

Friends with Benefits: A Critical Discourse Analysis on Framing US-Philippine Relations in Print Media Through the Coverage of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA)

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Abstract

This study examines discourse production in the reportage of foreign affairs. In early 2014, the Philippines announced the planning and signing of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) with the United States.

This research discusses vested interests of stakeholders, conflicting frames the print media used in their reportage, and representations of diplomatic concepts of friendship, peace and security in Philippines-United States foreign policy.

The study ties together the use of critical discourse analysis, media diplomacy theory, postcolonial theory and framing analysis to unveil frames used by Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI), The Philippine Star (PStar) and Manila Bulletin (MB) in representing these diplomatic concepts. It combines the results of coded print articles from March 15 to July 29, 2014, and coded official government documents.

The study points out that (a) PDI's reportage used conflicting frames while PStar and MB employed non-conflicting frames; (b) security is the main purpose for of EDCA but friendship exists because of the long-standing US-Philippine history that seeks to maintain international peace; and (c) US interests in deepening ties with the Philippines are to advance its strategy of Asia rebalance, thwart economic growth of China, and counter insurgency in the South. The need for EDCA was rationalized in light of the Philippine-China territorial dispute that the US pursued to reinforce military strength in the Asian region.

Evaluating the power relations between the stakeholders is pertinent to achieve the study's purpose of molding the Filipino populace as critical thinkers who are concerned of the society they live in.

Keywords: print, media, military, bases, agreement, foreign, affairs, framing, bias, discourse

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Introduction

Motives of ruling another country are covert in diplomacy. At first glance, interests of both countries are mutually acknowledged. However, the actual agreement favors one over the other. The oppressor-oppressed relationship in this globally competitive sphere still exists because one party, often the economically privileged, has the capacity to dominate the latter. This unequal relationship is exemplified by the Philippine-United States agreement called the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA).

For ten years, EDCA would allow US military rotational visits and construction of bases in the Philippines. It is the latest of the many military bases agreements between the Philippines and the United States since the latter became a U.S. colony in 1898.

One agreement that is in effect up to today is the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) which was ratified on May 27, 1999 by the Philippine Senate. It has two versions that concern the jurisdiction of US military personnel deployed in the Philippines. Preceding the VFA is the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT), signed August 30, 1951, that affirms the commitment of the United States and the Philippines to defend each other against external threat.

This increased existence of military bases agreements in Philippine territory can be traced back from the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, stating aggression and claim over American territory despite the European colonization in its area. This guiding principle for all implemented foreign policies of the United States had been proven and reinforced through the Mock Battle of Manila Bay as it wiped out Spanish colonial rule in the Philippines and had sparked an Asia-Pacific expansionism, which was then reinstated by the Manifest Destiny. The Manifest Destiny served as a doctrine for Americans in their belief of being responsible and fated to expand across the Asia Pacific region.

EDCA is a recent reinforcement of this principle. On April 28, 2014, a few hours before US President Obama arrive in the country, Philippine Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin and US Ambassador to the Philippines Philip Goldberg signed the ten-page document. The signing of the treaty sparked controversy. Issues circulated that it was rushed in order to reach the time of Obama's visit to the Philippines and to counter the impending territorial threat of China. EDCA's constitutionality was questioned on the ground that there was no formal approval of the Senate, which the 1987 Philippine constitution requires for an agreement to be valid. Moreover, anti-EDCA advocates believe it violates the country's sovereignty by allowing a foreign military base to be established in the Philippines in exchange of defense assistance.

On the same day EDCA was signed, the Philippine government released its primer that tries to answer the opposition. It states that EDCA is an executive agreement and does not require a transmission from the Senate. Even with VFA and MDT in effect, EDCA is needed because it will not only cater to military assistance but also disaster management and employment opportunities.

But despite the benefits the Aquino administration claims, EDCA remains controversial.

Being a longtime ally of the United States, it is important for Filipinos to understand current Philippines –United States relations, especially during this time of territorial disputes. Partnering with a superpower such as the United States has its consequences—positive and/or negative.

It is important to know about the history of Philippine-United States diplomatic relations and what may be the possible implications of entering this agreement.

Statement of the Problem and Objectives

The media has the power to affect society in the shaping of public opinion. In pertinent matters of public interest, particularly the country's national defense and territory, the media's role to educate the masses is heightened.

In such cases, a journalist can use various angles in an issue coverage, of which should be in accordance to journalistic principles and the editorial board's slant that he/she is under. Thus, news delivered to broadsheets, to the radio, to television and computer screens may use the same sources but have different content. Naturally, this also elicits different responses from the audience who choose to consume them. The publications with the widest reach affect more people and the Philippine society in effect.

Thus, the study asks, *“How did the Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI), The Philippine Star (PStar) and Manila Bulletin (MB) frame the concepts of friendship, security and peace in the coverage of EDCA in the context of Philippines-United States relations from March 15 to July 29, 2014?”*

The study's scope starts on March 15, the date of the first EDCA press conference and ends on July 29, the day after President Aquino's 5th State of the Nation Address, where EDCA reports were included.

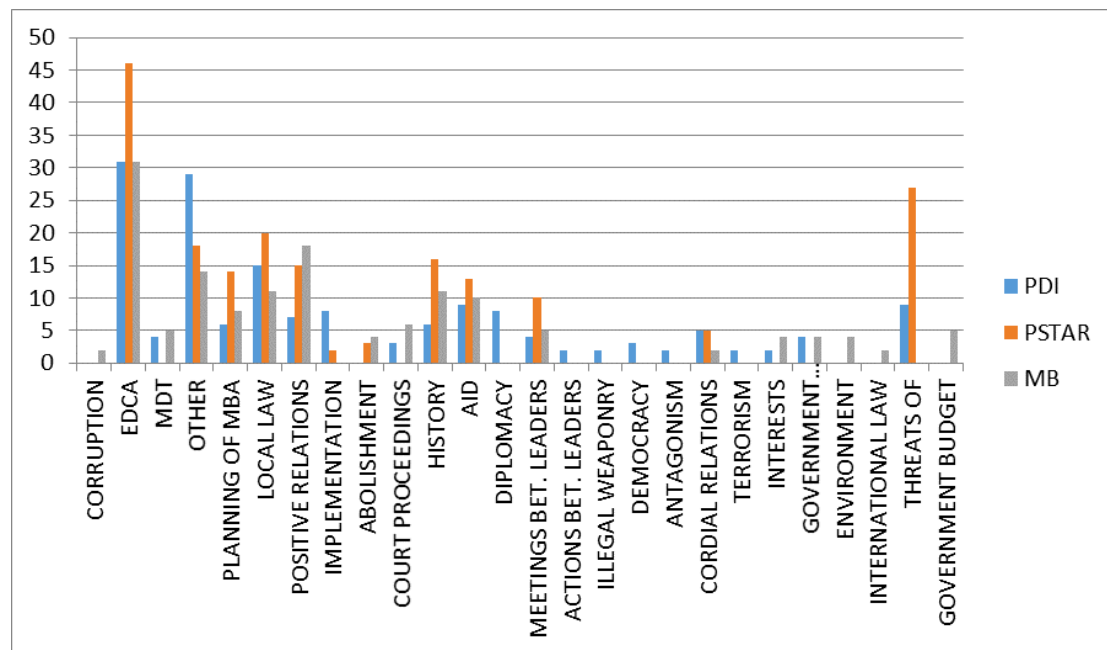
In this study, the researchers' objectives are as follows:

- To determine the frames used in the coverage of EDCA in the three major broadsheets
- To determine the representation of diplomatic concepts of friendship, peace and security in the context of US-Philippine relations as stated in the EDCA
- To critically examine the implicit messages of friendship, peace and security in available documents, speeches and articles about EDCA that reveal the vested interests of US in the Philippines

Socio-cultural context of the discourse

EDCA news was in the company of other national and global issues. Because of the other events happening, EDCA reportage was naturally affected and themes emerge per month based on the flow of events, expected or not. Shown in Chart 1 are the emerging themes per broadsheet.

Chart 1. *Top emerging themes in three newspapers about EDCA*



Figures above show the top emerging themes PDI, PStar and MB articles used the most from March to July.

At the start of March 2014, Chinese Coast Guard blocked two Philippine vessels that were supposed to bring supplies to BRP Sierra Madre in Ayungin Shoal. The Philippine government then submitted a memorial to the UN arbitration tribunal against China’s increasingly aggressive activity in the contested waters. Since EDCA was only introduced that time, the emerging theme in the three broadsheets was information about the agreement. In the midst of the growing PH-China territorial dispute, the government seemingly used the opportunity to present EDCA to the public as an immediate solution in securing the nation’s safety. Sourcing from interviews and press conferences organized by the government, all three broadsheets highlighted the history of military bases agreements and the cordial relations between the Philippines and US. Only in PStar did the threat of China rise as one of the top secondary themes which may indicate that the broadsheet is probing EDCA in the context of the current dispute.

EDCA coverage hit its prime time when US President Obama visited the Philippines as part of his 4-day Asian tour. The broadsheets explicitly reported that the trip of the US president was to start the US’ plan of Asia rebalance. It was also this time that the US released support statements for the Philippines’ recent action to seek the help of the arbitration tribunal. The Chinese interpret US support as anti-Chinese and pro-war. During this time, EDCA was reported as an offshoot of Philippines-US positive relations to upgrade the Philippines’ weak defense capability in order to counter external force. ‘Threats of war’ was outstandingly present in both PDI and PStar coverages as well as diplomacy. In MB, humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR), employment and other economic benefits the United States would give were one of the tertiary themes.

After Obama's visit and the official signing of EDCA, news reports were still mainly about what the defense agreement is, planned naval bases and the constitutionality of the agreement. Political analysts, professors, senators, congressmen and opposition groups were frequently sourced in which they discussed the existing military bases agreements (implementations of MBAs) and the Philippine constitution (Local/Municipal law). June's topmost issue was EDCA's unconstitutionality along with the Disbursement Acceleration Program. Impeachment cases against President Aquino began filing in the Supreme Court (court proceedings). In general, there were sub-themes that appeared per category in the whole coverage of EDCA but the reporters primarily focused on the aspect of politics and international relations in their articles.

After looking at the external factors that characterized the themes of the news articles, the researchers then analyzed the text itself. Language is a powerful tool used to forward an ideology. Repetition of words creates a discourse that shapes public opinion.

For CDA analysis, the researchers compiled the top twenty words that appeared the most from each month and categorized it into the concepts of friendship, peace and security based on its associated and implied meanings. From March to July, the most apparent diplomatic concept is security, followed by peace and lastly, by friendship. This result implies that the broadsheets reported that the country's security is EDCA's main goal. The two countries' vision for peace and long history of friendship only comes secondary.

Figure 1. Words used in PDI articles about EDCA

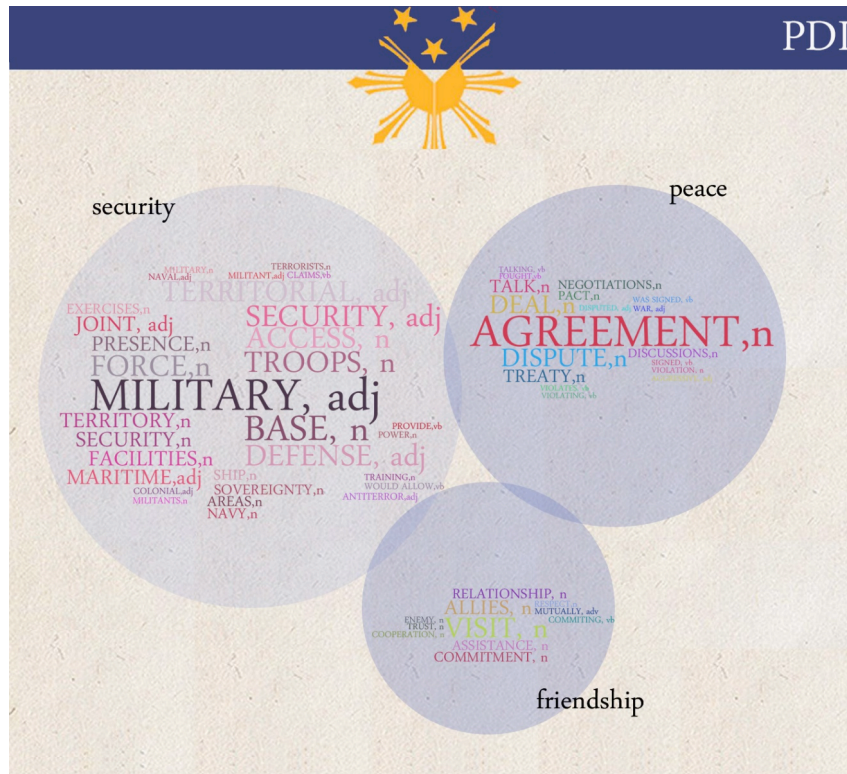


Figure above shows the top 20 words that appeared the most in PDI articles per month. Based on their associated meanings, the 100 words were then clustered into the diplomatic concepts of friendship, peace and security.

Figure 2. Words used in PStar articles about EDCA



Figure above shows the top 20 words that appeared the most in PStar articles per month. Based on their associated meanings, the 100 words were then clustered into the diplomatic concepts of friendship, peace and security.

Figure 3. Words used in MB articles about EDCA



Figure above shows the top 20 words that appeared the most in MB articles per month. Based on their associated meanings, the 100 words were then clustered into the diplomatic concepts of friendship, peace and security.

Only in April was friendship shown with the use of the word “visit” which implies a short stay of a special guest that was expected. US President Obama was welcomed warmly by the Philippine government, something one only does to a friend or to a person who one has positive relations with.

Agreement is the top word for three of the five months. The government consistently referred to EDCA as an “agreement” rather than “deal” or “pact.” Having an agreement implies that a discussion happened or is happening in order to serve a purpose that is accepted by all parties involved. The word “deal” is different as it connotes bargaining for one’s self-interests without considering the other party. The word “pact” is also risky to use because it is very much synonymous to “treaty” which the Philippine government had been denying that EDCA is.

“Military”, “defense” and “security” are categorized under the diplomatic concept of security. It is important to note that defense is used to protect and not to attack. Defense only uses its power when there’s an external threat to a country’s security. Having a good military defense establishes confidence of a nation to assert its sovereignty. The Philippines has no intention of fighting China and launching an armed war against it. Through the use of the word “security”, the Philippines needs EDCA, not for an armed attack, but a mere display of power that can make China concede peacefully.

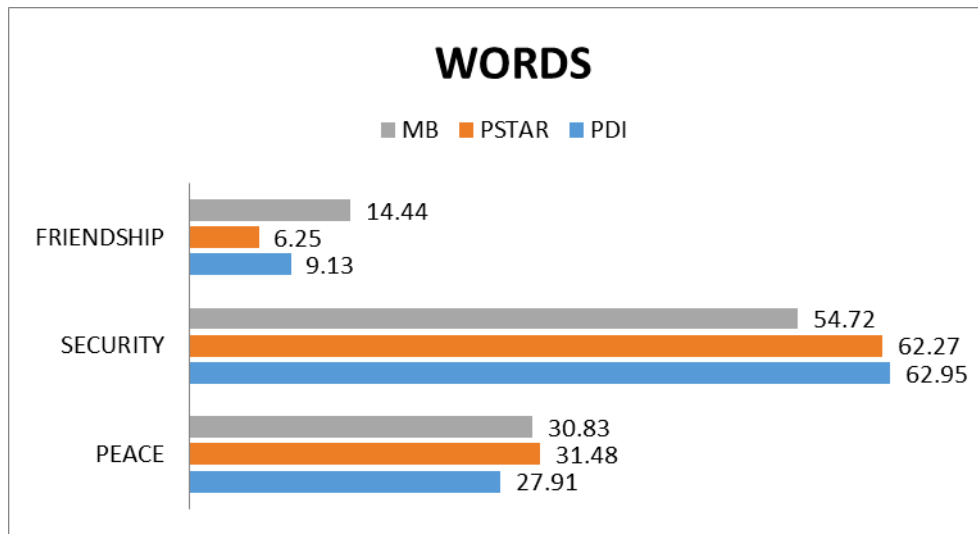
The word “base” had been used to emphasize that only “agreed locations” would be the center of operations. “Base” implies headquarters and all US military activities are only to be done on chosen bases. It is to be clear that the US doesn’t have plans to colonize the Philippines again.

“Violation” which was used in June and July means that there is an acknowledgment of a higher entity that the person is subjected to. In this case, the law does not excuse anyone, President or not. Violation of the law of a country’s president may connote instability of a nation because its highest leader is at question. Security is still the issue, although internal.

With the usage of these words, it is clear that EDCA’s main purpose is for the military to gain confidence and the buildup of a “minimum credible defense” that pertains to security. To illustrate this further, Chart 2 below shows the percentages of the three concepts on PDI, PStar and MB using the Top 20 words that appeared the most in the articles.

The results indicate that Manila Bulletin covered Philippines –US relations the most as friends, PDI as security allies and PStar as peacemakers. On one hand, indicating that Philippines-US relationship is friendly goes back to the history the two countries share. On another, presenting the relationship for security purposes meant the capability of the US to upgrade the Philippine military was highlighted. And lastly, if the relationship functions as a peacemaker, it can mean that the Philippines and US have the same vision for the maintenance of peace in the Asian region.

Chart 2. *Percentages of Words under Friendship, Peace and Security*



Percentages were derived based on the Top 20 words that appeared the most on each broadsheet from March to July

News Framing

The following figures present the dominant sources used by the three newspapers in five months. Those with high and low counts of proportion as sources in the articles of a certain month tell a significant aspect in power relations of the discourse.

Chart 3. *List of Domestic Sources*

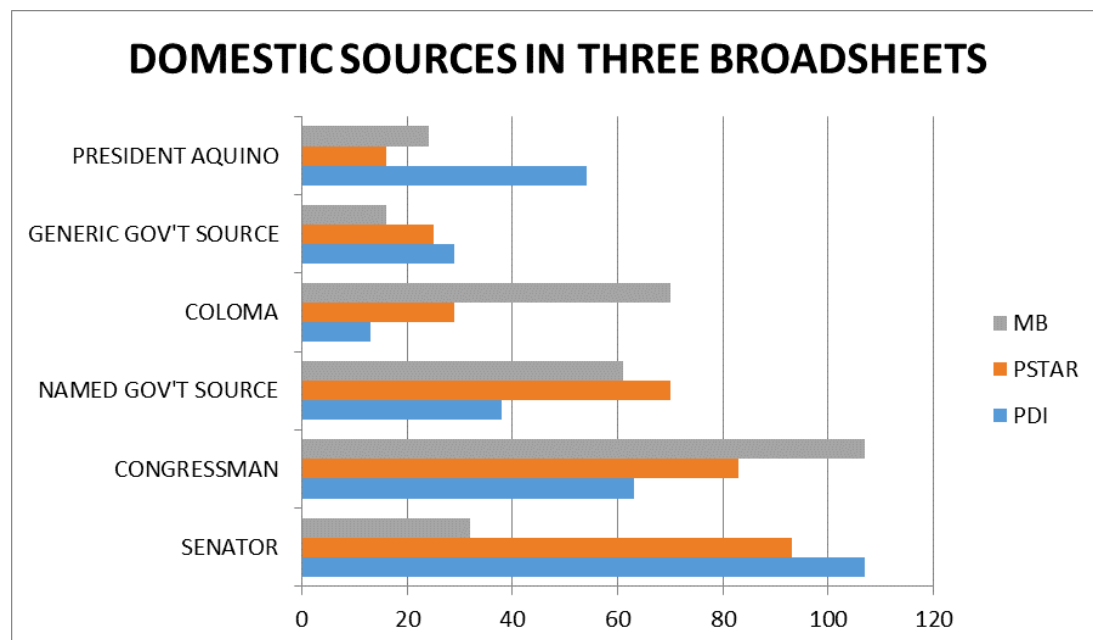


Chart shows top domestic sources from which journalists obtained their information from

When a source receives a significantly high proportion, there is an implication of dominance. What the source tells is automatically a basis for the truth even when it is not. More importantly when the source holds an important position in the circle of influencers, the given information is set as credible knowledge. When a source receives a low count in proportion, either the knowledge is influenced by multiple sources, evenly contributing to the discussion of the discourse leading to various partial and impartial origin of such discussions, or there is a lack of influencers in a certain story frame, limiting the knowledge of discourse to what only is available.

As an overview, the sources usually came from the government, non-government organizations, media and societal influencers such as business executives, academe experts, political analysts, and undefined sources.

It was a close decision for PDI and PStar to get the source of the discourse from the senators while MB garnered a high count from congressmen and from Coloma as dominant sources. To point out further, PDI used Aquino as another main informant.

Chart 4. *List of International Sources*

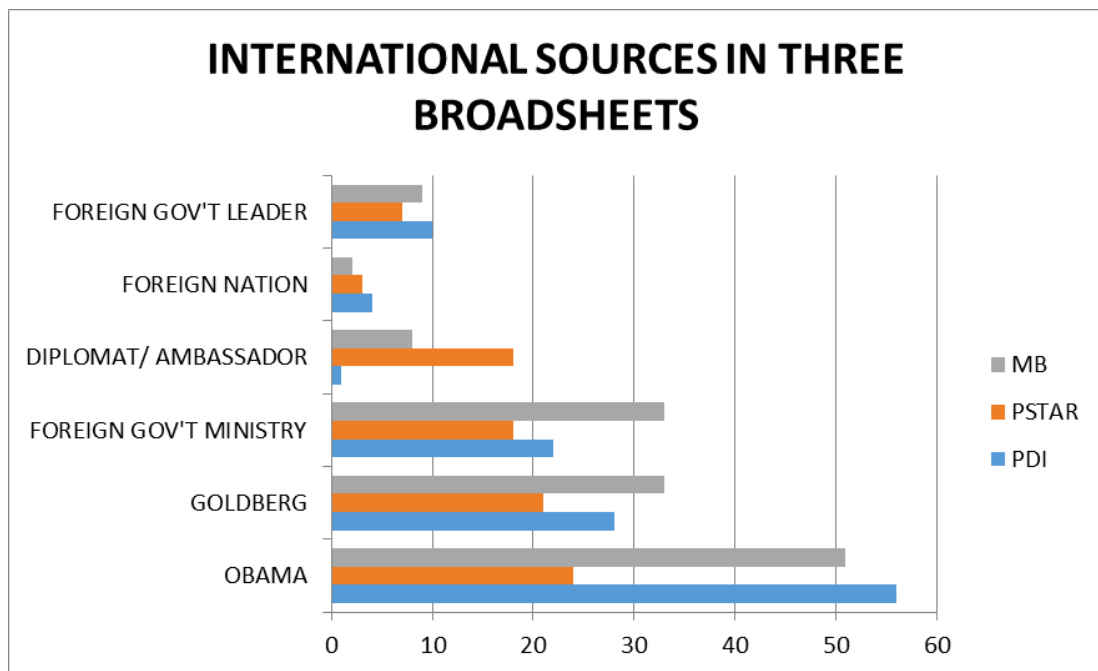


Chart shows top international sources from which journalists obtained their information from

It is evident that local and international government officials were the main discourse informants. As discourse is introduced in March, senators and congressmen give their opinion about EDCA. With foreign government agency sources, articles in March were styled as a printed argument updated for the public's interest. Obama as the dominant informant among international sources increased due to his visit in April, where almost all articles written before, during and after his visit including May showed an extensive use of his words. But then in June and July, what was furnished as credible sources were still from local officials giving out their sentiments on the issues of constitutionality, from President Aquino defending his decisions, backed up with answers from Goldberg.

There are other sources accounted for the flow of the discourse. Although the sources used in this category are fairly low in count in all newspapers, emerging sources such as university academe have been used a lot by MB, while PStar relied a lot on anonymous sources. PDI had oftentimes used NGO officials as a supplemental source for their reports.

Overall, sources used were highly political in nature.

Chart 5. *List of Other Sources*

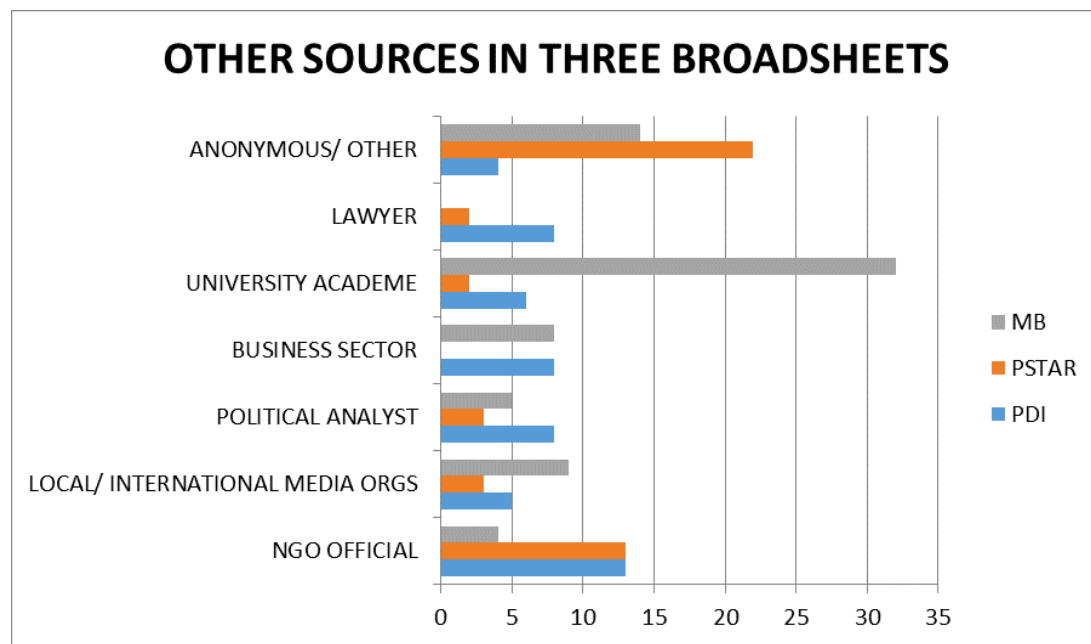


Chart shows other top sources from which journalists obtained their information from

Transitivity Analysis

Official public speeches about EDCA became primary sources of article information. These speeches contain specific details influencing the angles of articles. The manner and style with how the speeches were written influences news framing. What the speeches pour into the discussion of EDCA will mold the discourse as fact consumed by the public that will generate insight and create a whole body of knowledge.

The speeches chosen for this study are a.) included in EDCA articles published within study's sample and time frame, b.) released by a local or international government agency or by a government official involved with EDCA, c.) publicly released by the official department responsible in disseminating the speech, and d.) publicly delivered in an event related to the discourse.

These speeches represent the government's view on EDCA. Through assessing them, it would be possible to know if the media's reportage reflected the same discourse about EDCA or if through media's news framing, it has produced a different ideology. To decode the message of the speeches, Table 1 below illustrates the actions (verbs) key actors do to achieve a goal. These goals are for the furtherance of diplomatic concepts of friendship, peace and security.

Verb processes are divided into four: material, mental, verbal and relational. Material processes involve a concrete action to achieve a concrete goal. Mental processes create a visionary action of a goal. Verbal processes comprise communication through words. Relational processes express possession, equivalence and attributes.

Table 1. *Transitivity Analysis of selected speeches*
The actors, verb processes and goals of the speeches were determined through transitivity analysis. The goals were categorized under friendship, peace and security.

SPEECHES	ACTOR	VERB	GOAL	CONCEPT
OBAMA				
Joint Press Conference	we	continue to stand	to uphold peace and security in this region and around the world.	FRIENDSHIP, PEACE, SECURITY
	agreement to end the insurgency in the south	gives	the Philippines an historic opportunity to forge a lasting peace here at home, with greater security and prosperity for the people of that region.	
State Dinner	United States	has	an ironclad commitment to defend you, your security and your independence.	SECURITY
Remarks to Filipino and US Armed Forces	United States	will keep	commitment to defend the Philippines because allies never stand alone	FRIENDSHIP
AQUINO				
Joint Press Conference	President Obama and I	met	to ensure that our deepening relations are attune to the realities and needs that have emerged in the 21st century	FRIENDSHIP
State Dinner	Alliances	are deepened	not only through our shared history, but also through mutual confidence and respect, which is constantly refreshed to give new relevance and purpose to our positive, longstanding relations.	FRIENDSHIP
GOLDBERG				
EDCA Signing	We	continue	to strengthen our alliance, build our individual and collective defense capacities, and ensure our nations are ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century and beyond	FRIENDSHIP
GAZMIN				
EDCA Signing	we	forged	the Mutual Defense Treaty and put in place a Mutual Defense Board (MDB)	SECURITY
	we	entered	the Visiting Forces Agreement	SECURITY
	VFA	enabled	to train together and established the Security Engagement Board (SEB)	SECURITY
Release	views	way	arrived	FRIENDSHIP
DEL ROSARIO				
ACPAC Luncheon	ASEAN	Aims	for even greater integration as a regional community and structures on development, growth, peace and progress	PEACE
EDCA Signing	Philippines and United States	have written	a new chapter for our modern and mature partnership	FRIENDSHIP
Opening Ceremony for Balikatan 2014	Balikatan	are	to secure and defend our people and our territory	SECURITY
TREATIES/ PUBLIC DOCUMENTS				
VISITING FORCES AGREEMENT	Philippine government	recognizing	defining the treatment of the US personnel visiting the Philippines	FRIENDSHIP
MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY	The parties	will consult together	territorial integrity, political independence or security of either of the Parties is threatened	SECURITY
ENHANCED DEFENSE COOPERATION AGREEMENT	The parties	recognizing	all United States access to and use of facilities and areas will be at the invitation of the Philippines and with full respect for the Philippine constitution and Philippine laws	SECURITY
FAQs ON EDCA	We	Needed	to articulate the parameters, modalities and mechanisms to a greater degree	SECURITY
	We	in advancing	the benefits that could be derived from our defense alliance with the United States	SECURITY

Out of the concepts lifted from fifteen public documents, most are material verb processes, some are relational and a few are mental. The material processes from the speeches connote affirmation and show actions of support, assistance and agreement

such as “forged”, “entered”, “gives”, “continue” and “helped.” The relational processes, meanwhile, show an affirmative Philippines –US relations. Lastly, mental processes, which are very few, also express a thought of acceptance using the word “recognizing.”

The speeches were categorized and have been evaluated to see which of the diplomatic concepts best represents the tone of the public document. Both friendship and security have been highly portrayed in the documents as compared to how low the concept of peace had been delivered. It can be seen that speeches with concepts of friendship is delivered by prime leaders, such as US President Barack Obama, US Ambassador to the Philippines Philip Goldberg and President Benigno Aquino III. Security was emphasized through speeches delivered by Philippine’s Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin while Del Rosario delivered friendship-related, peace-involved and security-promoting speeches. All documents about the military bases agreement except the VFA pointed out a security-related tone in the speech. The VFA showed friendship in its choice of words and contexts. The following observations have been made out of thoroughly pointing out the goals, verb processes and words used to promote such concepts.

Power, on another hand, is reflected through the enumeration of the actors of each verb process. Notice that most of the actors represent the Philippines and the US as one with the use of “we”, “parties”, “President Obama and I,” “alliances” and “agreement” which implies an equal relationship and absence of dominance. Notice also that the US holds itself responsible to the maintenance of security in the Philippines which indicates the power that the latter has. In contrast, the need for proper treatment of US personnel (an interest of the US), suggests inferiority and an implicit submission to US demands.

It is evident that the three newspapers delved into reporting EDCA’s aspect of peace and security while quoting speeches that have actually delivered a strong sense of friendship and security. Nonetheless, quoting from the same speeches didn’t necessarily elicit the same reportage from PDI, PStar and MB. Through varying selection of quotations and references from the journalist’s rephrasing, different angles arise from the reports of the same event---revealing the biases of each broadsheet.

In April 29, 2014, the headline of the three broadsheets was about US President Obama’s toast during the State dinner prepared by the Philippines. In Figure 5, the broadsheets sourced from Obama’s speech and came up with three different headlines: in PDI, Obama’s lack of commitment to protect the Philippines, in PStar, the reinstatement of no US bases will be reopened in the country and in MB, US ironclad commitment to defend Philippine independence.

Figure 5. *Headlines of PDI, PStar and MB on April, 29, 2014*
April 29 headlines of PDI, PStar, and MB about US President Obama’s speech during the state dinner in his visit to the Philippines



In this example, it is clear that PDI uses an anti-US position by implying its manipulative interests in the Philippines. Meanwhile, in PStar it takes a neutral position by merely stating one of EDCA's provisions according to the visiting president. In MB, it takes a pro-US stand by firmly reporting that Philippine independence is secured through US protection. To investigate, the researchers cross-referenced the articles with the actual speech of President Obama.

All three are valid and were based on the contents of the speech. Nonetheless, the reportage resulted in different positions because each broadsheet employs different news framing that is in line with their interests and/or biases.

Postcolonial Frames

All newspapers portrayed Philippines as a developing country. They pointed out that the Philippines is an ally of the US in EDCA articles, with a few instances of being an accessory in PDI and PStar but also a beneficiary in PDI. The Philippines was represented as both an equal country with the US from March to April, and an inferior country from May to July for the PStar and MB. PDI showed Philippines as inferior. The same results for the prior representations were reflected when portrayed as submissive and neutral.

US was represented as a mix of all representations in all three newspapers, namely developed and superpower, benefactor and supporter to the Philippines, as a manipulative and sincere country but was fairly consistent when US becomes a superior country above the Philippines. The two countries' relationship and the military bases agreements were portrayed as consistently positive. No drastic change in representations committed a grave change in result in all three newspapers. In general, the representations in articles have been consistent all throughout the given months. Moreover, the frequency of the positive representations has been significantly high.

Table 2 below shows an overview of concepts reported in each broadsheet about EDCA. Out of the various causes, results, goals and issues on EDCA, all of it were condensed to only fourteen concepts. These concepts are within the premise that the Philippines was a former colony of the US and since then has remained a close ally and beneficiary of the latter. They aim to find out if the Philippines still unconsciously or consciously recognizes the control and power of the US over it.

With the use of them, the table will determine if the three newspapers use conflicting or non-conflicting postcolonial frames.

Conflicting frames refer to news frames that are either against US and Philippine decisions or statements, or against US but roots for the Philippine's stance, and vice-

versa. On the other hand, non-conflicting frames are news frames that both side with US and Philippine decisions. One column for “agree” and another for “disagree” per newspaper had been a simplified basis as to how the following newspapers have framed each concept as conflicting or non-conflicting.

The resulting newspaper frames per concept was based on the researchers’ data of the broadsheets’ representations of the Philippines, US and Philippines–US relations in their articles.

All of these strengthened EDCA as part of a conditional relationship between the superpower and the developing nation. Most of the themes discussed were about the military bases agreements, constitutionality issues and aspects of developing international relations with the US.

Table 2. *Frames of postcolonial concepts in PDI, PStar and MB articles*

STATEMENT	PDI		PSTAR		MB	
	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
1. EDCA is a deterrent to China's increasingly assertive actions in the West Philippine/South China Sea.		o		o		o
2. EDCA's main purpose is to upgrade the defense capability of the Philippines which it lacks the budget to fund on its own		o	o		o	
3. EDCA is a part of the United States' Asia rebalancing strategy.		o		o		o
4. EDCA is unconstitutional.	o		o		o	
5. EDCA is constitutional.		o		o		o
6. EDCA needs Senate and Congress review/ratification	o		o		o	
7. EDCA was offered by the Philippines to the United States	o		o		o	
8. EDCA was offered by the United States to the Philippines.		o		o		o
9. EDCA's notable provision tackles about humanitarian assistance and disaster response, one aspect that sets it apart from MDT and VFA.		o		o		o
10. EDCA exploits Philippine lands and violates the country's sovereignty.		o	o		o	
11. EDCA reopens Philippines to US use of naval bases.		o	o		o	

12. The Philippines needs EDCA more than the United States needs it.		o		o		o
13. The United States needs EDCA more than the Philippines needs it.	o		o		o	
14. EDCA is more beneficial than harmful to the Philippines.		o		o		o

The table provides all postcolonial concepts and the frames presented by PDI, PStar and MB articles under these concepts.

In the first articles, the broadsheets wrote that EDCA can serve as a deterrent against the threat of Chinese intrusion. In some articles that were mainly about the PH-China sea dispute, EDCA was mentioned in the concluding paragraphs. This implies that EDCA’s purpose is to show China that the Philippines can protect its claimed territory through US support.

However, in later articles, the government denied that EDCA is being used to threaten China. Instead, it claimed that EDCA’s main goal is to deepen Philippine – US relations and enhance cooperation not only in defense but also in other key areas where Philippines needs most improvement.

Still, with the emergence of war themes and representations of the US as a hero and supporter of the Philippines, all three broadsheets showed US as a superpower that is capable to fight China in defense of the Philippines.

But the US has its own motives in deepening PH-US relations through EDCA. In recent years, recognizing Asia’s economic rise in the international community, the US has announced its intention to reinforce its foreign policy in the region. The three broadsheets agree that EDCA is part of said US strategy that makes Philippines –US relations as highly conditional.

Since US interest of Asia rebalance does not necessarily clash with the Philippines’ goal of upgrading its military, the latter openly welcomes the help of the superpower. Opposition raps against the constitutionality of EDCA are ignored and all EDCA coverages of the three broadsheets present the agreement as constitutional. All agree that it no longer needs Senate ratification, a statement in accordance with the Philippine government’s position.

The Aquino administration had been stressing the benefits of EDCA to the Philippines, one of which is to upgrade the country’s defense capability. PDI agrees with this statement as it represents the country as a beneficiary of the United States that would need its help in funding. In contrast, PStar and MB perceive Philippines and US as equal within the existing alliance.

EDCA, as a postcolonial discourse in the US-Philippine relations, dealt with the benefactor-beneficiary status of the two countries. All three newspapers agreed that the US offered EDCA to the Philippines, knowing that it has the capability to do so as a superpower. Moreover, the Philippines benefits upon accepting this offer because of

the country's evident needs in defense and humanitarian assistance. This has been in time for the country's present issues such as the South China Sea dispute and the Typhoon Haiyan incident. All three broadsheets expressed that the US as a superpower didn't need EDCA more than the Philippines does. But PDI articles reflected that EDCA is a US exploitation of the Philippines, using the country's territory for its military activity. PStar and MB nonetheless showed that the US does not have such intention.

Conclusion

In a span of five months, the three Philippine leading broadsheets covered EDCA from its first public announcement until issues of its constitutionality surfaced. In their reportage, PDI, PStar and MB presented EDCA as an agreement beneficial to the country's efforts in upgrading its defense capability. The news coverage of EDCA is highly propelled by political interests as most of its themes revolve around policies and international relations. Through its selection of sources, choice of words, and a given emphasis on covered events, these newspapers reinforced US as a trusted ally of the Philippines. Moreover, the print media recognized the unequal stature of the US and the Philippines in the international realm. The United States happens to be the most accessible thread the Philippines can use to weave its tattered security forces. Still the fact remains that the institutions, coming from different backgrounds, produced an assortment of news frames.

Based on consistent and thorough evaluation of newspaper style and depiction of involved actors in Philippine – US relations, PDI used conflicting frames which showed the Philippines as inferior and submissive in contrast with the US as a superpower. Most of its articles contain arguable positions, outlined incidents, detailed narratives, and implicit prompts. Its articles favored US exploitation of the Philippines as long as the latter benefits from the former.

Meanwhile, PStar applied non-conflicting frames. It displayed the Philippines as a developing nation having an existing alliance with a superpower such as the US. Similar to the PDI, its EDCA articles are descriptive, argumentative, and summarized accounts of events. The reports forwarded mutual benefits of the two countries to further their relationship.

Lastly, MB also employed non-conflicting frames. US is superior in terms of economic and political clout. However, it depicted an equal stance in the US-Philippine relations wherein both of the countries' interests and goals converge. Its articles described the benefits of EDCA and argued its validity. In plurality, MB endorsed the US as the best ally to lead the Philippines to progress.

The study discovered the different representations of friendship, peace and security in EDCA. Friendship in this context is based on history, mutual benefits, and aid given by the US to the country. Through all of these, US helps the Philippines achieve its goals which it can't on its own. Peace reflects the mutual recognition and vision of the US and the Philippines for non-violent acts, non-aggression in the international community, and non-use of force on discussions and debates. Security is resolved upon the upgraded and developed military defense capability of the Philippines. When EDCA reinforces the US working together shoulder-to-shoulder with the Philippines, the closer it gets for the Philippines to become secure.

The reflection of these concepts in Philippine-US relations during EDCA concealed vested interests of the United States. Since the start of the negotiations, the Philippines is aware of the interests of the US in the Asia Pacific. The superpower, in various speeches, pronounced their goal of rebalancing US foreign policy in the region. Forging ties with the Philippines instantly guarantees them a secure foothold in Asia. Now the question is why the US and the Philippines are starting a new defense agreement when there are already two in existence. The unveiling of EDCA came when the the Philippines was facing China in a territorial dispute that has become increasingly unmanageable through simply bilateral talks. As reported in the articles, US proclaimed its support to the Philippines desire of handling the dispute peacefully and seeking the intervention of a third party, the UN arbitration tribunal. But the US never declared it will protect the Philippines in case the latter gets embroiled in a war with China.

However, in categorically the same situation, the US explicitly promised to protect Japan who is also in a territorial conflict with China, something that troubles analysts is why the US can't give the same vow of commitment to the Philippines, its longest treaty ally in Asia.

Taking into account the US interest of Asia rebalance and China's increasingly aggressiveness in expanding its territory, it is just logical for the US to grab the opportunity and deepen relationships with Asian allies entangled in a dispute with China. The US can't risk losing its good economic relations with China, one of its largest exporters, but if it is able to present China as a proponent of war through showing support to China's "bullied" regions, it can doubly benefit the US as it would not only advance its strategy of Asia rebalance, it also, in the process, brands China as a threat to peace and consequently, may impede its progress.

Another vested interest of the US that was revealed through this study is the superpower's desire to forward its policy of anti-communism by putting a stop to insurgency. US President Obama, in his speech during the State Dinner in the Philippines, explicitly stated one of the agreement's goals is to counter insurgency in the Southern Philippines. EDCA, as a counter insurgency plan, was never built up in both the 10-page document of the agreement and the Frequently Asked Questions on EDCA released by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The diplomatic concepts in the interests of the United States through EDCA are explicitly found in evaluated public documents. The call for a vow of commitment and support from the United States is a reflection of friendship. The principle of applying a counterinsurgency plan in the south for lasting peace and the substantive expressions for non-aggression are the promise of peace. The goals and implementations of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement are mainly about security.

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