



ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN PHIL-CHINA RELATIONS

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I. Civil society engagement in PH-CH relations



- Limited (academics, business groups, media)
- Divergent perspectives from CS on the maritime disputes & on dealing with China
- Cause-oriented civil society (CS): Critical and adversarial

II. Context of CH & PH relations: By epochs from 1949-today (67 years)

CHINA



- **1949-1978** Chinese socialist construction & cultural revolution: Proletarian internationalism & anti-imperialism (support for national liberation struggles, Party-to-Party relations, people-to-people solidarity associations; Three-Worlds Theory, 1974)



- **1978-present:** Economic reform & “opening up”; “peaceful rise”

Proletarian internationalism abandoned in favor of “positive nationalism” (national interest vs ideology; stability & international peace), state-to-state relations; communist parties in power; internationalizing economic relations & acting as a global player



PHILIPPINES

- 1949-1975: Cold War xenophobia & travel ban to China
- 1975-present: Trade relations & investments (GMA period: “golden era”)
- 2010-June 2016: Maritime disputes
Civil society (CS) groups: Strongly critical of China;
drop in public trust rating of China

Progressive CS groups: Chinese capitalism not
“socialism with Chinese characteristics”

III. In China, impact of economic liberalism leads to proliferation of NGOs (“popular organizations”)



► 2M NGOs (2014) mostly small, of which 500,000 are “non-conflictual” & registered with government; many quasi-government involved in services for the poor, legal services for workers, environment, HIV/AIDS, prostitution & drug use

1.5M unregistered NGOs under watch by government (e.g., workers groups and Maoist dissidents); human rights NGOs restricted

Foreign NGOs in China: 7,000 (with security registration; must have Chinese NGO partner)

Social media users 660M; 500M bloggers

CHINESE GOV'T RESPONSE



- ▶ “NGOs are not all revolutionaries who want to overthrow the CPC – as they (some Party officials) had thought.” (*Jianyu He, NGO Research Centre, Tsinghua University*)
- ▶ The CPC believes that it can encourage the expansion of NGOs so long as China’s core interests (CPC leadership & national security) are not undermined
- ▶ “People-to-people” exchange between CH and PH limited to Track 2 dialogs & strategic studies

IV. Prospects of Philippine CS Role in PH-CH relations: KEY CHALLENGES



- Basic grasp of the multi-dimensional relations between CH & PH but maintain sensitivity of sovereignty disputes
- Promote better understanding and bridge communication gaps between the 2 countries amid growing complexities in the region & world (e.g., Does anybody know what OBOR means?)
- Register voice in defining strategic foreign policy on China: Scanning areas of congruent interests instead of being locked in hostility



Watchdog role to promote constructive relations:

- Fisherfolk rights in contested maritime waters
- Illegal drugs involving Chinese drug lords
- Chinese mining operations and impact on the environment & community life
- Demilitarization of the South China Sea involving China & US: a complex issue
- Economic cooperation between the 2 countries