frontiers | Frontiers in Political Science

ORIGINAL RESEARCH
published: 31 May 2022
doi: 10.3389/fpos.2022.836561

Islands Apart: Explaining the Chinese Experience in the Philippines

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What explains the general absence of disdain against the Chinese Filipino community in the Philippines? One common answer focuses on the high rates of intermarriage—a legacy of Spanish colonialism. Yet, this explanation ignores how the Chinese were explicitly targeted—culturally during the American occupation and economically in the aftermath of independence. Moreover, it runs against theoretical expectations that when there are national security threats, there is a domestic backlash in the threatened state against the diaspora from the aggressor state. Simply put, we should observe rising discrimination against the Chinese-Filipinos given escalating maritime disputes between Manila and Beijing in the West Philippine Sea. Yet we do not. In this paper, we argue current patterns of minimal discrimination is the product of government–tempered nationalism. Despite the territorial conflicts, the Duterte administration has gone to great lengths to highlight the positive economic aspects between the two countries. To test this argument, we employ an original survey data, scrape speeches by government officials, and conduct interviews with local officials and business leaders.

Keywords: China, Chinese, diaspora, Duterte administration, outgroup tolerance, Philippines, rhetoric

OPEN ACCESS

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Specialty section:
This article was submitted to Comparative Governance, a section of the journal Frontiers in Political Science

Received: *15 December 2021*
Accepted: *29 April 2022*
Published: *31 May 2022*

Citation:
Masucol E, Jap J and Liu AH (2022) Islands Apart: Explaining the Chinese Experience in the Philippines. Front. Polit. Sci. 4:836561. doi: 10.3389/fpos.2022.836561

INTRODUCTION

In a 2020 survey (IRB number: STUDY00000237), about 70% of the respondents held largely positive views of the Chinese diaspora population—i.e., the *Chinese Filipinos*. Additionally, 91% considered them upper class, and 75% saw the Chinese Filipinos as good for the local economy. Another 40% said the influx of more Chinese into the Philippines was a good development. These numbers are striking in light of the ongoing conflicts between Manila and Beijing over the West Philippine Sea.[1] What explains the general absence of disdain against the Chinese Filipinos?

One common explanation focuses on the Spanish legacy. During colonial times, the Spanish authorities viewed the Chinese community both as a political risk and as contributors to the economy. The solution to this tension was to integrate and assimilate the Chinese into the wider Philippine society—namely through conversion to Catholicism (Wickberg, 1964). Conversion was necessary if a Chinese wanted to marry a Filipino. The colonial authorities incentivized these intermarriages by reducing taxes and lifting restrictions on movement and residence (Crewe, 2015, p. 358). Such unions—often between Chinese men and local Filipinas—resulted in the establishment of permanent family units where the children would be Chinese *mestizos*. Critically, the Chinese *mestizos* were viewed as Filipino rather than Chinese (Weightman, 1985, p. 165). The existence of Binondo—a district in Manila originally reserved only for Catholic Chinese and the world's oldest Chinatown—is testament to the importance of the Chinese *mestizo* community.

[1]West Philippine Sea is the official Philippine designation for the South China Sea. In this paper, we opt for the Philippine name given the focus is about the Filipinos and how they see the Chinese (the diaspora) and China (the country).

Yet, such cultural explanations ignore how the Chinese were explicitly targeted during the American occupation. In 1882, Washington passed the Chinese Exclusion Act—in response to growing anti-Chinese racism. The Act would suspend all Chinese immigration to the United States. And so when Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States in 1898, American Sinophobia—inclusive of the immigration ban—would make its way to the Philippines. While a 1940 legislation would end complete prohibition, new citizenship laws changed the official identification of both Chinese *and* Chinese *mestizos*. Anyone with Chinese ancestry was rendered an alien—thereby reversing what the Spanish had done (Chu, 2010). The ability of the average Filipino today to (1) differentiate between the Filipino Chinese and the Chinese; and (2) see the former in a positive light certainly does not follow from the racially-charged American occupation period.

Another common explanation rests on the economic dominance of the Chinese community. During Spanish colonial times, the Chinese population dominated the retail and wholesale markets. And as agricultural exports grew, the Chinese took up roles as middlemen and commercial agents. European and American importers coordinated with and supported Chinese exporters by providing loans and credit lines. With this new capital, the Chinese organized into guilds and export-import collectives. The Chinese would quickly establish monopolies over buying and selling operations—positioning themselves as the islands' primary creditors. And in spite of escalating Sinophobia, the economic position of the Chinese community grew during the American period. The 1909 Payne Aldrich Act—which opened up free trade between the Philippines and the United States on all goods minus sugar—meant Chinese economic influence grew substantially. The Chinese business community further organized en masse to leverage collective financial power; the Chinese businessmen consolidated to protect shared interest and established several major financial institutions—e.g., China Banking Corporation and Mercantile Bank of China—for more effective asset management and capital preservation (Crewe, 2015).

Economic explanations about the Chinese, however, ignore the post-1945 anti-Chinese economic backlash. While the newly independent Philippine government had passed a series of legislation curtailing Chinese businesses—from labor to licensing restrictions—the 1954 Retail Trade and Nationalization Act proved most damaging. It stipulated only Philippine citizens could engage in retail trade. Aliens—i.e., the Chinese—were allowed to continue operating until death or retirement, at which point the business would be liquidated (Appleton, 1960). The Chinese responded first legally through the judicial system; and when that failed, some resorted to capital flight while others employed bribery and dummy operations to circumvent restrictions. A further "Filipino First" policy in 1958 affected the Chinese although they were not the primary intended community. The policy aimed to address the disproportionate economic shares held by non-Filipinos, namely, the Americans and Europeans. Nonetheless, the Chinese were targeted—and would remain so until Ferdinand Marcos normalized relations with China in 1973 (Lim, 1999).

In spite of cultural discriminations during the American occupation and economic targeting in the post-independence period, public attitudes toward Chinese Filipinos today are generally positive. This is even more surprising in the wake of conflicts in the West Philippine Sea. We know from the political science literature that when two parties are engaged in conflict—whether it is an external military attack (Hutchison and Gibler, 2007); an internal insurgency campaign (Hutchison, 2014); or an ongoing terrorist campaign (Peffley et al., 2015)—there is a rally-around-the-flag phenomenon where outgroup intolerance escalates (see Theiss-Morse, 2009; Tir and Singh, 2015). We see this effect during World War 2 with Japanese internment in the United States (Komisarchik et al., Forthcoming); during the Gestapu Affair with killing of the Chinese in Indonesia (Liu and Ricks, 2012); and September 11 with increasing anti-Muslim attitudes (Panagopoulos, 2006; Coenders et al., 2008) and support for an unpopular War on Terror globally (Sides and Gross, 2013).

In this paper, we argue attitudes toward Chinese Filipinos remain largely positive in spite of these historical and contemporary challenges precisely because of how the Rodrigo Duterte government frames China. Duterte's administration has marked a notable shift toward China (Camba, 2021b). It is a pivot to maximize economic opportunities by softening territorial conflicts (Camba, 2020a; Camba and Magat, 2021). Thus, whether the disputes are over island claims or failed Chinese promises, the Philippines continues to emphasize the strong points of its relationship with China. This emphasis in turn keeps anti-Chinese sentiments—whether it toward the country or more importantly toward the diaspora in the Philippines—dormant.

We test this claim by employing three different empirical studies. Study 1 is a survey experiment that leverages different narratives—Philippine, Chinese, and American—about the conflicts in the West Philippine Sea. We find convincing evidence that across different treatments, there is general positive attitudes toward the Chinese Filipinos. Moreover, for respondents who are supportive of Duterte, the attitudinal effects of the Philippine treatment are statistically significant. Study 2 is a text analysis of all speeches by Duterte. We show that the rhetoric is consistently positive—at even greater levels than any other topics. Study 3 is a set of interviews with government officials and Chinese Filipino businessmen in and around Palawan Province—an area with jurisdiction extending into the Philippine-claimed waters of the West Philippine Sea. We demonstrate how leaders—despite countering encroachment of Chinese vessels regularly—are developing joint Philippine-Chinese projects precisely because of the expected economic gains from such cooperation.

This study makes several contributions to the literature on identity politics. First, it joins the existing scholarship in emphasizing the role of elite rhetoric in shaping outgroup attitudes (Helbling et al., 2016; Flores, 2018; Adida et al., 2020; Czymara, 2020). Indeed, consistent with the scholarship on constructivism, this study underscores the malleability of intergroup relations. The ways in which hegemon group members—who also constitute the mainstream society—view immigrant groups can be inclusionary or exclusionary. We argue elite rhetoric—about the newcomers and their countries of origin—plays a critical role in shaping this attitude. This study

also addresses two limitations in the literature. The literature has primarily examined the effect of divisive elite rhetoric, and thus, we know little about the flip side—i.e., the effect of positive elite rhetoric (c.f., Liu, 2017). This study suggests that positive rhetoric can dispel deterrence to the integration of the severely marginalized into mainstream society. Finally, another limitation is that the political science literature on immigrant/diaspora attitudes has primarily focused on dynamics in advanced democracies like the United States and Western European countries (c.f., Adida, 2014; Liu, 2021). This study expands the regional scope of this literature by providing a systematic investigation of a non-western diaspora (the Chinese) in a non-western setting (Philippines).

GROUP THREAT AND OUT-GROUP DISDAIN

Increasing number of countries around the world today are home to immigrant groups or diaspora communities. Their experiences in the host state are commonly marked by reluctant acceptance, xenophobia, and outright exclusionary practices by the hegemon group. A prominent explanation for disdain of immigrant groups is the perceived threats—whether *cultural, economic, or security* (Mughan and Paxton, 2006; Ceobanu and Escandell, 2010; Ramsay and Pang, 2017).

Cultural distance between the outgroup and the mainstream society can be perceived as a national identity threat. The mainstream society in the host country often has strongly held beliefs, norms, or identities. Hegemon group members might be concerned about whether the new groups will assimilate or change the cultural content of the nation. This results in hostility toward immigrants. Several experimental studies have demonstrated that the sheer exposure to non-English speakers increases anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States (Newman et al., 2012; Enos, 2014). Existing works also show that hegemon groups in Europe are less accepting of Muslim immigrants, who are seen are culturally distinct compared to Christian immigrants (Adida et al., 2016; Bansak et al., 2016). Consistent with these findings from advanced democracies, a study in Jordan finds that individuals with greater sensitivity to religious outsiders have more negative attitudes toward the incoming Syrian population (Alrababa'h et al., 2021). In addition to language and religion, the immigrant groups' phenotype in relation to that of the hegemon group may also signal cultural distance. For example, Ford (2011) finds that in the United Kingdom, white immigrants are preferred over non-white immigrants.

Another strand of the literature identifies *economic threat* as an incentive for anti-immigrant attitudes. Works focusing on the pocketbook mechanism expect low-skilled workers to be especially sensitive to increased immigration. They might worry about increased labor competition, decreased wages due to oversupply of labor, and increased burden on government's welfare services (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). However, evidence in support of this expectation has been mixed (see Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014). Given the emphasis on material interests, it is unsurprising that scholars have also identified a strong correlation between anti-immigrant attitudes and economic crisis (Wilkes et al., 2008). In a similar vein, scholars also find that humanitarian and political asylum seekers are about 15 percentage points more likely to be accepted compared to economic migrants (Bansak et al., 2016). Relatedly, a manifestation of economic threat is perceived group size: large(r) immigrant groups are perceived as economic competitors. Multiple studies show that hegemon group members often overestimate the immigrant numbers in their countries (Citrin and Sides, 2008). And studies based on the European context consistently find that a greater immigrant presence correlates with more hostile attitudes toward immigrants (Semyonov et al., 2006; Hooghe and De Vroome, 2015). At the same time, several studies also fail to find the effect of economic threat (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2010; Liu, 2020; Alrababa'h et al., 2021).

Furthermore, when the hegemon group associates immigrant communities with a specific foreign country, this has *security implications* for the former's perception of the latter's loyalty to the host country as well as anti-immigrant hostility. This association may be real or perceived. For immigrant communities that have been in the host state for several generations, it is possible that their linguistic or cultural tie to the associated foreign country is minimal or non-existent. Nevertheless, immigrant groups' loyalty to the host state remains questioned. Additionally, suspicion may flare up when there are national security threats or when the host state and the foreign country are engaged in disputes. At such precarious times, immigrant communities are seen as "fifth column" or "domestic actors suspected of working on behalf of external actors to undermine the state or regime" (Radnitz and Mylonas, 2022). For example, because they are seen as "enemies within," the Japanese Americans were placed in internment camps during World War 2 and Muslim Americans faced increased islamophobia after 9/11. Indeed, existing works in political science show that perceived security threat is an important predictor of anti-immigrant attitudes (Canetti-Nisim et al., 2008; Hellwig and Sinno, 2017; Ward, 2019).

Given these existing explanations for immigrant disdain, we should expect Filipinos to have unfavorable attitudes toward the Chinese diaspora community—who are culturally distinct, economic competitors, and are associated with a homeland that engaged in conflict with the Philippines in recent years. However, as we contend in this paper, this is not the case.

MARITIME RIVALRY IN ASIA AND ANTI-CHINESE SENTIMENTS

We now turn our attention to the maritime dispute between China and neighboring countries, including the Philippines, claiming islands and reefs across the West Philippine Sea. The region is one of the most economically and geostrategically important maritime spaces in the world. An estimated $3.4 trillion in international trade passes through the West Philippine Sea annually (China Power, 2017). The region is also a potential source of hydrocarbons and has one of the largest fishery stocks

in the world, accounting for 12 percent of global catch (Salleh, 2000). Besides economic and geostrategic factors, claimants have also placed historical and moral stakes on their claims. The dispute over these maritime territories have resulted in open confrontation in the sea. The dispute and Beijing's hawkish actions have led to an increase in anti-Chinese sentiments in most countries involved in this interstate rivalry—with the exception of the Philippines.

Japan and China have been locked in competing claims over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands for decades. During the peak of the conflict, a 2012 survey found that 84% of the Japanese respondents held an unfavorable impression of China (Horiuchi, 2014). This figure stands in stark contrast to numbers from the 1980 public opinion poll in which 79 % of the respondents said they held "friendly feelings" toward China (Horiuchi, 2014). While the dispute over the islands is not the only point of contention between Japan and China, it is a significant flashpoint that further inflames rising anti-Chinese feelings in Japan. In a similar vein, Vietnam and China have competing claims over the oil and gas reserves in what the Vietnamese call the "East Sea." Scholars have noted that this rivalry has led to a high anti-Chinese sentiment in Vietnam. Notably in 2011, "after Chinese patrol boats attacked a Vietnamese oil survey off the coast of Vietnam, anti-Chinese protests took place every Sunday in Hanoi and Saigon for 2 months, before being suppressed by the authorities" (Luong, 2020, p. 3). Similarly in 2014, China's assertiveness in the East Sea sparked deadly anti-China riots in Vietnam (Luong, 2020).

In many ways, the Philippines is no different from its Japanese or Vietnamese counterparts. It too has engaged in a contentious dispute with China over the areas west of Palawan, which have resulted in several instances of Beijing muscle-flexing. The Philippines primarily relies on its geographical proximity to territories in the region to assert its claims. For example, Manila claims some of these areas are close enough to the country's shoreline that it can assert its municipal waters law (Department of Agriculture, 2015). Additionally, Manila asserts ownership rights outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), ratified by the Philippines in 1984 and China in 1996.

For decades, Filipino and Chinese vessels have confronted each other in the region. Arguably the worst incident was the 2012 Scarborough Shoal standoff. Both Manila and Beijing claim the Scarborough Shoal (Huangyan Island per China)—a feature north of the Spratly Islands. On April 8, 2012, the Philippine Navy dispatched a warship to confront Chinese fishing vessels in the area. China responded by sending its own naval vessels to the shoal, resulting in a standoff. The crisis escalated with China banning certain agricultural imports from the Philippines and suspending tourist travel to the Philippines. The United States mediated a deal for both countries to withdraw from the shoal to negotiate ownership. However, as it turns out, only the Philippines complied and withdrew; China still maintains a military presence over the shoal today.

Given how maritime disputes led to increased anti-China sentiments in Asia, we would expect the Manila-Beijing rivalry to facilitate unfavorable Chinese attitudes among the Filipino public. However, contrary to this expectation, Filipinos attitudes toward the Chinese are rather neutral—if not favorable. In the next section, we propose a theory to explain this deviation.

THEORY: FOREIGN POLICY, ELITE RHETORIC, AND INTEGRATION OF CHINESE FILIPINOS

Elite rhetoric is consequential for mass attitudes toward outgroups (Czymara, 2020). While they may not generate outgroup bias, their portrayal of the groups and their policies can sharpen or neutralize existing attitudes. For example, Flores (2018) finds that Donald Trump's statements about immigrants strengthened anti-immigrant sentiments in the United States. In a study fielded during the Ebola crisis, Adida et al. (2020) compare immigration attitudes of American respondents who are primed on the identity of the Ebola carrier: an African vs. an American. While they do not find more exclusionary immigration attitudes despite the public health crisis being linked explicitly to outsiders, they do, however, find that "views of immigration were significantly more negative when Republican partisans read a statement by a Republican politician critical of President Obama's Ebola response" (494).

Indeed, the literature indicates that elite rhetoric matters for how the hegemon group views immigration and immigrants. The literature, however, tends to focus on the effect of negative and divisive rhetoric and has not adequately examined implications of positive rhetoric. This may be because instances of elites deriding outgroups is more frequent than inclusionary rhetoric in contemporary politics. Such instances are quite sensational and thus may also receive more media attention. Divisive rhetoric may also receive more attention because these instances result in quick and visible political gains. In this paper, we shift the attention to positive elite rhetoric and theorize how they affect mass outgroup attitudes.

We argue that just as the elites' negative rhetoric strengthens outgroup prejudice, positive rhetoric can dampen outgroup prejudice and may even foster positive outgroup attitudes. For example, Romanians in territories that were part of the Soviet Union during the two World Wars were more likely to help Jews during the Holocaust compared to the Romanians in territories outside the Soviet Union. One reason for this difference—per Dumitru and Johnson (2011)—is that the Soviet Union instituted an inclusive policy during the Interwar period. This suggests the efficacy of elites' cues. We argue that the lack of disdain for Chinese Filipinos in the Philippines is a contemporary case of this phenomenon.

Why would political elites encourage favorable outgroup attitudes? Outgroup rhetoric may be endogenous to the minority group's ethnic identity vis-à-vis that of the political elites—i.e., the elites' perception of whether the outgroup can be incorporated into the hegemon culture. This perception is likely to be shaped by the permeability of ethnic boundary, constituted by language, religion, and phenotype, between the hegemon and the minority outgroups (Liu and Ricks, 2022). If the

boundary is highly permeable, the outgroup group may be seen as having the potential to be "one of us." In this case, the elites might refrain from using negative rhetoric, thereby neutralizing ethnic cleavages.

Another explanation for elites' outgroup rhetoric is regime ideology. Communist and socialist regimes are known to downplay ethnic differences and encourage social harmony across ethnic cleavages. Dumitru and Johnson (2011) notes that the Communist Party in the Romanian territory of the Soviet Union put "great emphasis on national equality as the best vehicle for advancing its socialist goals" (15). Similarly, one of the main undertakings of the "Burmese Way to Socialism" was seeking out means to "de-politicize" ethnicity (Taylor, 2009). To that end, throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, the socialist regime in Burma reorganized the state's territory to foster a sense of equality across ethnic lines and vigorously recruited ethnic minorities into the party structure.

Elites' outgroup rhetoric may also be shaped by geostrategic considerations. According to Mylonas (2013), political elites promote minority policies that mirror their foreign policy goals and interstate relations with the minorities' external ally state (i.e., the country with which the minorities have cultural ties). The political elites are likely to adopt exclusionary measures if the host state has revisionist aims and views the minorities' external ally state as an enemy. Conversely, if the two states are allies, then the minority group is more likely to be accommodated. In sum, just as the elites may resort to negative portrayal of outgroups for political gains under certain conditions, they may also see strategic advantages in pursuing inclusionary policies in other contexts.

In this paper, we argue that despite the territorial dispute in the West Philippine Sea, the Filipino public has a generally neutral and even favorable attitude toward Chinese Filipinos because of positive rhetoric from the political elites. One reason why the political elites have maintained such positions is because of Manila's foreign policy toward China—a shift that began with the Marcos administration. In the first two decades following independence, the Philippine government's policies toward the Chinese diaspora were guided by suspicions of Communist China (Hau, 2014). The first presidency, the Manuel Roxas administration (1946–1948), was friendly with Nationalist China. The establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, however, complicated matters. The Elpidio Quirino administration (1948–1953)—fearing a flood of Chinese refugees and immigrants—essentially closed the door to China. The annual Chinese immigrant quota dropped from 500 to 50 (Lopez, 1990, p. 90). Additionally, Quirino avoided diplomatic relations with the PRC due to the Korean War (Lopez, 1990, p. 91). And for the next 15 years, each Philippine president approached the PRC with caution out of growing anti-communist sentiments. This in turn would cast doubt on the loyalties of the Chinese in the Philippines.

The 1965 election of Ferdinand Marcos ushered in the biggest change to Chinese political rights in the Philippines. The centerpiece of Marcos' Chinese policy was providing a pathway to citizenship for all ethnic Chinese. Full citizenship status gave the Chinese and Chinese Filipinos newfound security in residency and business ownership, offering them long-term stability in the Philippines. This naturalization also incorporated the Chinese into Philippine society. The ethnic Chinese were no longer a separate, "foreign" cultural entity operating in the Philippines but an integrated minority group. These domestic Chinese policies went hand-in-hand with improved PRC relations in the 1960s. The PRC was a growing military and security threat that necessitated peaceful relations (Official Gazette., 1969). In 1975, the Philippines normalized relations with the PRC and recognized the One China Policy. In return, the PRC ended financial and military support of communist movements in the Philippines, crippling them and reducing their capacity to revolt against the Marcos regime (Lim, 1999, p. 10–12).

Relations with Beijing continued to improve following the Marcos administration. The two countries have signed several bilateral agreements to expand economic, agricultural, and military cooperation. It was in the shadow of improved relations between the two countries that the territorial disputes in the West Philippine Sea began in the 1970s. In spite of military confrontations, every post-Marcos president except one—i.e., Benigno Aquino III (2010-2016)—has prioritized cooperation and peaceful resolution. The Duterte administration (2016-present) has continued this China-friendly stance. While responding with aggressive rhetoric to certain Chinese incursions into Philippine-claimed waters, Duterte's policies mainly focus on the positive aspects of Philippine-China relations. Furthermore, the Duterte administration has facilitated greater Chinese infrastructure investment, poverty reduction support, tourism exchange programs, and trade (Camba, 2020b, 2021a). Duterte has also secured increased military financing from Beijing to support counterterrorism efforts and his war on drugs. Recently, China has provided the Philippines with millions of COVID-19 vaccine doses. Unlike other governments who have blamed China for the economic and human loss of the pandemic, the Duterte administration has praised Beijing for its vaccine diplomacy.

Like other interstate relations, the one between Manila and Beijing is simultaneously rivalrous and mutually beneficial. For nearly six decades, the Philippines leaders have focused on the advantages of its relationship with China and underplayed the maritime disputes. This has resulted in a consistently positive portrayal of China.

EMPIRICAL TESTS

Our theoretical argument emphasizes the role of elite rhetoric to explain intergroup relations. Given that our outcome of interest is a null phenomenon—i.e., the general absence of disdain toward the Chinese Filipino—we test by triangulating three observable implications that flow from our argument. First, given the favorable portrayal of China by the Philippines political elites over the years, we should see robust positive attitudes toward Chinese Filipinos (study 1). Second, we should see consistent positive rhetoric in how Duterte talks about China—with a notable difference when he is not talking about China (study 2). Third, we should see economic considerations supersede

security concerns in how the Filipino government approaches relations with China—with implications for the Chinese Filipino community (study 3). We find evidence for all three expectations.

Study 1: Survey Experiment

In the first, we test for the attitudinal effects of the government having framed the China security issue in a non-negative light. We employ a survey experiment in the Philippines (IRB study number: STUDY00000237). We worked with a marketing research firm (Kantar) to administer the survey in January 2021 using computer-assisted web interviewing. The sample was nationally representative with quotas on age, gender, income, and region ($N = 1{,}575$). The survey starts with a battery of demographic questions. There is also a pre-treatment question about the respondent's overall attitudes toward China. Responses ranged from "very negative" (0) to "very positive" (3).

All respondents were subsequently divided into four groups—three treatments and one control. Those in the first treatment got a prime about the *Philippine* Department of Foreign Affairs—i.e., the Duterte administration—noting a potential split in what had been hitherto an alignment between the two countries. To test whether attitudes toward the Chinese Filipinos is in response to Philippine government rhetoric—as opposed to rhetoric from just *any* government—we include two other treatments as intentional negative checks. One is an *American* prime, specifically, a comment about the US Secretary of State viewing the Chinese claims as unlawful. And the other is treatment included a prime from the *Chinese* Foreign Ministry restating China's commitment to peace, stability, and bilateral diplomacy in the region. The primes were as follows:

> **Philippine Treatment:** *On July 12, 2020, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) of the Philippines issued a statement raising the 2016 arbitral award on the South China Sea dispute. This is the first time that the Duterte administration has urged China to comply with the award. This points to a shift in Philippine foreign policy from attempting to align with China to challenging expansive China's maritime claims.*

> **American Treatment:** *On July 13, 2020, US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo said the US supported the arbitral award and viewed China's maritime claims as unlawful.*

> **Chinese Treatment:** *On July 14, 2020, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin and assured him that China will continue to work with the Philippines to properly handle the maritime issues through dialogue and consultation. Wang stressed that China wishes to maintain peace and stability in the region through continued bilateral relations and diplomatic efforts.*

In contrast, respondents in the control group got no prime. Given that the survey asked about attitudes toward an outgroup—an ethnic group that had been vilified in the country's history and was subject to global discrimination during the pandemic—we opted against using a fake statement with one clause manipulated across treatments. Moreover, we did not believe it was prudent to use more mundane primes for ethical reasons. We did not want to call attention to over-the-top sensational ones (even if they were real). And thus, we settled on more banal ones—with the recognition that it could work against us. Assignments into the treatment and control groups were random. And as we see in **Table 1**, there is general balance across the treatment arms.

All respondents received a series of post-treatment questions. Respondents were asked about their attitudes toward the Chinese Filipinos, specifically, "What is your overall attitude toward Chinese Chinese-Filipinos (Tsinoys)?" Responses ranged from "very negative" (0) to "very positive" (3). As we see in **Figure 1**, the distribution of responses is split—but normally distributed—where the vast majority are in the middle, whether somewhat positive or somewhat negative. What is even more telling, however, is that these responses do not correlate whatsoever with the respondent's predisposition toward China. In fact, if we look at the distribution of attitudes toward the Chinese-Filipinos by how respondents feel about China, we see no statistical difference across each category (see **Figure 2**). It is striking to note that among those who said they had "very negative" attitudes toward China (top left panel), the modal response is "very positive" attitudes toward the Chinese diaspora. Conversely, among those who had "very positive" attitudes toward the country (bottom right panel), 12% of the respondents indicated they had "very negative" attitudes toward the people. While 12% amounts to the lowest proportion in this particular panel, it is the highest proportion for "very negative" across all four panels.

Empirical Evidence: Rhetoric-Tempered Attitudes

Having established that there is no correlation between attitudes toward the people (Chinese) vs. the country (China), we now look at the effects of the treatments. We begin with a simple means test. In spite of some primes being more nationalist and one specifically amplifying China's high-handed diplomacy, surprisingly we see no statistical

TABLE 1 | Sample randomization.

	Control	Philippine	American	Chinese	*p*-value
Attitudes toward China	1.84	1.90	1.85	1.89	0.39
Support for military force	1.56	1.67	1.62	1.55	0.64
Age	3.61	3.57	3.61	3.69	0.81
Gender (1 = Female)	1.47	1.52	1.53	1.51	0.11
Income bracket	3.70	3.75	3.71	3.77	0.57
Policy priority: drug war	3.95	4.01	3.97	4.00	0.29
Policy priority: economy	2.20	2.26	2.31	2.15	0.50
Voted for Duterte	0.56	0.53	0.56	0.55	0.55
Region: North capital	0.32	0.31	0.32	0.32	0.91
Region: North central Luzon	0.16	0.15	0.17	0.14	0.66
Region: South Luzon	0.23	0.21	0.24	0.24	0.88
Region: Visayas	0.13	0.16	0.11	0.10	0.73
Region: Mindanao	0.16	0.18	0.16	0.18	0.48

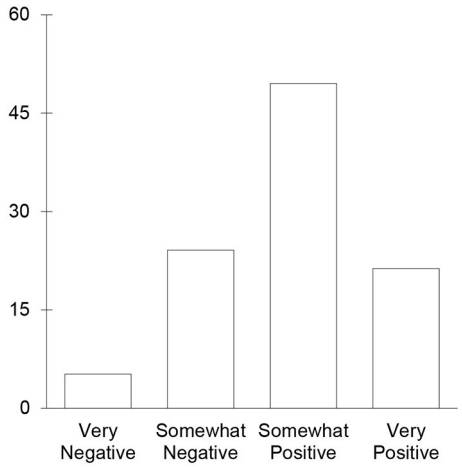

FIGURE 1 | Attitudes toward Chinese Filipinos.

difference in how respondents saw the Chinese-Filipinos. As we see in **Table 2** (column 1), being primed on Philippine sovereignty did not affect how respondents saw the Chinese-Filipinos. Likewise, respondents were no more negative toward the Chinese diaspora after getting an American or Chinese treatment.

There are several explanations for this non-finding. The first is one consistent with our argument: If government rhetoric has tempered the anti-Chinese nationalism, it follows that we find no effect for the treatments. And while the empirics corroborate this claim, there is another explanation: There is something inherent about our survey experiment specifically. It is possible that our primes were quite weak—i.e., too weak to draw a response. And finally, it is possible that our theoretical argument in general is simply wrong—i.e., government rhetoric has no effect on attitudes. As is, we cannot differentiate between these different explanations.

We can, however, leverage some observable implications. If it is about rhetoric-tempered attitudes, we should see this effect be more pronounced among those who are pro-Duterte. Put differently, a prime about what a populist leader says or does should have an effect only on those who support them—and conversely, it should have no effect whatsoever on those who never supported the leader in the first place (Andrews-Lee and Liu, 2021). To consider this, we split the sample into two sub-samples. The first looks at those who were anti-Duterte—i.e., those who said they did *not* vote for Duterte in the 2016 presidential elections. Conversely, the second sub-sample includes those who said they voted for him; those who could not vote; and those who did not want to answer. We then rerun the means test. The results in **Table 2** suggest the Philippines treatment does matter for respondent's attitudes toward the Chinese diaspora. Even though the treatment had no effect for those who were opposed to Duterte from the outset (column 2), the prime—one that emphasized the ongoing amicability between the two countries—had a statistically significant, positive effect for Duterte supporters on attitudes toward the diaspora (column 3).

We consider that there may be other confounding factors. To this end, we run a multivariate regression where we control for the respondent's demographics (see **Table 1**—model 1), their political ideology (model 2), and their region of residence (model 3). Note that we restrict the sample to those who (admitted that they) did not vote against Duterte in the 2016 election. The results show that the Philippines treatment has a statistically significant and positive effect on attitudes toward the Chinese diaspora. Respondents who were primed with the statement from the Philippines government were 15% more favorable toward the Chinese diaspora than respondents in the control group. And while the null effect of the American treatment is robust, the effect of the Chinese treatment is sensitive to model specifications. Note that while it is negative in some models, the coefficient is not statistically significant. This is all consistent with our priors that attitudes toward Chinese Filipinos are tempered by Philippine government rhetoric.

We recognize that identifying who is anti-Duterte can be quite difficult given social desirability bias (see Cruz et al., 2017). Using responses to a "Did you vote for Rodrigo Duterte in the 2016 Philippine election" risks counting individuals who outright lied and/or those who did not want to go on record as having voted against him. It also includes people who may indeed have voted for Duterte but no longer support him. In short, there is a high risk of false positives. As an alternative, we focus on the policies to identify an individual's affinity for Duterte. In the survey, we asked respondents the following question:

I will give you a list of five issues. I would like you to rank them, so the first issue is the one you would like the government to prioritize the most, and the last one is the one that you would like the government to prioritize the least. There is no right or wrong answer.

The list of issues includes anti-corruption, economy, education, *drug war*, and improving infrastructure and public services. Of the five issues, drug war is the one most equated with Duterte who strongly campaigned on an anti-drug platform. As such, we can assume respondents who ranked drug war as the least important issue as most likely to be anti-Duterte. Of course it is possible that we may end up excluding Duterte supporters who genuinely feel the other four issues are more important—i.e., there may be false negatives. But when we run the full model on this alternative sub-sample, the results remain substantively unchanged—i.e., respondents are in fact more positive toward the Chinese diaspora after being primed about the Philippine's recent alignment with China (see model 4).

Among the control variables, how respondents feel about China—from a foreign policy perspective—matters. Surprisingly, the effects are inverse. Specifically, respondents who see China unfavorably are more likely to feel positively toward the diaspora. Likewise, the more the respondents feel the need to engage militarily with China, the more likely they are to be favorable to the Chinese Filipinos. Demographically, older, female, and/or poorer respondents are more predisposed to being favorable toward the ethnic Chinese.

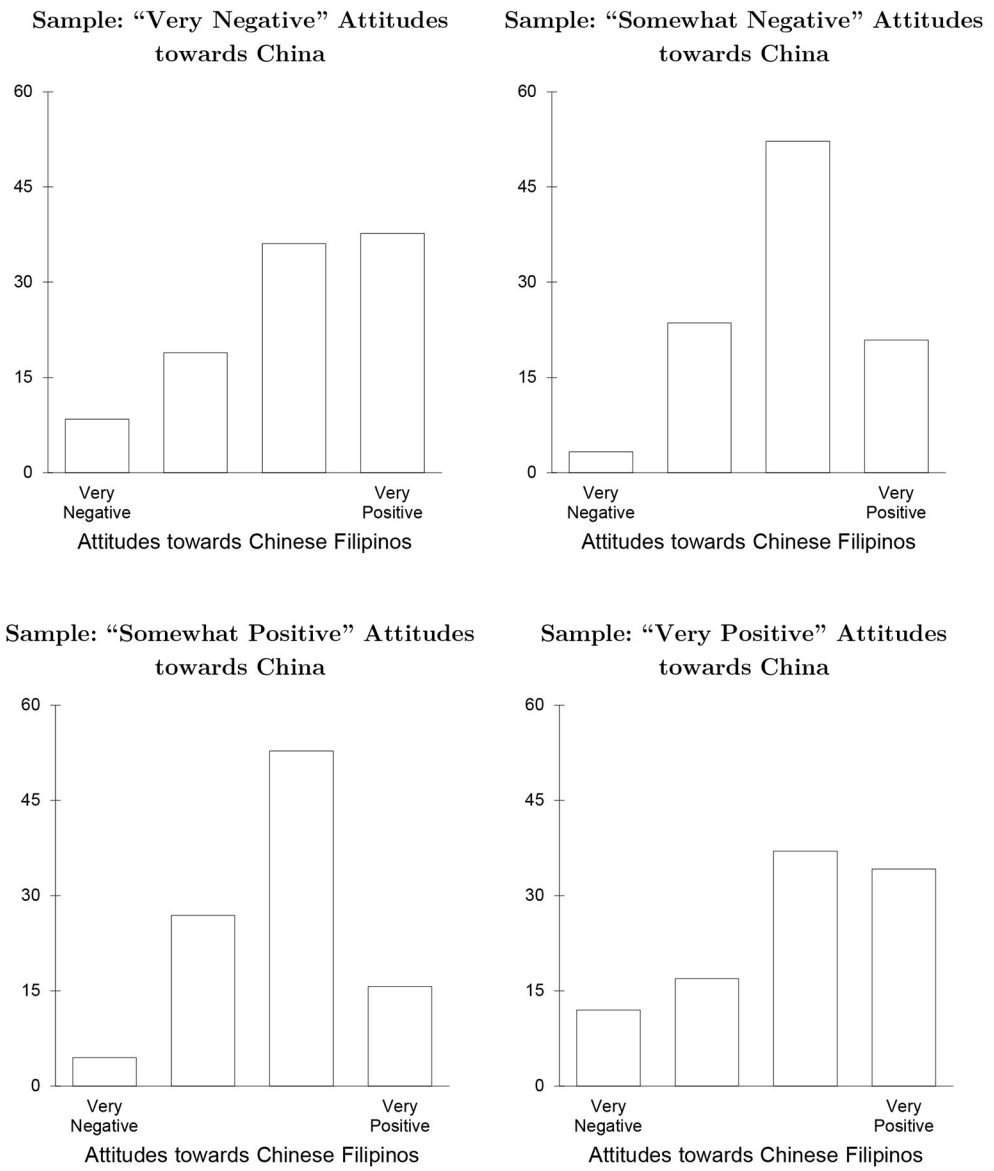

FIGURE 2 | Attitudes toward Chinese Filipinos given attitudes toward China.

Study 2: Text Analysis of Government Speeches

In the second study, we examine whether Duterte indeed framed China in a positive light. To test, we scrape all of Duterte's speeches available on the Philippine Presidential Communication Operations Office website between June 30, 2016 (when he entered office) and April 2021 (when the study was conducted. Note that not all of Duterte's speeches were posted; moreover, some speeches had broken links. In all, our corpus includes 249 speeches. The speeches were delivered in either English or Tagalog—if not both. For speeches in Tagalog, we pivoted the text into English using Google Translate and then manually verified the translation.

For the 249 speeches, we identified all the speeches that were made in reference to China—regardless of context ($N = 25$). With this corpus, we then use the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) 2015 software (Pennebaker et al., 2015). We use LIWC 2015 because it includes a dictionary that identifies 620 positive emotion words, 744 negative emotion words (inclusive of those capturing anxiety, anger, and sadness), and 756 social processes words that include family and friends. Identifying the frequency in which Duterte uses positive, negative, and social words can highlight how he sees and talks about China. Note that frequency here is measured as percentage of total words used. Thus, a value of "5" for positive emotions would suggest 5% of the total words used in the speech are considered positive.

TABLE 2 | Attitudes toward the Chinese across treatments.

Attitudes toward Chinese	Full sample	Duterte opposition[a]	Duterte supporters[b]
Control	1.84 (0.04)	1.84 (0.09)	1.84 (0.09)
Treatment: Philippine	1.90 (0.04)	1.87 (0.05)	1.99 (0.08)*
Treatment: American	1.85 (0.04)	1.85 (0.05)	1.85 (0.10)
Treatment: Chinese	1.89 (0.04)	1.90 (0.05)	1.86 (0.08)

*Attitudes toward Chinese range from "very negative" (0) to "very positive" (3). Standard errors reported in parentheses. Statistical difference from the control reported with asterisks. *$p \leq 0.10$. [a]Sub-Sample: Respondents who did not vote for Duterte in the 2016 elections only. [b]Sub-Sample: Respondents who did not vote for Duterte in the 2016 elections removed.*

Empirical Evidence: Duterte and Positive Emotions

The results suggest that in general, Duterte evoked a lot of positive emotions (see **Figure 3**). When it was about China, almost 5% of each speech [confidence interval: (3.63, 5.27)] contained positive emotion words (left panel). One speech to the Chinese State Media on October 6, 2016 was particularly laced with "warm feelings" and "warm brotherhood" (10.42%). In contrast, <1% of each speech was negative [confidence interval: (0.42, 1.47)]. In fact, 32% of his speeches contained zero negative emotion words! This 5-fold difference is not only statistically significant but notable when we consider it vis-à-vis Duterte's other speeches that are not in reference to China. While he still evoked more positive emotions (3.67) than negative ones (1.63) in these other speeches, the gap is much smaller—see **Figure 3**, right panel. In short, it seems when talking about China, Duterte was both much warmer and less hostile than usual.

It is also interesting to note that the gap in positive and negative emotions is largely consistent over time. As we see in **Figure 4**, left panel, Duterte starts his presidency with a lot of positive emotions when it comes to China. The aforementioned warmly-laced speech to the Chinese State Media was in 2016. And while the volume of positive emotions drops in 2017, it ends up holding steady over time. The consistency is even more pronounced when we shift our attention to negative emotions. We can draw a band between 0.5 and 1.5% across all 6 years. Moreover, in four of the 6 years, there were speeches with no negative emotions whatsoever.

Study 3: Interviews With Palawan Government Officials

In the third study, we establish (1) that despite looming security concerns with China, (2) the positive Chinese frames have been driven by economic considerations and this has (3) spillover effects on how the Filipinos see the Chinese diaspora in the country. We do so by drawing on interviews with government officials and members of the Chinese Filipino community in Palawan and in major urban areas including Cebu City and Manila. We focus on Palawan because it is the western-most province in the Philippines—with its jurisdictions extending into the Philippine-claimed waters of the West Philippine Sea.[2] Palawan's proximity to disputed maritime territories puts it at the forefront of Chinese challenges to Philippine claims. Yet the interviews demonstrate consistently that despite the potential security concerns, economic relations between Palawan and China remain very positive—a relationship with implications for the Chinese Filipino community. Interviews with individuals outside of Palawan were focused on assessing attitudes of businessmen in major urban areas who either work with or are Chinese Filipinos and/or have business ties to China.

Recruitment was based on both convenience and snowball sampling. We began with officials and businessmen by leveraging personal and family connections. These individuals in turn recommended other colleagues. In all, we interviewed ten senior-level Palawan officials—many of them holding positions in provincial security or executive governance (e.g., education and trade)—and twelve businessmen. Interviews were conducted via phone calls, private video meetings, or email correspondence. All interviews were semi-structured: We began with a set of questions tailored to each official's position or businessman's industry; we then allowed discussions about China and the Chinese diaspora to naturally flow.

Background: Security Concerns

For the Philippines—and Palawan specifically—China is a security challenge on three fronts. The first is about food security. Palawan is a major source of fisheries for the Philippines: 103,135.43 metric tons in 2019—almost 10% of the country's total fish catch (Philippines Statistic Authorities, 2020, p. 29). Likewise, China is interested in the vast fish stocks west of Palawan. Chinese fishing vessels frequently enter Palawan-administered waters to haul catches to sell in mainland China. According to a senior Palawan official, it is widely known that there is "a sizable Chinese fishing fleet in the Western Philippine Sea operating just a few kilometers or nautical miles from certain islands controlled by the Republic of the Philippines" (Personal interview with senior Palawan provincial official, September 21, 2020).

Confrontations between the two sides often involve fishing vessels. One of the worst during the Duterte administration was the June 2019 Reed Bank Incident. A Chinese fishing

[2]The Kalayaan Island Group is a Palawan municipality; its administrative center is Thitu (or Pag-asa) Island—the primary Philippine-occupied island in the Spratly Archipelago.

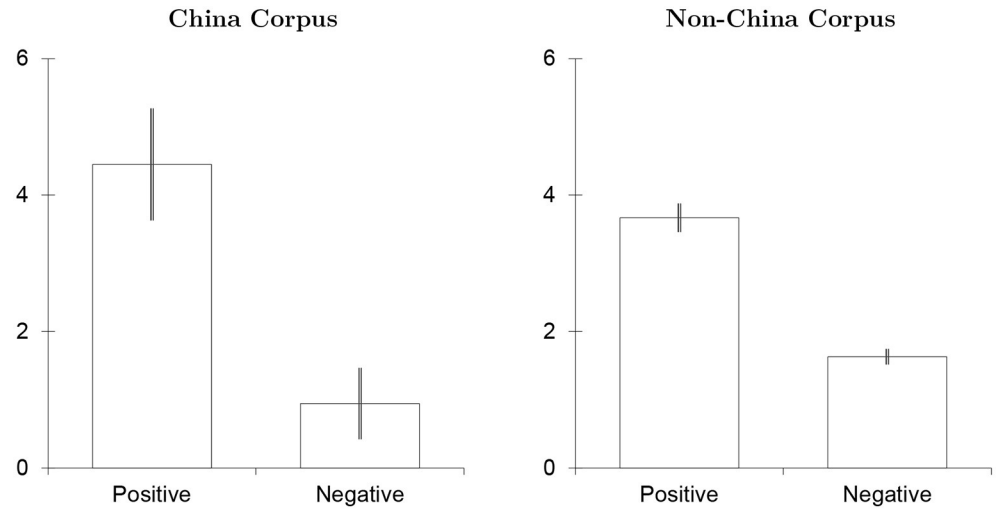

FIGURE 3 | Emotions in Duterte speeches by corpus type (%).

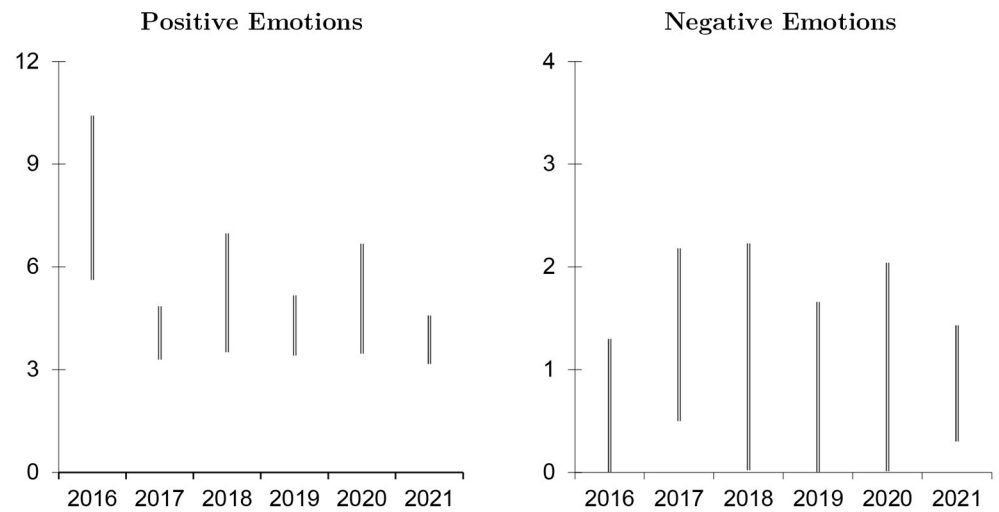

FIGURE 4 | Emotions in Duterte speeches over time (%).

vessel hit and sank an anchored Filipino vessel northeast of the Kalayaan chain. The twenty-two crew members of the Filipino boat—abandoned by the Chinese boat—had to be rescued by a third-party Vietnamese fishing boat that happened to be in the area (Stashwick, 2019). Many in the Philippines believed the sinking was a deliberate act. In fact, the Department of Foreign Affairs lodged a diplomatic protest in response (Gomez, 2019). China maintained it was an "ordinary maritime traffic accident." Duterte responded by concurring with China—citing no desire for further conflict (ABS-CBN News, 2019). Incidents such as this—which occurred well within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone—demonstrate the forwardness of Chinese fishers to encroach on Philippine waters. Yet Duterte has remained largely mum.

The second challenge is about fields and gas reserves. Despite recent production declines –particularly with the closure of the Nido and Matinloc oil fields—Palawan remains important for petroleum production. Two of the three petroleum-producing fields in the Philippines are off the coasts of northwest Palawan. Galoc oil field produced 96 percent of Philippine-made oil in 2019; and Malampaya field produced all gas and condensate in 2019 (Department of Energy, 2020).

China has a history of interfering with Philippine petroleum development. In March 2011, two Chinese patrol boats harassed a Philippine survey ship exploring Reed Bank for drilling sites (Senate of the Philippines, 2011). The result was the Philippine government placing a moratorium on oil and gas exploration throughout the Philippines' exclusive economic

zone in the West Philippine Sea to avoid further conflicts with China. However, as relations warmed, in 2018 the Duterte administration negotiated a memorandum of understanding for joint maritime development of energy resources to provide a mechanism for both countries to access energy resources in disputed waters. In October 2020, Duterte lifted the Reed Bank exploration ban, and the Philippines' PXP Energy Corp began negotiating with China National Offshore Oil Corp to start joint projects in the area (Reuters, 2020). Yet, it is PXP that has begun exploration unilaterally (Bloomberg, 2020). While lingering hesitations remain, Duterte's efforts at negotiations have proved important at mitigating conflict over hydrocarbons in the area.

The third challenge touches on sovereignty implications. Philippine-occupied areas have limited defenses. Thitu Island is arguably the most important one as it is home to the only Philippine airstrip in the region and has a civilian population. Chinese vessels have approached the island on numerous occasions. In early 2019, a flotilla of around 275 fishing boats and armed naval escorts were seen "swarming" Thitu (Associated Press, 2019). The incident would draw Duterte's most explosive rhetoric toward China. He threatened to send Philippine forces on a "suicide mission" against China if the flotilla did not "lay off" the island, though he would later qualify his threat by saying he still preferred negotiations over conflict (Guzman, 2019).

Empirical Evidence: Economic Considerations

In short, there have been multiple incursions—whether military or civilian vessels—between the Philippines and China. Yet at the same time, Palawan maintains numerous programs that facilitate direct, regular cooperation with China. Interviews with government officials offer insight into this economically-motivated partnership—one that manifests in at least two fronts.

First, Palawan has adopted a de-escalation policy when it comes to the local, daily encounters with Chinese fishers. Authorities are rather lenient of Chinese fishing near the Spratly Islands. Law enforcement agencies can board Chinese boats, but only do so for safety precautions and emergency services. It is a "diplomatic effort" to avoid conflict escalation while demonstrating sovereign assertion—per a senior Palawan provincial official (Personal interview, September 21, 2020). Most arrests are due to poaching of endangered species or illegal fishing methods (e.g., dynamite blasting, cyanide poison, or trawl nets). Charges manifest frequently as fines or vessel confiscations rather than formal prison sentences. While there are exceptions, this tolerance has been most evident during the Duterte administration. In fact, after the 2019 Reed Bank incident, Duterte said he and Xi Jinping had agreed that Chinese fishers could catch within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone in exchange for Filipino fishers' access to Chinese-controlled Scarborough Shoal (Aurelio, 2019). While the risk is still high with both countries fishing in disputed waters, the de jure policy is about reducing disputes as much as possible.

Second, Palawan is a sister province with Hainan. Hainan is the southernmost province of China, consisting of several islands in the West Philippine Sea. The province provides local administration over most of the PRC's claims in the region. On July 24, 2012, China established Sansha City on the disputed Woody Island; and then on April 18, 2020, it established two new administrative districts of the city covering the Paracels and Spratlys (Wang, 2012; Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2020). As such, Hainan's administrative jurisdiction directly conflicts with Palawan territories. In fact, many Chinese poachers incurring into the Palawan area sail out from Hainan (Boehler, 2014).

Despite this, Palawan and Hainan signed a sisterhood agreement in May 2017 primarily for joint economic development. Provincial officials have met to establish direct maritime cruise and commercial airline connections—with the goal of boosting tourism and increasing agricultural exports (Philippine News Agency, 2017). There is also an inter-province education exchange: 50 Palaweño students receive funds each year to study in Hainan (Formoso, 2018). And at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines, Hainan sent a shipment of 30,000 masks to Palawan to support frontline health workers (Magdayo, 2020). Despite their rival positions in the West Philippine Sea, Palawan and Hainan have warm relations. Interviewed officials spoke highly of the partnership between the two provinces, downplaying conflicts over disputed waters.

Spillover Effects: The Chinese Filipino Business Community

The cordial Philippine-Chinese relations have been instrumental to the Chinese Filipino business community. At the national level, they have publicly supported Duterte's rapprochement toward China. Over 100 members of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry joined Duterte on his first state visit to Beijing in 2016 to be included in the various trade and infrastructure agreements he negotiated with Xi (Hiebert, 2020, p. 520). And even at the firm level, it seems the Chinese Filipino business community has not experienced any nationalist backlash. Even when tensions were heightened, calls to boycott Chinese goods have not affected local Chinese-owned business communities—per a prominent member of the Chinese Filipino business community in Cebu (Personal interview, November 29, 2020). One of his colleagues even added that ties with mainland Chinese suppliers have never been threatened. Local economic activity of ethnic Chinese is largely apolitical; protests and anger are directed toward the Chinese government rather than ethnic Chinese as a whole (Interview with prominent members of Chinese Filipino business community in Cebu City, November 29, 2020). Duterte's focusing on positive relations only reinforces this trend.

There are of course exceptions—but the exceptions come with qualifications. There is targeting of the Chinese in the Philippines. However, the Chinese in these cases are the new mainland Chinese expatriates rather than the established Chinese Filipinos (Strangio, 2020, p. 267). The new Chinese migrants are seen as a threat—by both Filipinos *and* Chinese Filipinos—due to economic competition (Hau, 2005; Robles, 2018; Camba and Lung, 2021). This suggests a differentiation between the Chinese diaspora already in the Philippines and the "foreign" Chinese—a differentiation that remains in place in spite of the territorial disputes in the West Philippine Sea. There is also some latent fear

TABLE 3 | Attitudes toward Chinese Filipinos.

DV: Attitudes toward Chinese[a]	Baseline[d] (1)	Duterte[d] (2)	Region FE[d] (3)	Alternative[e] (4)
Treatment: Philippine[b]	0.17 (0.08)†	0.18 (0.11)*	0.19 (0.10)*	0.14 (0.07)*
Treatment: American[b]	0.13 (0.36)	0.14 (0.35)	0.13 (0.35)	0.03 (0.11)
Treatment: Chinese[b]	0.01 (0.13)	−0.06 (0.16)	−0.04 (0.14)	0.18 (0.05)‡
Attitudes toward China	−0.37 (0.15)†	−0.34 (0.15)†	−0.35 (0.14)†	−0.14 (0.07)†
Support for military force	0.50 (0.05)‡	0.51 (0.05)‡	0.51 (0.04)‡	0.46 (0.04)‡
Age	0.22 (0.05)‡	0.21 (0.06)‡	0.22 (0.07)‡	0.10 (0.03)‡
Gender (1 = Female)	0.21 (0.20)	0.20 (0.19)	0.14 (0.21)	0.16 (0.10)*
Income bracket	−0.13 (0.05)†	−0.17 (0.06)‡	−0.19 (0.06)†	−0.10 (0.04)†
Policy priority: drug war		0.18 (0.06)‡	0.18 (0.07)‡	−0.06(0.04)
Policy priority: economy		−0.20 (0.14)	−0.22 (0.13)	−0.09 (0.05)*
Voted for Duterte				0.19 (0.04)‡
Region: North Capital[c]			0.34 (0.05)‡	0.45 (0.02)‡
Region: North Central Luzon[c]			0.82 (0.04)‡	0.34 (0.02)‡
Region: South Luzon[c]			0.63 (0.04)‡	0.45 (0.02)‡
Region: Visayas[c]			0.71 (0.04)‡	0.42 (0.02)‡
Cut 1	−2.47 (0.45)‡	−2.36 (0.76)	−2.11 (0.74)‡	−2.16 (0.32)‡
Cut 2	−0.03 (0.37)	0.11 (0.75)	0.39 (0.68)	−0.09 (0.26)
Cut 3	2.35 (0.45)‡	2.54 (0.77)‡	2.85 (0.72)‡	2.26 (0.22)‡
N	1,212	1,212	1,212	1,421
R^2	0.05	0.06	0.07	0.03
Log Likelihood	−377.71	−373.01	−370.2977	−1,608.8886

*Models estimated using ordered logit with standard errors clustered by region. Standard errors reported in parentheses. [a]Attitudes toward Chinese range from "very negative" (0) to "very positive" (3). [b]Reference Category: Control (No Treatment). [c]Reference Category: Region: Mindanao. [d]Sample: Respondents who did not vote for Duterte in the 2016 elections removed. [e]Sample: Respondents who answered "Policy Priority: Drug War" as the least important policy issue that the government should prioritize removed. *$p \leq 0.10$, †$p \leq 0.05$, ‡$p \leq 0.01$.*

of rising anti-Chinese attitudes. These fears, however, are often more directed at Filipino nationalism in general and less about the Chinese *per se* (Personal interview, November 20, 2020). Additionally, the anti-Chinese attitudes are often symptomatic of frustrations over growing socioeconomic disparities and reported corruption—problems that are widespread across Philippine society in general (Personal interview, November 29, 2020).

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

Based on results from a survey experiment, we have shown that the general population in the Philippines hold robustly positive attitudes toward the Chinese in the country. We have argued that the seemingly anomalous outgroup attitudes can be explained by how Duterte frames China. However, it is possible that Duterte's rhetoric about China—whether positive or negative—has no bearing whatsoever on Filipinos' attitudes toward the Chinese Filipinos. There are two alternative explanations for why the average Filipino respondent would harbor minimal disdain toward the ethnic Chinese—independent of security concerns with China. The first focuses on the integration of the Chinese into Philippine society. Because the boundaries are porous between the two groups, the outgroup category has no meaningful identification. In contrast, the second explanation assumes the boundaries are (more) fixed. However, since the two groups come into contact regularly, these intergroup exchanges facilitate cultural understanding and outgroup tolerance. In the subsections below, we consider each of the two alternative explanations, demonstrating why they cannot account for the observed patterns.

Explanation 1: Integration of Ethnic Chinese and Porous Group Boundaries

The first explanation focuses on the Chinese Filipinos, specifically the extent of their integration—if not assimilation—into Philippine society. Since the Spanish colonial period, the Chinese population have married locals, learned the local languages, and converted to Catholicism. A Filipino interacting with a stranger who is Chinese Filipino might assume that they are interacting with a "fellow" Filipino. Chinese Filipinos themselves are likely to present themselves as Filipinos. One member of the Chinese Filipino business community in Cebu City said he sees himself as a Filipino who happens to have Chinese ancestry (Personal Interview, November 29, 2020). In short, it is possible that for the average Filipino, the boundaries between Filipino and Chinese are porous. And this in turn manifests as a

lack of outgroup disdain because the outgroup category itself is nominally null.

To test whether the average Filipino recognizes the Chinese group boundary, we turn back to the survey experiment in study 1. In the survey, we asked respondents their approval of Filipino brides marrying foreign men. However, we manipulated the identity of the foreign men. One third of the respondents—i.e., the "control group—were given no information about the foreign men. The remaining respondents were given one of two treatments. In the first treatment, the foreign men are Taiwanese. We use Taiwanese instead of "Chinese" to match on-the-ground developments. Foreign brides marrying locals is a relatively rare phenomenon in China, but this is not the case in Taiwan. And finally, the remaining one third of the respondents got the second treatment, where they are told the foreign men are Korean.

As it turns out, respondents are statistically less likely to approve of Filipino brides marrying a non-Filipino man only when the man is ethnically Chinese (2.28 on a 0 to 3 four-point scale) versus getting no information about the man whatsoever (2.38; $p = 0.01$). This difference is driven by the ethnicity of the Chinese husband versus Philippine nationalism *per se*. When we look at the treatment for the Korean husband, the result is statistically non-differentiable (2.37; $p = 0.89$)—suggesting there is something about the Chinese identity that is still recognized as being culturally distinct. This finding helps us rule out Chinese Filipino integration—and the porous boundaries between ethnic Chinese and Filipinos—as an alternative explanation.

Explanation 2: Intergroup Contact and Outgroup Tolerance

In contrast, the second explanation recognizes that the boundaries between ethnic Chinese and Filipinos are (more) rigid. However, it is the frequent, regular interactions between the two groups that socialize positive outgroup attitudes. And while we recognize how contact with diversity can improve intergroup trust, we are skeptical of this mechanism in this case (see Enos, 2014; Scacco and Warren, 2018). As discussed above, the history of contact between ethnic Chinese and Filipinos is long. And in fact, the contact was at times incentivized (e.g., during Spanish colonialism). Yet, ethnic tensions between the two communities have been a consistent feature of Filipino society well into the post-independence period—that is, until the elite rhetoric toward the ethnic Chinese officially shifted toward integration. Our argument is that since that shift, political leaders' positive rhetoric has tempered public attitudes toward the Chinese Filipino—a phenomenon that has been visibly pronounced during the Duterte administration.

To consider whether contact with ethnic Chinese increases tolerance, we look at the coefficients for the regional dummies in **Table 3** (models 3 and 4). We see that attitudes toward the Chinese Filipinos are the lowest for Mindanao respondents—the region with the smallest ethnic Chinese population. This does lend some validity to the contact theory. Note, however, that in spite of this, the Philippine treatment variable remained significant, suggesting regular contact—even if it matters—is not the only mechanism at play.

We also probe this by leveraging another question from study 1. Respondents were asked how much they agreed with the following statement: "Business catering to the Chinese are good for the local economy." Answers ranged from "strongly disagree" (0) to "strongly agree" (3). While this question does not directly measure the extent of the respondent's contact with the Chinese, it presupposes there is one. We rerun model 3 from **Table 3** with this variable included. The results suggest that while the variable is significant ($\beta = 0.58$; SE $= 0.23$), it does not substantively alter the results for the treatment variables specifically or the model generally. Again, this corroborates our earlier assertion that while contact theory may matter, it does not preclude our explanation of rhetoric-tempered anti-Chinese nationalism.

CONCLUSION

Given that many immigrant communities around the world face increasing discrimination, the Chinese experience in the Philippines is a remarkable one. While the Chinese community there started out as a severely marginalized community, today they fare much better than many of their diaspora counterparts in other Southeast Asian countries (see Liu, 2015; Setijadi, 2017). In fact, while the general population in the Philippines recognize that the Chinese Filipinos are a culturally distinct group and play a dominant role in the commercial activities, there is no evidence of disdain against the Chinese. Using a survey fielded in January 2021, we establish that the general population in the Philippines hold favorable views of the Chinese community. This finding may appear surprisingly given the maritime rivalry between the Manila and Beijing governments. However, in this study, we argue that Duterte's positive rhetoric about China, which builds on the Philippines' decades-long China-friendly stance, neutralizes potentially unfavorable views about China and the Chinese community in the Philippines and has even fostered positive attitudes. By conducting a text analysis of Duterte's speech about China, we find that he is five times as likely to frame China in a positive light as opposed to negative light. We attribute how Duterte frames China to his foreign policy goals with China, particularly economic incentives for maintaining cordial relations with Beijing. To that end, we examine qualitative evidence from interviews with the Palawan government officials.

While much of the literature on implications of elite rhetoric has focused on divisive and inflammatory portrayals of immigration and immigrants, this study highlights that positive rhetoric can lead to improved intergroup relations. At the same time, our argument and the findings we present challenge the notion that exclusionary rhetoric is more potent in identity politics than inclusionary ones as has been suggested in the literature (see Helbling et al., 2016). In other words, negative rhetoric can lead to unfavorable immigrant attitudes, but positive rhetoric is unlikely to lead to favorable immigrant attitudes. Given these dissenting views, future research should investigate

how implications of positive rhetoric stacks up to that of negative rhetoric.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board (IRB Study: 00000237 and 00000396). The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

EM wrote the sections on the Philippines and did study 3 (the interviews). JJ wrote the literature reviewing and the theoretical framing on the front end. AL did study 1 (survey) and study 2 (text analysis). All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

FUNDING

The authors thank Roach Funds (FY 2020-21) for supporting Ethan Masucol's research on Philippines-China relations in the West Philippine Sea. The funder was not involved in the study design, collection, analysis, interpretation of data, the writing of this article or the decision to submit it for publication.

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.