rhetorical calls for the CPC to act in a more determinative and stronger manner	0	0	1	1
32	Reporting the CPC's other efforts to legitimate its legal claims over the SCS	0	0	1	1

The second stage

This stage examined 139 MFA remarks regarding the SCS issues and 293 English and 397 Chinese news reports to find the common themes.

Table B-1: Results of the MFA's press conferences

No	Contents	Total	
		SCS	Arbitration
A	Discussing the SCS issues	139	18/139
B	Discussion of the SCS disputes relating to the PHL	50	18/50
1	Informing about China's stance over the SCS issues (opposition/objection) ²⁹⁵	51	18
2	Calling for the other claimant state(s) to respect their commitments ²⁹⁶	62	15
3	Informing about the CPC's peaceful principles ²⁹⁷	92	13
4	Explaining the causes of the tensions	48	12
5	Reiterating the CPC's commitment to defending national sovereignty	52	12
6	Reiterating China's sovereignty over the disputed areas	68	11
7	Criticising the PHL actions ²⁹⁸	24	11
8	Informing about the Chinese government's reactions	35	10
9	Urging the PHL to stop provocative actions	58	10
10	Citing historical and legal evidence for China's claims	34	9
11	Quoting the CPC's peaceful commitments ²⁹⁹	19	9
12	Discussing relevant moves of third-party actors ³⁰⁰	74	7
13	Warning the PHL not to internationalise the issues	35	6
14	Citing the 2006 Declaration filed by China under Article 298 of the Convention	9	6
15	Denying jurisdiction of the arbitral tribunal over the case	9	6
16	Projecting a stable situation in the SCS	43	4
17	Discussing other SCS disputes ³⁰¹	38	0

²⁹⁵ Including 13 reportages discussing the reclamation and island-building projects

²⁹⁶ Such as relevant bilateral agreements and DOC in the SCS

²⁹⁷ At least 8 press conferences mentioning the freedom of navigation and overflight in the SCS

²⁹⁸ Including seriously infringing upon China's territorial sovereignty and violating the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the SCS (DOC)

²⁹⁹ Including being the guardian of its national sovereignty and security, the upholder of international justice and righteousness, and the promoter of world peace and development

³⁰⁰ Including the US, Japan and Vietnam and China-ASEAN (29 reportages)

³⁰¹ Including the oil rig crisis/Test Flight to newly built Airport on Yongshu Jiao/International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

Table B-2: Results of Xinhua and People’s Daily articles

No	Contents	Xinhua (92)	Pd EN (201)	Pd CN (397)	Total
1	Informing about the PHL government’s legal act	27	53	129	209
2	Sending the Chinese govt's message to third party actors	7	17	129	153
3	Reporting the Chinese government's military, diplomatic, and media activities ³⁰²	20	40	62	122
4	Reporting the PHL government's military, diplomatic and media activities	6	22	82	110
5	Describing the PHL as provocative by analysing its SCS strategy	13	25	65	103
6	Quoting the Chinese government's stance of peaceful means	21	29	44	94
7	Reporting the Chinese government 's rejection of the case and its arguments	17	29	45	91
8	Reporting the CPC’s claims in the SCS and commitment to defending sovereignty	10	19	50	79
9	Quoting analyses of PHL internationalisation tactics towards the case	7	21	47	75
10	Quoting scholars' support for the government's “Four Nos” policy	15	19	40	74
11	Discussing Chinese/Philippine nationalist sentiments ³⁰³	6	14	45	65
12	Reporting the support of third-party actor(s) for the PHLs’ legal moves	5	20	39	64
13	Quoting the Chinese government’s criticism and calls for the PHL to stop provocative actions	12	18	32	62
14	Citing the CPC’s viewpoint on UNCLOS and jurisdiction of the arbitration	13	20	28	61
15	Reminding the PHL of relations with China	7	16	34	57
16	Reminding the PHL of its commitment not to complicate the issue/bilateral relationship	15	14	26	55
17	Criticising the PHL for violating DOC in the SCS and threatening the region’s peace	17	17	18	52
18	Analysing the PHL's sovereignty claims as groundless	10	12	29	51
19	Analysing PHL legal arguments as self-contradictory/wrong	9	17	25	51
20	Quoting scholars' criticisms of the PHLs’ legal moves	6	17	26	49
21	Quoting scholars' warning messages to the PHL to withdraw from the move	6	14	28	48
22	Quoting the support of third-party actors for China ³⁰⁴	3	5	37	45
23	Describing PHL's failures in its attempts to go against China	6	7	27	40
24	Quoting historical evidence to support for China's sovereignty claims	2	12	25	39
25	Quoting the PHL government's official statements	3	4	27	34
26	Recalling hostile events in the past	7	3	14	24
27	Quoting the government's information about the stable situation in the SCS	5	5	11	21
28	Quoting rhetorical calls for the CPC to act in more determinative and stronger manner	0	2	17	19
29	Quoting that the legal move as a challenge China's nine-dash line claim	1	2	10	13

³⁰² 35 news reports that discussed Chinese diplomats and officials working abroad

³⁰³ China’ nationalism: 105 PD CN, 40 PD EN, and 13 Xinhua news reports, in which only 4 reports cited the words of “core interests”, The PHL’ nationalism: 32 PD EN, 32 PD CN, and 9 Xinhua news reports

³⁰⁴ Including those published by international media channels

30	Explaining that China's increasing military presence in the SCS was because of Manila's provocative moves	0	2	8	10
31	Reporting anti-China protests by the Filipinos and anti-tribunal demonstrations by the Chinese	0	2	4	6
32	Reporting the CPC's other efforts to legitimate its legal claims over the SCS	0	0	0	0

The third stage

This stage examined 149 MFA remarks regarding the SCS issues and 765 English and 1138 Chinese news reports to find the common themes.

Table C-1: Results of the MFA's press conferences

No	Contents	Total	
		SCS	Arbitration
A	Discussion of the SCS issues	149	58
B	Discussion of the SCS issues relating to the PHL	84	57
1	Discussing the intervention of third-party actor(s) ³⁰⁵	58	57
2	Informing about the PCR's peaceful principles	116	51
3	Calling for the other claimant state(s) to respect their commitments ³⁰⁶	90	48
4	Informing about China's stance over the issues (opposition/objection)	75	38
5	Denying the jurisdiction of the arbitral tribunal over the case	36	35
6	Criticizing the PHL actions ³⁰⁷	38	34
7	Reiterating China's sovereignty over the disputed areas	80	34
8	Informing of the Chinese government's reactions	36	26
9	Explaining the causes of the tensions	49	25
10	Committing to defending national sovereignty	44	21
11	Citing historical evidence/ historic rights	30	14
12	Citing the 2006 Declaration filed by China under Article 298 of the Convention	14	14
13	Projecting a stable situation in the SCS	37	12
14	Discussing other SCS disputes ³⁰⁸	18	6
15	Warning the PHL not to internationalise the issues	10	6

³⁰⁵ Including the US and Japan or other states support for China

³⁰⁶ such as relevant bilateral agreement and DOC in the SCS

³⁰⁷ Including seriously infringing upon China's territorial sovereignty and violating the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the SCS (DOC)

³⁰⁸ Including other incidents such as the oil rig crisis/Test Flight to newly-built Airport on Yongshu Jiao/International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

Table C-2: Results of Xinhua and People’s Daily articles in general

No	Contents	Xinhua (345)	PD EN (420)	PD CN (1138)	Total
1	Informing about the PHL government’s legal act	250	290	8	548
2	Reporting the Chinese government's military, diplomatic, and media activities ³⁰⁹	132	186	3	321
3	Quoting scholars' support for the government's peaceful stance and “Four Nos” policy	159	123	4	286
4	Reporting the Chinese government 's rejection of the case and its arguments	130	129	2	261
5	Quoting the Chinese government's stance of peaceful means	114	136	4	254
6	Reminding the PHL of economic/trading/friendship relations with China	122	124	2	248
7	Reporting the support of third-party actor(s) to the PHLs’ legal moves ³¹⁰	94	106	4	204
8	Quoting scholars' criticisms toward the PHLs’ legal moves	105	93	4	202
9	Reporting the CPC’s claims in the SCS and commitment to defending sovereignty	73	97	4	174
10	Sending the Chinese govt's message to third party actors ³¹¹	90	79	5	174
11	Reporting the PHL government's military, diplomatic and media activities	49	106	3	158
12	Quoting the support of third-party actors for China ³¹²	78	63	2	143
13	Citing the CPC’s viewpoint on UNCLOS and jurisdiction of the arbitration	69	64	0	133
14	Describing the PHL as a provocative actor by analysing PHL's SCS strategy	61	62	5	128
15	Discussing Chinese/Philippine nationalist sentiments ³¹³	48	74	5	127
16	Analysing PHL legal arguments as self-contradictory/wrong	47	67	3	117
17	Quoting the state's criticism and calls for the PHL to stop provocative actions	49	61	1	111
18	Quoting analyses of PHL internationalisation tactics	44	62	3	109
19	Criticising the PHL for violating DOC in the SCS and threatening the region’s peace	42	61	0	103
20	Describing the PHL's failures in its attempts to go against China	55	44	1	100

³⁰⁹ 13 PN EN, 79 PD CN, and 14 Xinhua news reports discuss Chinese diplomats working abroad

³¹⁰ 18 PD CN, 21 PD EN, and 12 Xinhua news reports discuss the topic of freedom of navigation, China’s island building and militarisation in the SCS

³¹¹ Including ASEAN member states, the US, Japan, etc.

³¹² Including those published by International media channels

³¹³ Chinese nationalist sentiments: 37 Xinhua, 181 PD CN, and 67 PD EN news reports including 21 Xinhua, 51 PD CN, and 52 PD EN ones mentioning “China threat”; and 5 PD CN news reports discussing the concept of nine-dashline; and 2 Xinhua, 2 PD EN, and 5 PD CN citing the word of “core interests”

21	Discussing historical evidence to support China's sovereignty claims	46	47	1	94
22	Analysing the PHL's sovereignty claims as groundless	30	35	2	67
23	Quoting scholars' warning messages to call the PHL to withdraw from the move	38	20	0	58
24	Reminding the PHL of its commitment to not complicate the issue/bilateral relationship	23	30	2	55
25	Quoting the government's information about the stable situation in the SCS	25	17	3	45
26	Recalling hostile events in the past	9	21	2	32
27	Quoting the PHL government's official statements	20	7	2	29
28	Reporting the CPC's other efforts to legitimate its legal claims over the SCS	1	24	0	25
29	Quoting rhetorical calls for the CPC to act in a more determinative and stronger manner	8	12	2	22
30	Quoting a discourse that the legal move is to challenge China's nine-dash line claim	6	10	0	16
31	Reporting anti-China protests by the Filipinos and anti-tribunal demonstrations by the Chinese ³¹⁴	1	4	10	15
32	Explaining that China's increasing military presence in the SCS was because of Manila's provocative moves	7	1	0	8

³¹⁴ 4 (PD CN) news reports cover Chinese netizens' movements and 36 (1 Xinhua, 4 PD EN, and 31 PD CN) ones discuss overseas Chinese communities' protests against the final awards

The general results

This part examined 244 MFA remarks regarding the SCS issues, 1221 English and 1627 Chinese news reports.

Table D-1: Results of MFA remarks and press meeting

No	Contents	Total	
		SCS	Arbitration
A	Discussion of the SCS issues	244	91
B	Discussion of the SCS issues relating to the PHL	116	88
1	Calling for the other claimant state(s) to respect their commitments ³¹⁵	137	78
2	Informing about China's peaceful principles	191	76
3	Informing about China's stance over the SCS issues (opposition/objection)	116	68
4	Discussing the intervention of third-party actor(s) ³¹⁶	102	63
5	Reiterating China's sovereignty over the disputed areas	137	56
6	Criticizing the PHLs' actions ³¹⁷	57	53
7	Informing about the Chinese government's reactions	63	45
8	Explaining the causes of the tensions	88	44
9	Denying jurisdiction of the arbitral tribunal over the case	46	42
10	Reiterating the CPC's commitment to defend national sovereignty	90	38
11	Citing historical and legal evidence for China's claims	56	24
12	Citing the 2006 Declaration filed by China under Article 298 of the Convention	19	21
13	Projecting a stable situation in the SCS	67	17
14	Warning the PHL not to internationalize the issues	39	16
15	Discussing other SCS disputes ³¹⁸	31	7

³¹⁵ Such as relevant bilateral agreements and DOC in the SCS

³¹⁶ Including the US and Japan or other states support for China

³¹⁷ Such as seriously infringing upon China's territorial sovereignty and violating the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC)

³¹⁸ Including other incidents such as the oil rig crisis/Test Flight to newly built Airport on Yongshu Jiao/International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

Table D-2: Results of Xinhua and People’s Daily articles

No	Contents	Xinhua (499)	PD EN (722)	PD CN (1627)	Total
1	Informing about the PHL government’s legal act	288	370	11	669
2	Reporting the Chinese government's military, diplomatic, and media activities	159	246	4	409
3	Quoting the Chinese government's stance of peaceful means	143	186	5	334
4	Quoting scholars' support for the government's peaceful stance and “Four Nos” policy	176	149	5	330
5	Reporting the Chinese government 's rejection of the case and its arguments	153	165	1	319
6	Reminding the PHL of economic/trading/friendship relations with China	129	148	4	281
7	Reporting the support of third-party actor(s) to the PHLs’ legal moves	102	130	8	240
8	Quoting scholars' criticisms toward the PHLs’ legal moves	113	116	3	232
9	Reporting the CPC’s claims in the SCS and commitment to defending sovereignty	90	130	5	225
10	Reporting the PHL government's militarily, diplomatic and media activities	61	143	11	215
11	Sending the Chinese govt's message to third party actors	97	103	11	211
12	Describing the PHL as a provocative actor by analysing PHL's SCS strategy	77	101	14	192
13	Citing the CPC’s viewpoint on UNCLOS and jurisdiction of the arbitration	84	88	1	173
14	Quoting the state's criticism and calls for the PHL to stop provocative actions	69	93	6	168
15	Discussing Chinese/Philippine nationalist sentiments ³¹⁹	54	91	13	158
16	Quoting the support of third party actors for China ³²⁰	81	71	6	158
17	Quoting analyses of PHL internationalisation tactics	54	93	7	154
18	Criticising the PHL for violating DOC in the SCS and threatening the region’s peace	63	91	0	154
19	Analysing PHL legal arguments as self-contradictory/wrong	59	89	2	150
20	Describing the PHL's failures in its attempts to go against China	63	59	6	128
21	Discussing historical evidence to support China's sovereignty claims	49	63	1	113
22	Reminding the PHL of its commitment not to complicate the issue/bilateral relationship	43	56	3	102

³¹⁹ Chinese nationalism: 355 PD CN, 117 PD EN, and 44 Xinhua news reports; Citing word of “core interest”: 3 Xinhua, 2 PD EN, and 10 PD CN
The PHL nationalism: 40 PD CN, 93 PD EN, and 69 Xinhua news reports

³²⁰ Including those published by international media channels

23	Analysing the PHL's sovereignty claims as groundless	43	54	1	98
24	Quoting scholars' warning messages to the PHL to withdraw from the move	46	40	2	88
25	Quoting the government's information about the stable situation in the SCS	31	27	2	60
26	Quoting the PHL government's official statements ³²¹	27	21	6	54
27	Recalling hostile events in the past	18	24	2	44
28	Reporting anti-China protests by the Filipinos and anti-tribunal demonstrations by the Chinese ³²²	2	8	18	28
29	Reporting the CPC's other efforts to legitimate its legal claims over the SCS	1	24	0	25
30	Quoting rhetorical calls for the CPC to act in a more determinative and stronger manner	8	14	1	23
31	Quoting a discourse that the legal move is to challenge China's nine-dash line claim	8	15	0	23
32	Explaining that China's increasing military presence in the SCS was because of Manila's provocative moves	8	7	0	15

Write a clear and detailed description of your study/research objectives, and give your reasons for wanting to pursue them. Be specific about your major field and your specialized interests within this field. Describe the kind of program you expect to undertake, and explain how your study plan fits in with your previous training and your future objectives. This statement is an essential part of your application and is required. Do not mention specific U.S. universities at which you would like to study. **(Please limit your response to 700-750 words.)**

³²¹ 15 PD CN, 4 PD EN, and 2 Xinhua report the new Philippine government

³²² 18 PN CN, 4 Xinhua, and 9 PD EN news reports cover anti-China protests (most of them are in the first and second stage). 4 PD EN and 35 PD CN mention overseas Chinese's demonstrations against the final awards.