

On Aileen S.P. Baviera’s review of
 The South China Sea arbitration:
 Understanding the awards and debating with China*

In her book review of Alfredo C. Robles, Jr.’s *The South China Sea arbitration* (published in 2018), Aileen Baviera mentioned the existence of literature on the “intense lobbying” carried out by both China and the Philippines with other governments before and after the 2016 arbitral award in favor of the Philippines in “In the Matter of the South China Sea Arbitration” case (Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) Case No. 2013-19). More information on the intense lobbying conducted by both governments, as mentioned by Baviera, can be gleaned from the following publications on the matter.

The most recent Filipino publication that discusses the circumstances surrounding the PCA arbitral award is *Rock solid* (2018), written by veteran journalist Maritess Vitug and published by the Ateneo de Manila University Press. Here, Vitug traced the beginning of the South China Sea dispute two decades before the release of the arbitral award in 2016. Using such materials as PCA transcripts and other primary sources from the disputed islands themselves, Vitug presented how the shifting Philippine administrations, beginning from the Marcos era, handled the South China Sea dispute, until the Duterte administration, when the arbitral award was granted to the Philippines in July 2016.

Another Filipino scholarly work that expounds on these political developments leading to tensions in security in the Philippines is *The South China Sea dispute: Philippine sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the West Philippine Sea* (2017), written by Associate Justice of the Supreme Court (Retired) Antonio T. Carpio. Here, Carpio explained that China “reframed the dispute as a contest between China and the U.S., with the U.S. containing or constraining the rise of China, and the Philippines having allied itself with the U.S” (31). The book also provides an account of China’s historic rights claims over the West Philippine Sea and includes a list of the root causes behind the dispute, which also involved other Association

* Note from the Editor-in-chief: Professor Baviera mentioned a list of written works on *The South China Sea Arbitration* but she did not include them in the review. We requested Atty. Kathleen Tantuico to compile a short list of the published works to accompany Professor Baviera’s book review.

of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, such as Vietnam and Malaysia, as stakeholders. A summary and explanation of the PCA case were also presented.

Furthermore, providing international perspective on the matter is the publication entitled *The South China Sea dispute: Navigating diplomatic and strategic tensions* (2016) published by ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. This work includes various international perspectives on the geopolitical significance of the South China Sea, and how they play a role in rising tensions among the U.S., China, and the ASEAN members (2). In their introduction (Chapter 1) of the book, editors Ian Storey and Chengyi-Lin summarized each of the 13 chapters of the book as tools to understand the various tensions brought about by the South China Sea (also known as the West Philippine Sea) dispute.

Chapter 5 (“The South China sea: Primary contradictions in China–Southeast Asia relations” by Alice D. Ba) discusses how other states concerned over the South China Sea dispute have managed such a conflict in the past. The chapter also presents the challenges faced by members of the ASEAN in light of the current rivalry on this issue between the U.S. and China. Complementing this perspective is Chapter 6 (“Rising tensions in the South China Sea: Southeast Asian responses”), wherein Ian Storey highlighted the ASEAN–China conflict management process through policy responses.

Three chapters of the publication also provide perspectives from three ASEAN members, which were actual claimants to the South China Sea dispute: the Philippines (Chapter 7: “The Philippines and the South China Sea dispute: Security interests and perspectives” by Aileen S.P. Baviera), Vietnam (Chapter 8: “A Vietnamese perspective on the South China Sea dispute” by Hoang Anh Tuan), and Malaysia (Chapter 9: “The South China Sea dispute: Options for Malaysia” by Elina Noor).

Baviera herself was the author of Chapter 7. Here, Baviera explained how the worsening security in the Philippines, brought about by the South China Sea dispute, has impacted the country’s political and security interests. It has been suggested that Philippine foreign policy is one of many policies affected by the conflict, which is due not only to the changing security landscape, but also to mounting tension brought on by U.S.–China competition in the region (171).

Chapter 10 (“The United States and the South China Sea: Front line of hegemonic tension?” by Denny Roy) and Chapter 11 (“The South China Sea dispute in U.S.–ASEAN relations” by Yann-Huei Song) discuss the respective relations between the U.S. and China and between the U.S. and ASEAN members as regards the South China Sea dispute. The final article (Chapter 12: “Japan and the South China Sea dispute: A stakeholder’s perspective” by Yoichiro Sato) introduces Japan’s perspective as one of the stakeholders in the said dispute.

In her book review, Baviera mentioned that showing the political motives and strategies (such as “intense lobbying”) of the Philippines and other stakeholders would have been instructive in shedding light on what she described as China’s disappointing “total rejection” of the Philippines’ legal victory. The aforementioned publications expound on Baviera’s suggestion and are apt supplements to Alfredo Robles, Jr.’s work on the matter.

REVIEWER

Kathleen Felise Constance D. Tantuico, JD

Research Institute, Nayong Pilipino Foundation

kdtantuico@up.edu.ph