

CHAPTER III

THE JAPAN-PHILIPPINES STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Japan and the Philippines have begun their relation as early as the period of Muromachi of Japanese history, during this period Japanese merchants and traders had settled in the suburb of Manila, Dilao, which was a *Nihonmachi*¹⁰ (Japantown) of 3,000 Japanese around the year 1600. Japan and the Philippines have built up its economic and even military cooperations, seen in the involvement of Japan in supporting the struggle of the Philippines to gain independence during the Philippine-America war, eventhough the Meiji government of Japan were unable to give official support because of the risk of rising tension with United States.

In the modern time, Japan and the Philippines relation has started to focus more on the assertive behaviour of China in both South and East China Sea. The clash between the countries were concentrated around disputed islands and territory claims in both sea region. Continuous breach of Japan airspace and water territory by Chinese commercial flight and fishing ships around the area of dispute were able to ensure that the tension between both countries would not cool down any soon.

In this Chapter, writer will discuss the development of Japan – Philippines relation based on its historical records until the recent years, and later writer will discuss more specifically towards the strategic cooperation between Japan and

¹⁰*Nihonmachi* is a term used to referring historical Japanese communities in Southeast and East Asia. The term has also been applied to several modern-day communities, though most of these are called simply "Japantown", in imitation of the common term "Chinatown".

The Philippines and how this cooperation is closely related towards the assertiveness of China in the Region.

A. The History of Japan and the Philippines Relations

Japan relations with the Philippines during the Spanish Colonial Period closely related to the Filipino revolutionary organization “*The Katipunan*”, they had asked for assistance from the Imperial Japanese government to obtain financial support and weapons to fight the colonial government, but the plan was unsuccessful (Official Gazzete of The Philippines, 2016). The Japanese government already established a consulate in Manila in 1889, but it was closed in 1893 and later re-opened in 1896, just before the outbreak of the Philippine Revolution against the Spanish Empire (Official Gazzete of The Philippines, 2016).

Later, The establishment of Treaty of Paris resolved the Spanish–American War in December 1898, and when Spanish sovereignty of the Philippines was transferred to the United States, the First Republic of The Philippines, established by President Emilio Aguinaldo filed a diplomatic protest as reaction towards the treaty. On February 4, 1899, the Philippine-American War broke out. A handful of Japanese *shishi*, or ultranationalists landed in Manila, led by Captain Hara Tefought alongside President Aguinaldo’s forces in Bataan (Official Gazzete of The Philippines, 2016). The Japanese indirectly supported the establishment of the First Republic, as evidenced by numerous Japanese newspaper articles headlining about the first Asian republic (Official Gazzete of The Philippines, 2016).

With the increasing volume of trade and number of Japanese residents in the Philippines that totaling up to 9,874 individuals in 1919, the Japanese consulate in Manila was converted to Consulate General to compensate the development. Philippines have 113% of increase in Japan's share in trade while Japan's share in trade with United States only increased 32%(Yu-Jose, 1999). Japan became the Asian largest trading partner of the Philippines in 1929 (Jose, 2003).

Following the establishment of the Commonwealth of the Philippines in 1935 allowed President Manuel L. Quezon to began good-natured relations with Japan. President Quezon engaged in informal diplomacy to Japan: by visiting officially in January 31 to February 2, 1937 and privately in June 29 to July 10, 1938. (Ocampo, 2014). Even though as regulated by Article XVII, Section I of the 1935 Constitution, matters of the Commonwealth's foreign affairs were held exclusively by the United States. President Quezon's visits aimed at strengthening economic ties with Japan after independence (Wingo, 1938). This visits were in the middle of Japanese intrusion in China and fear of further Japanese expansion (Official Gazette of The Philippines, 1958).

When the Second World War in the Pacific broke out, Emerging Philippine-Japanese diplomatic ties were disrupted. Japan ended the resistance of Philippine and American forces with the Fall of Bataan and Corregidor and the occupation of Manila in January 1942 (Official Gazzete of The Philippines, 2016). The Japanese government established a military administration over the

Philippines, including the Philippine Executive Commission, composed of Filipino leaders to replace the Commonwealth.

During the war, Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo visited the Philippines and delivered a speech in Rizal Park on 6 May 1943, promising Philippine independence. In October 1943, Dr. Jose P. Laurel, Jorge Vargas, and Benigno S. Aquino Sr. were invited to Tokyo to discuss a Pact of Alliance with Japan and during the visit, Laurel and Vargas were conferred the Order of the Rising Sun, First Class, and Aquino was conferred the Order of the Sacred Treasure on October 1, 1943. These decorations were bestowed for distinguished civil merit. (Kratoska, 2001)

After that, on October 14, 1943, the Second Republic was inaugurated in ceremonies in front of the Legislative Building in Manila, and Jose P. Laurel, the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee on Philippine Independence (PCPI) assumed office as President (Official Gazette of The Philippines, 2016). In the same year on 5th and 6th November, by the invitation of the Japanese Government, seven Asian nations attended the Greater East Asia Congress in Tokyo to promote the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. These nations were Japan, China, Thailand, Manchukuo, The Philippines, Burma, and Free India (Official Gazette of The Philippines, 2016). The Philippine delegates present were President Jose P. Laurel, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Claro M. Recto, and Minister of Public Works and Communication Quintin Paredes. On November 6, 1943, the

Greater East Asia Congress published a Joint Declaration of Cooperation with Japan (Official Gazzete of The Philippines, 2016).

And then, in October 1944, The liberation of the Philippines by Filipino guerrillas and the Allied forces began with the landing of the Allies in Leyte and their engagement with the Japanese forces in the Battle of Manila in February 1945, led to the capital's liberation. The war destroyed much of the Manila and devastated the Philippine economy (Jose, 2003) . Field Marshal Douglas MacArthur, declared all the acts of the Second Republic to be nullified during the reestablishment of the Commonwealth government in Tacloban, Leyte,, a decision upheld by the Philippine Supreme Court. He returned the civil government to President Sergio Osmeña on February 28, 1945, in a ceremony in Malacañan Palace (Official Gazzete of The Philippines, 2016).

After the war, the Philippines and Japan slowly began the process of normalization on diplomatic ties and economic relations of both country. The Philippines entered a trade agreement with U.S.-occupied Japan on May 15, 1950. With all official diplomatic channel must through the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) the trade maximum limit was set at \$50 million. The next year, Quirino appointed a committee to assert the Philippine claim for reparations amounting to \$8 billion in the peace negotiations.

On September 9, 1951, 48 countries signed the San Francisco Peace Treaty, which required Japan to pay for the damages it caused during the world

war II. The Philippines was represented in the treaty signing but did not sign the treaty due to reservations concerning reparations.

President Quirino, took steps to show gestures of goodwill toward the Japanese. As an example, the case of President Quirino pardoned 52 convicted Japanese war criminals on June 27, 1953 (Official Gazzete of The Philippines, 2016). The pardon changed their death sentences to life imprisonment with certain conditions. They were released on July 15 and departed to Japan on the same day with a promise they would never return to the Philippines (Official Gazzete of The Philippines, 2016). On the eve of their departure, the prisoners were sent a message by Quirino, who was at that time hospitalized in the United States. Quirino decided to pardon the prisoners though it was the hardest thing for him to do after his wife, three children and another five members of his family were killed because of the Japanese during the Battle of Manila (Official Gazzete of The Philippines, 2016). He said he made the decision in the belief that “the Philippines and Japan share the destiny to be good neighboring countries” (Official Gazzete of The Philippines, 2016) On that same month, the National Diet of Japan passed a joint resolution expressing deep gratitude towards President Quirino and the Philippine government for the pardon as a response (Official Gazzete of The Philippines, 2016).

Finally, on 1956, the diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Japan were established when the Philippine Senate ratified the “Reparations Agreement between Japan and the Republic of the Philippines”. Since then, the

bilateral ties of the Philippines and Japan have increasingly grown in warmth, mutual respect, and solidarity (Official Gazzete of The Philippines, 2016).

Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi as the first postwar Japanese prime minister visited the Philippines on 1957, and on December 1, 1958, President Carlos P. Garcia visited Japan to reciprocate the visit (Official Gazette of The Philippines, 1958). President Garcia was the first Philippine president to address the joint session of the Japanese National Diet, on December 2, 1958. The Japanese government agreed to source financial reparations amounting to U.S. \$50 million. This was followed by the Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation, approved in 1960, and which allowed Japan to send instruments and machinery as reparation to the Philippines (Official Gazette of The Philippines, 1958).

And on November 1962, for the first time, a successor to the Chrysanthemum throne, Crown Prince Akihito, came to the Philippines on a five-day state visit (Official Gazzete of The Philippines, 2016). He was welcomed by President Diosdado Macapagal and was conferred the Grand Collar (Raja) of the Order of Sikatuna in a state dinner hosted for the Prince and his wife Crown Princess Michiko at Malacañan Palace on November 5, 1962. The royal couple also visited former President Emilio Aguinaldo in his home in Kawit, Cavite (Macapagal, 1968).

On September 28, 1966, President Ferdinand E. Marcos and First Lady Imelda Marcos went on a state visit to Japan and were met personally at the

Tokyo International Airport by the Emperor Shōwa, and the Empress Kōjun. The emperor then conferred on President Marcos the Grand Cordon of the Supreme Order of the Chrysanthemum. In return, Marcos conferred the Order of Sikatuna, Rank of Raja, on the emperor (Stars and Stripes, 1966).

In the year of the fall of the Marcos dictatorship 1986, President Corazon C. Aquino went on a state visit to Japan. She met with the National Diet, Japan's legislature, in a private reception to inform them of the return of democracy to the Philippines, and to ensure political stability after the EDSA People Power Revolution. She also met with Emperor Shōwa who conferred the Supreme Order of the Chrysanthemum with the rank of Grand Cordon on her (Cory Aquino Foundation, 2010). Benigno S. Aquino III accompanied his mother during this visit and during two other visits to Japan: the funeral of the Emperor Shōwa on February 24, 1989, and the enthronement of Emperor Akihito on November 12, 1990.

During the President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's visit to Japan in December 2002, Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement or JPEPA was initiated. President Arroyo and then-Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi agreed on major elements of JPEPA that would lead to the immediate removal of tariffs on certain fruits, vehicles, steel products, electronic appliances, and garments. The agreement was signed in Helsinki, Finland on 9 September 2006 (Senate Economic Planning Office, 2007).

Japan is the second largest trading partner of the Philippines next to the US. The leading Philippine exports to Japan consist of electronic products,

woodcraft furniture, ignition wiring sets, fresh bananas, and iron ores. In 2006, Japan amounted to US\$7.9 billion or 17% of the country's total exports. Japan is our biggest export market for asparagus, bananas, papayas, nata de coco, mangoes, chicken, shrimps and prawns, and yellowfin tuna (Senate Economic Planning Office, 2007).

President Arroyo's visit was the second time that a Philippine president addressed the National Diet, the first was during the era of President Carlos P. Garcia. President Arroyo's speech was also the first speech delivered at the Diet by a woman head of state (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2002). She was conferred the Grand Cordon of the Supreme Order of the Chrysanthemum by the emperor.

President Benigno S. Aquino III undertake a state visit to Japan, in June 2 to 5, 2015, under the invitation of the Japanese government. The President was received by Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. In the visit, President Aquino conferred the Grand Collar (Supremo) of the Order of Lakandula on Emperor Akihito and the Grand Collar (Raja) of the Order of Sikatuna on Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. President Aquino was conferred the Supreme Order of the Chrysanthemum by the Emperor.

The President also hold a meeting with Prime Minister Abe, during which the two leaders discussed the enhancement of the Philippine–Japan Strategic Partnership and exchange views on recent regional developments. As an addition, Prime Minister Abe's maternal grandfather, Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, was

the first Japanese Prime Minister to visit the Philippines after the Second World War. Abe's father, Shintaro Abe, was the longest serving Foreign Minister of Japan; he held office when Japan recognized President Corazon C. Aquino's government (Official Gazette of The Philippines, 2016).

Since the era of Spain colonization, until the era of modern Philippines, and despite of the changes in their regional and domestic situation in both country, Japan and The Philippines maintained a good and friendly relations that also preserved until the present era with dynamic changes in the region.

B. Japan - Philippines in 21st Century

In 21st century, the growing tension between China and Japan in East China Sea also has effect towards the relations between Japan and The Philippines. The Prime Minister Shinzo Abe came into power in the middle of intense territorial clash between Japan and China over the Senkaku Island in the East China Sea. In 16 December parliamentary election, PM Abe declared "that the islands are the inherent territory of Japan... We own and effectively control them. There is no room for negotiations about them" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013).

In the first few months of his term, Japan-China relationship became extremely strained because of the Senkaku Islands dispute. PM Abe did not acknowledge the existence of a dispute over the islands, continuing the policy of his predecessor. China responded Abe's posture by increasing the number and the frequency of civilianships deployed around the islands. In the face of heightened

tension in the Senkakus, several significant steps have been taken by PM. Abe to expand Japanese security policy. From his point of view, China's assertive behavior in East Asia is a source of grave security concern for Japan (Singh, 2015).

On 28 February 2013, Abe calling on China - without mentioning China by name, to refrain from any dangerous acts with regard to the Senkaku and underscored that Japan's interests are unchallengeable forever and that aggression must be prevented at all costs and the fundamental rule for the entire world, must prevail against the use of force (Przystup, 2013).

During the 2014 Shang-rila Dialogue in Singapore, PM Abe implied that "China is attempting to change the status quo by force, rather than by the rule of law." He cited that the declaration of an Air Defense Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea, the repeated intrusions by Chinese civilian planes and ships into Japanese territorial waters and airspace around the Senkaku Islands, and the locking of fire control radar on SDF surface combatants by PLAN warships were examples of China's aggressive behavior in East China Sea. (Przystup, 2013)

He mentioned China's aggressive behaviors in the South China Sea including the unilateral announcement of the regulations, that require all fishing vessels in the disputed waters to seek permission from Chinese authorities, the tense 2012 stand-off between Philippine and Chinese civilian vessels at the Scarborough Shoal, and China's deployment of an oil rig deep inside the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of Vietnam (Singh, 2015).

Japan decided to strengthen its defense posture to face China's intrusions in Japanese waters and airspace, growing naval might, and assertiveness in the East and South China Sea. It also conducted a coordinated diplomatic strategy to resolve the potentially fluid and dangerous regional balance of power in cooperation with the U.S. and the neighboring countries in East Asia. Specifically, the Abe Administration undertook three major security measures that could be regarded as defensive (Przystup, 2013).

The three major security measures undertaken by the Abe administration were: First, Prime Minister Abe announced an increase in defense spending in 11 years and a review of the 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) (Przystup, 2013). Second, in October 2013, Japan and the U.S. convened a meeting of the Security Consultative Committee (SCC) or 2+2 in Tokyo. Both sides reaffirmed the importance of the alliance and announced a review of the U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation Guidelines which hasn't been updated since 1997, as a reflection of the changes in regional and global security environment (Szechenyi, 2014). The meeting mentioned several priorities for cooperation that included ballistic missile defense, space and cyber defense, joint Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) activities, dialogue on extended deterrence, joint training and exercises, realignment of U.S. forces in Okinawa, and convening of trilateral and multilateral security cooperation among U.S. allies in East Asia (Szechenyi, 2014).

Finally, Japan launched the “multilayered security cooperation” on a regional and global scale with U.S. allies in the region with same views towards the regional situations, such as South Korea, Australia, as well as with U.S. alliance/partner countries whose coastal territories are critical to Japanese sea-lanes of communications (Matsuda, 2012). Japan will strengthen its diplomacy and security cooperation with ASEAN countries concerned to settle disputes in the South China Sea, not by force, but in accordance with the rule of law as mentioned in the *2013 National Security Strategy of Japan* (Government of Japan, 2013). Although the document did not name specific countries, two states are located along Japan’s Sea Line of Communication (SLOC) and have ongoing disputes with China in the South China Sea were Vietnam and the Philippines.

The government of Philippines also conducting several policy to improve the naval capabilities of the Philippines during the campaign period for the presidency in June 2010, President Benigno S. Aquino vowed to modernize the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) aligned with the process to shifting its focus from internal security to maritime/territorial defense. The incident that occurred at Reed Bank between two Chinese patrol vessels and a Philippine survey ship in 2nd of March 2011, followed by China’s dismissive response to the Philippines’ diplomatic act in demanding explanation for the case, prompted the Aquino administration to hasten the AFP’s modernization. China has badgered the Philippines and other claimant states of South China Sea disputes to recognize Chinese sovereign over sea area. China’s arrogant and hostile attitude towards the Philippines and Vietnam in the first half of 2011 has escalated the territorial

dispute (Castro, 2016). At the time President Aquino clearly saw that the Philippines has a potentially on a direct collision course with China regarding the South China Sea issue. That's why, the current modernization of the Philippine military influenced by the external factor of the changes in the balance of power in East Asia generated by a geo-strategic reconfiguration of national capabilities in the light of an emergent China (Santiago, 2012).

The Philippines squared off with China during the standoff at the Scarborough Shoal in 9 April to 18 June 2012. A triangle—shaped, 150 square kilometers of barren reefs and rocky islets, the shoal is about 135 miles from the Philippines and 543 miles from China. The standoff began on 10 April 2012 when the Philippines flagship *BRP Gregorio del Pilar*, tried to capture several Chinese fishing boats at the shoal. Two Chinese maritime surveillance vessels intervened and prevented the arrest of the Chinese fishermen who were hauling corals, clams, and live sharks into their boats. To defuse the tension generated by the incident, the Philippines replaced its surface combatant with a smaller coast guard vessel. Instead of reciprocating, China increased the tension by deploying the *Yuzheng 310* its most advanced and largest patrol vessel equipped with machine guns, light cannons, and electronic sensors. This incident underscores an international reality that Chinese economic and naval power overshadow the Philippines and Vietnam capabilities, which are at the forefront of a maritime dispute with China in the South China Sea. During the stand-off, China did not show any desire to de-escalate and end the crisis (Voltaire T. Gazmin, 2011).

In December 2012, six months after the tense Scarborough Shoal stand-off, President Aquino signed into law Republic Act 10349 extended the AFP modernization program of 1995. The implementation period of the original AFP modernization law Republic Act 7898 expired in December 2011 without any significant arms acquisition for the Philippine military. RA 10349 extends the military modernization program up to 2027, to give the PN and PAF time to acquire new weapon systems needed for maritime security. The law also streamlined the procurement process and shortened the 29 stages into two assessment levels including the actual procurement and contracting stages (Rodulfo-Veril, 2012).

The *Defense Planning Guidance for 2016-2022* emphasized the importance of defending “the country’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, specifically in the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea)” which accordingly “poses the primary security challenge” to the Philippines and the AFP (Voltaire T. Gazmin, 2011). Thus, it requires optimization of all available resources at the government’s disposal to achieve a credible defense posture in territorial defense and maritime security. In building up the country’s territorial defense capabilities, the Aquino administration concentrate more into challenging China’s expansive claims as China has directly encroaches into the Philippines’ EEZ in the South China Sea.

The Philippines’ territorial defense goal is to develop a credible posture for territorial defense and maritime security by organizing a competent force capable of safeguarding the country’s interests and the land features it occupies in the

SouthChina Sea.(Castro, 2016) Despite this modest objective, the Aquinoadministration is still immobilized by scant financial resources. Given its current pace and budget allocation, the AFP’s territorialdefense build-up would hardly compete with the PLAN in the contested sea because the latter has procured modern surface combatants and submarines since the start of the 21st century(Bitzinger, 2011). The military imbalance between the Philippines and China will not be resolved in the foreseeable future even if the AFP develops a credible defense posture. Thus, the Philippines has no recourse but to seek a security guarantee from its only strategic ally, the U.S., and at the same time, to request military assistance and diplomatic support from other American allies that share a common interest with the country in maritime security(Castro, 2016).

C. Establishment of Japan – Philippines Strategic Partnership

China’s assertive behavior in the second decade of the 21st century pushed both Japan and Philippines to explore a strategic partnership. At the start of the two-month Scarborough Shoal stand-off in April 2012, Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Toshio Urabe stressed the “close-knit triangular relationship among Japan, the Philippines, and their closest ally—the United States”(Asia News Monitor, 2012).

Three JMSDF surface combatants arrived in Manila in May 2012 for a four-day port call. The visit came after the government of Japan announced its plans to provide the Philippines with 10 new patrol vessels to boost Philippines maritime patrol capability. The newspaper, *Yomiuri Shimbun* linked the ship visit to

the ongoing Scarborough Shoal standoff and editorialized that Japan could not justly stand by and wait for China and the Philippines to clash openly. It also underscored that it is in “Japan’s national interest to ensure that its sea-lanes remain safe.” (BBC Monitoring Asia-Pacific, 2012)

The JMSDF’s ship visit to the Philippines happened just a few days after the U.S. Navy’s Virginia-class attack submarine, the *U.S.S. North Carolina*, made a supposedly port-call at Subic Bay in Luzon. These ship visits were actually routine port calls. However, their visit was made during the Scarborough stalemate and were extensively publicized. In a sense that Washington and Tokyo were trying to imply that they would not hesitate to act jointly if the Philippines is threatened by any form of Chinese assertiveness (Almazan, 2012).

As the result of the Scarborough Shoal stand-off, Tokyo became more straightforward towards its extending security assistance to the Philippines. In July 2012, Japanese Defense Minister Satoshi Morimoto and Philippines Defense Secretary Gazmin, agreed on a bilateral agreement on maritime security. The agreement calls for high-level dialogues between defense officials and reciprocal visits by the MSDF chief-of-staff and the PN flag commander. It also features various security related activities such as the Multinational Cooperation Program in the Asia-Pacific (MCAP); Multilateral Logistic Staff Talks (MLST); Training Exchanges and Subject Matter Exchanges on HADR and Logistics; and Exchange Visits and Student Exchanges in the two countries’ respective staff colleges (Castro, 2016). Then Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario announced that Tokyo was likely to provide the PCG with ten 40-meter

boats as part of Japan's ODA to the Philippines by the end of the year. Newspapers also reported that Japan were considering for the transfer of two additional bigger vessels to the Philippine government as a donation.

A few weeks after his return to power, PM Abe sent Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida on a four-country Asia/Pacific diplomatic tour to convey Japan's growing concern over Beijing's expansive territorial claims in the South China Sea (Castro, 2016). In Manila, Minister Kishida met with then Philippine Foreign Secretary Del Rosario. They discussed the difficulties China's neighbors' face in defending their positions *vis-à-vis* the East China and South China Sea issues while managing their economic relations with China, which is now a major economic power (Cuneta C. L., 2013). The two foreign ministers agreed to closely work together in enhancing cooperation in maritime security (Asia News Monitor, 2013). 10 multi-role response vessels were pledged to the Philippine Coast Guard (PSG) by Minister Kishida to improve the patrolling capabilities in the Philippine maritime territories (Cuneta C. L., 2013). Minister Kishida also announced Japan's provision of essential communication system equipment to the PCG for maritime safety.

During his visit, he also promised more development assistance for the Philippines, the expansion of trade relations, increased investments, and closer maritime cooperation. He also announced that Japan will open its doors for more Filipino nurses and caregivers and finance the extension of the country's two light rail transit networks, and the construction of the new airport in the province of Bohol (Asia News Monitor, 2013). Mr. Kishida then met President Aquino and

reaffirmed the commitment of Japan to foster its relations with the Philippines based on mutual respect and understanding (Asia News Monitor, 2013). Japanese Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera and Philippine Defense Secretary Gazmin in 27 June 2013 confirmed the continuous “exchanges of information aimed at strengthening Philippine-Japan defense relations and on working together to make U.S. strategic rebalancing a reality in Asia” (BBC Monitoring Asia-Pacific, 2013).

As a means to increase the defense cooperation, both Japan and Philippines undertake several activities: Reciprocal visits between the Chiefs-of-Staff of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Forces (JMSDF) and the Flag Officer of the Philippine Navy (PN); the holding of the Japan Philippines Maritime Chief of Staff Meeting; port calls in the Philippines of JMSDF vessels; and active participation in the Pacific Partnership 2012. The two defense ministers also extended the two countries’ security cooperation to the field of aviation highlighted by the visit to the Philippines by the Chief-of-Staff of the Japanese Air Defense Force (JASDF) (Castro, 2016). Secretary Gazmin raised the possibility of allowing the Japanese SDF access to the former American military bases in the Philippines if Tokyo is interested in such arrangement (Embassy of Japan in Manila, 2013).

Japan’s willingness to extend security assistance to the Philippines became evident during its participation in the multilateral Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations in Tacloban City, that heavily devastated by a category five typhoon with the international name of Hayan in mid-November

2013. Locally known as Yolanda, the super typhoon killed more than 6,000 people and left more than three million Filipinos without homes in five major island-provinces—Leyte, Samar, Panay, Cebu, and Palawan. It destroyed nearly 550,000 residential houses and damaged several farmlands and fishponds in these islands province, which account for about 12% of the country's gross domestic product. (Cuneta C. L., 2013). Japan immediately joined a U.S. - led international coalition that immediately provided humanitarian assistance to the victims of Typhoon Yolanda. It sent three JMSDF destroyers carrying nearly 1,000 Japan Ground Self Defense Force (JGSDF) personnel to deliver emergency supplies to the remote areas of Samar and Leyte (Obe, Hayashi, & Martine, 2013).

Furthermore, to assist the multinational forces involved in the international HADR operations in the Central Philippines, Japan also dispatched three CH-46 transport helicopters, three UH-1 utility helicopters, the transport vessel *Osumi*, two KC-767 air tankers, seven C-130 transport aircraft, and U-4 utility support aircraft. (Asia News Monitor, 2013) The ASDF C-130 carried the typhoon victims, U.S. Marines, aid agency officials, and Philippine government officials between Manila and Tacloban. In addition to its military assistance, Tokyo also gave Manila more than US\$50 million in direct aid and grant (Murtagh, 2013). President Aquino continued his thorough consultation with PM Abe on the peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region during his state visit to Japan in early June 2015 (The Philippines News Agency, 2013).

With the tension in the region that continues to escalate, both Japan and Philippines government agree to enhance their strategic cooperation to adapt with

the dynamic condition. During his official state visit to Japan in 2015, President Aquino meet with PM Abe and signed a joint declaration on “A Strengthened Strategic Partnership for Advancing the Shared Principles and Partnership and Goals for Peace, Security, and Growth in the Region and Beyond”, and agreed to enhance the strategic partnership between their countries on shared principles and goals even further (The Philippines News Agency, 2015).

The document includes the two countries’ commitment to ensure maritime safety and security, the South China Sea and their serious opposition to unilateral actions to change the status quo in the South China Sea including large-scale reclamation and building of outposts (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2015). This document specially directed towards China’s constructions of artificial islands in the contested sea. Specifically, the joint statement commits Japan to the following: 1) enhancing the capacity of the PCG; 2) cooperate with the Philippines on maritime security and on maritime domain awareness, and c) explore the prospects for the transfer of Japanese defense equipment and technology to the Philippines (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2015).

The declaration includes a detailed action plan for strengthening the two countries’ strategic partnership. The areas of cooperation in the security realm includes the sharing of information on security environment and challenges; information exchange and policy coordination on respective security policies; collaboration on maritime matters; and humanitarian assistance; and most importantly, the terms regarding defense equipment and technology. The Philippines and Japan are currently exploring a strategic partnership to

complement their respective bilateral alliances with the U.S. On the one hand, the Philippines has to leverage its alliances and defense engagements with foreign militaries to support its military capability and effectively in responding to security threats (Rodulfo-Veril, 2012).

Japan finds it necessary to assist Southeast Asian countries in active dispute with China in the South China Sea because “if China’s strategic position improves in relative terms in the South China Sea, then it is likely it would adopt a similar assertive attitude and actions against Japan in the East China Sea” (National Institute for Defense Studies, 2011).

The relation of Japan and The Philippines has developed into a dynamic and strategic oriented cooperation as a result of dynamic condition of the region, mainly affected by the China’s dramatic growth in both economy and military power. China’s assertive actions by confronting with Japan over the Senkaku Island, also its unilateral claims together with construction of military base over the South China Sea poses significant threat for the major partners of United States in both region, Japan and the Philippines.

In the next chapter, writer will analyze the strategic cooperation between Japan and The Philippines related to Japan’s economic and security needs as the main basis of Japan’s foreign policy towards the Philippines. The next Chapter will discuss about the implementation of the foreign policy and balance of Power concept towards the Strengthening of strategic cooperation of Japan and the Philippines in 2015.

