

**THE SOUTH CHINA SEA ARBITRATION: RESPONSES FROM THE
PHILIPPINES AND SINGAPORE**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this thesis is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

28

August 2018

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Manickam', enclosed within a large, loopy oval shape. The signature is written in a cursive style.

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the importance of disputed claims in the South China Sea (SCS) by the claimant country, the Philippines and a non-claimant country, Singapore. There are overlapping claims by 6 countries to the South China Sea namely China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei. In January 2013, the Philippines brought this case to the Permanent Court of Arbitration under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 (UNCLOS). Although the Hague court ruling in July 2016 favours the Philippine territorial claim in the South China Sea, current President Rodrigo Duterte has taken a more conciliatory approach in favour of stronger economic ties with Beijing. Singapore, on the other hand, although a non-claimant state, made it clear that the country's economy relies on the principle of freedom of navigation and commerce in the area. As such, Singapore has stressed the importance of abiding by international law in the South China Sea despite China's rejection of the ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague that invalidated Beijing's claims. This study therefore attempts to explore the strategic dynamics governing the South China Sea claims by the Philippines and Singapore, as well as the domestic and external factors driving their foreign policies vis-à-vis China. The findings suggest that in the case of the Philippines, the leadership factor determining Manila's current approach is based on realism while Singapore has pursued its national interests based on UNCLOS.

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