

DUTERTE'S POPULISM DISCOURSE AND THE DEATH OF GRAND NARRATIVE

by Imelda Masni Juniaty Sianipar Arthuur Jeverson Maya

Submission date: 20-Oct-2022 09:04AM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 1930160561

File name: m_Discourse_and_The_Death_of_Grand_Narrative.Imelda_Arthuur.docx (1.62M)

Word count: 3673

Character count: 20261

DUTERTE'S POPULISM DISCOURSE AND THE DEATH OF GRAND NARRATIVE

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Imelda Masni Juniaty Sianipar & Arthuur Jeverson Maya

imelda.sianipar@uki.ac.id & arthuur.jmaya@uki.ac.id

Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Jakarta

ABSTRACT

This article tries to show Duterte's populism discourse as a collective discursive in driving social integration in the Philippines. Anti-United States is Duterte's populist discourse to gain popular support. This phenomenon has a controversial meaning, because, historically, one of the countries that has become the direction of foreign policy for the Philippines is the United States. It shows the discourse resistance from Duterte. The building of the discourse will be analyzed at the level of social movements using the hegemony approach of Ernesto Laclau, to show collective discursive and the power approach to reveal the grand narrative. This study found that the decline of dominant narrative power under the United States in the Philippines such as democracy, free markets and human rights was due to the collective discursive hegemony-pivot to China, change is coming, anti-democracy and anti-United States became the discourse of universalized antagonism.

Keywords: Duterte's discourse, grand narrative, social movements

1. Background

The western dominant discourse is an antagonistic knowledge. Derrida mentions this dominant discourse as logocentrism or regime of truth. It has been resisted by the emergence of populism due to the failure of representative democracy to fulfill social equality promise. Furthermore, it can be traced through anti-order discourse dominant elitist and anti-representative institutions. This phenomenon has been worried by Ernest Gellner in the 1960s who said "there are ghosts that are destroying the global order". The building of hegemony discourse became famous in academics and practitioners who focus on global political issues. The dynamics of the development of global political populism knowledge provided opportunities for Duterte to seize political power in the Philippines by constructing a minor discourse to demolish the dominant discourse.

Duterte's discourse is the discourse of power of anti-dominant order. The symbol of sign and the language of nationalism are maintained as a political strategy. It can be found in Duterte's political discourse to beat Manuel Roxas in 2016 the general election. Duterte's discourse was successfully rooted and mobilized the people of the Philippines to support him. Duterte's discourse is spread through social network strategies so that it has an impact on the meaning of the truth. According to Castells in his book, the rise of the network society, the emergence of a networked society in the contemporary era make the networks as real power. He also proclaims that media is the truth.

This article tries to explain how the ecstasy of Duterte's discourse became social truth and succeed to drive social integration in the Philippines and finally made him succeed in becoming the Philippine president in 2016. The Filipinos are tempted by his promises to eradicate crime. And with the spirit of nationalism, Duterte uses his populist image to form foreign policy, namely pivot to China, change is coming, anti-democracy, and anti-United States.

2. Populism¹⁵

Populism is a concept that is still debated by political and economy experts (Knight, 1998: 22). Based on Latin American countries experience, populism is identified with a personalistic regime which flourished in the ISI (Import Substitution Industrialization) era in 1940-1960. Populism is also often interpreted as a movement, a regime, a leader or even a country that claims to have close relation to the people (Weyland, 2001: 2). Although there is no agreement on the definition of populism, the term continues to be used and remains a useful concept for the purposes of more analysis.

Margaret Canovan conveyed a pattern of populism that is difficult to debate. According to Canovan, populism in developing countries is closely related to the economic crisis as a consequence of development which is too slow (Canovan, 2002). This situation will provide an opportunity for nationalist groups to encourage change in particular of all forms of dependence on the colonialists (Taggart, 2000: 60).

According to Allan Knight, populism is a political style that shows the closeness of relations with the people (Knight, 1998). Kenneth M. Roberts states populism is the top-down political mobilization of mass constituencies by personalistic leaders who challenge elite groups on behalf of an ill-defined pueblo, or "the people" (Roberts, 2007: 5-6). While Kurt Weyland argues that

⁷ Populism is a political strategy through personal personality leaders or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated institutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers (Weyland, 2001). Based on the definitions of Knight, Roberts and Weyland, It seems clear that populism is ⁴ a strategy used by leaders to achieve power both as a political style and as a driving model (mobilization) of the masses.

According to Roberts, populism has five main characteristics (Roberts, 1995: 88). First, populist leadership patterns are personalistic and even paternalistic sometimes charismatic. Second, populism is a multicultural and heterogeneous political alliance whose followers are people who are concentrated in the area periphery. Third, there is political mobilization from top to bottom. Fourth, the ideology adopted by populist leaders tend to be unclear. Fifth, populism is a project economy that uses ¹² redistributive or clientelistic methods to create the foundation material for popular support. Based on the definition of the experts above, this article concludes ⁹ that populism is a political strategy used by a charismatic populist leaders with utilize the existence of a crisis to encourage change and reduce dependence on "west".

3. Death of the Grand Narrative

The emergence of populism regimes in various regions is rooted in the paradoxical condition of relations knowledge of the global system that is controlled by liberal democracy and efforts to enforce free markets by global capitalism. Response to the paradoxical power relations and global capitalist system is found in two spectrums of ideology; left and right. Therefore, populism spectrum is often attached to the ideology of the wing of socialist communism and the wing of democracy liberalism. Liberal democracy promises political and government equality and free markets promising global economic equality. In reality, both create gaps in political and economic justice. Poor countries remain a source of exploitation of developed countries. Finally, the world is divided into two; the predator country and prey country. The paradox of economic equality and political justice promised by the liberal democratic system is decaying in the postmodern era, giving rise to new anti-democratic and anti-market elites. They are called as populist leaders who promise equality and justice.

¹⁹ Some experts claim that populism is not a political ideology. Cas Mudde and Kristobal Kartwasser ³ defines populism as a thin centered ideology that consider society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, the pure people versus the corrupt elite,

and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people. This concept states that populism can be fused either with socialism, liberalism, conservatism or authoritarianism (Mudde, Kaltwasser, 2017: 6).

This anti-democratic regime can be traced from the discourse of the populist political strategy; first, crystallizing identity politics in populism politics, which divides society into “the elite” and “the poor”. Second, the image of the populist is constructed directly to “the poor” to maintain legitimacy. This strategy raises the contradiction of populism because the expectations of identity fusion do not get maximum results but still crystallize into “us” and “them.” Muller reinforces the anti-democratic statement by arguing that populism is a regime that rejects pluralism as a global norm which fundamental for liberal democracy (Muller, 2016).

The contradiction of populism is the response to the paradox of liberal democracy system. According to Laclau, populism functions as a discursive tool that constructs ideas collective in many communities. The complexity of inequality problem carried out by the capitalists in the economic field and by the liberals in the political field creates fertile land for populists. The construction of anti-free market and anti-liberal democracy discourses as a knowledge that is directly produced by many communities who are economically and politically imbalance. The discourse is powerful in every social arena such as religion, culture, and the political space of the poor, leading the masses to support the populist against the global system (Laclau, 2005).

Laclau and Mouffe also say that post-democracy strengthens the elements unifying the artificial antagonism of populism; left and right. The crisis of democracy is successful encourage right populism to produce national identity or nationalism knowledge which is implemented in anti-migrant policies that show different identity. While, the political obligation of left populism is to build the discourse of fundamentalist antagonism in order to accommodate the interests of the people collectively. It began in Latin America through a shift to the right, then the leftward shift through the pink tide phenomenon, in Europe through the trend of right wing populism and even in Southeast Asia. Charismatic mobilization of a mass movement to pursue political power has also impact the Southeast Asian. Populism thrives when the ties between voters and bureaucratic party or clientelistic are eroded

The discursive ideas of anti-democracy and free markets are born from left and right wing leaders. Therefore, the populism regime is an anti-modern regime or anti-capitalistic civilization that seeks to accelerate the accumulation of capital to the whole world by using industrial

technology that has an impact on economic inequality between developed and developing countries or between the elites and the poor. In the end, the exploited and alienated communities by the means of production will fully support ideas of populist figures. Populist discourse is a ghost who is looking for the body of lower class society who are anti-liberal democracy discourse.

The power of populism is the power of ideas. According to Bourdieu, the real power is the dominant discourse. He confirmed Laclau's statement about "discursive." Populist discourse challenges the established global discourse-"liberal democracy". The paradox arises later from populist leaders with their populism slogans is no guarantee. Policies issued by populists can have a negative and positive impact. However, the idea will continue to reproduce in the global community and become doxa (Lubis, 2016: 117). The emergence of populism discourse has undermined the grand narrative of representative democracy. The destruction of trust in the grand narrative of western liberal democracy and this unique populism discourse will be further analyzed in the emergence of Duterte in the Philippines.

4. Duterte's Discourse

Rodrigo Duterte was born in Massin, Southern Leyte, Philippines on March 28, 1945. His nickname is Digong. He is a son of Cebuano Vicente G. Duterte and Soledad Roa Duterte. His father was a school teacher, a lawyer and then serves as the Governor of Davao. Besides as a Governor, his father was also a Mayor of Danao in Cebu. Duterte's cousin and uncle were also politicians. They hold strategic positions in the Philippines. Duterte has family ties with the Visayan clan and the Durano clan and Almendras. The relationship between Duterte and the clans made him popular in the Philippines, especially in Davao City. Duterte studied at the University of the Philippines Lyceum (BA) and San Beda (BL) Law College. He grew up in politics. The family background of politicians and the educational background have shaped the character of Duterte. He has been used to political life since his childhood.

Duterte began his political career from 2 May 1986 until 27 November 1987 as a Deputy Mayor of Davao. Then, from 2 February 1988 to 19 March 1998, he replaced Jacinto T. Rubillar as a Mayor of Davao. After being deposed, he served again as a Deputy Mayor of Davao from 30 June 2001 until 30 June 2010. Duterte rose again to become a Mayor of Davao on 30 June, 2013. After seven periods of being an official of Davao City, on 21 November 2015, Duterte declared himself to be nominated as a candidat of the Philippines in the 2016 presidential election.

The Filipinos support Duterte as the strongest presidential candidate. One of the reasons was Duterte's promise to convince the Filipinos that he would do the best for the nation and country. Duterte promised to carry out his duties not only when he wakes up but also when he sleeps, he will work. Duterte became the idol of the Filipinos. He also promised to execute criminals. The slogan "change is coming" or the arrival of change becomes a discourse on Duterte's populism (nusantaranews.co). Eighteen months before the 2016 presidential election, Duterte did not even figure among the likely presidential candidates. Duterte finally decided to run for president in the 2016 national elections on November 21, 2015. He became the fourth politician to join the race after Vice President Jejomar Binay, former Interior Secretary Manuel "Mar" Roxas II, and Senator Grace Poe. However, Duterte's popularity rose rapidly in April and Duterte became a popular candidate. From January to March 2016, Duterte consistently polled last among the four main candidates. Yet, by April, Duterte was the clear front runner (Cook & Salazar, 2016). (See table 1).

Table 1: Presidential polls and election result (in %)

	Duterte	Roxas	Poe	Binay
Sept 2015 SWS	11	20	26	24
Sept 2015 PA	16	20	26	19
Dec 2015 PA	23	17	21	33
Jan 2016 SWS	18	21	24	31
Jan 2016 PA	20	20	30	23
March 2016 SWS	21	22	27	24
April 2016 PA	35	17	23	16
May 2016 SWS	33	20	22	13
9 May election*	39	23	21	13

Source: Cook & Salazar, 2016

The polls result in table 1 is closely related to the construction of the discourse built by Duterte. The high poll result obtained by Duterte was due to the construction idea of "change is coming" which is different from the former Philippine Presidents discourses (see table 2). He uses the idea as a political strategy to gain public trust. The idea was successfully rooted in the beliefs and knowledge of the Filipinos. Thus, Duterte won in the 2016 general election (Teehankee, 2016).

Table 2: Discourse competitions in political period

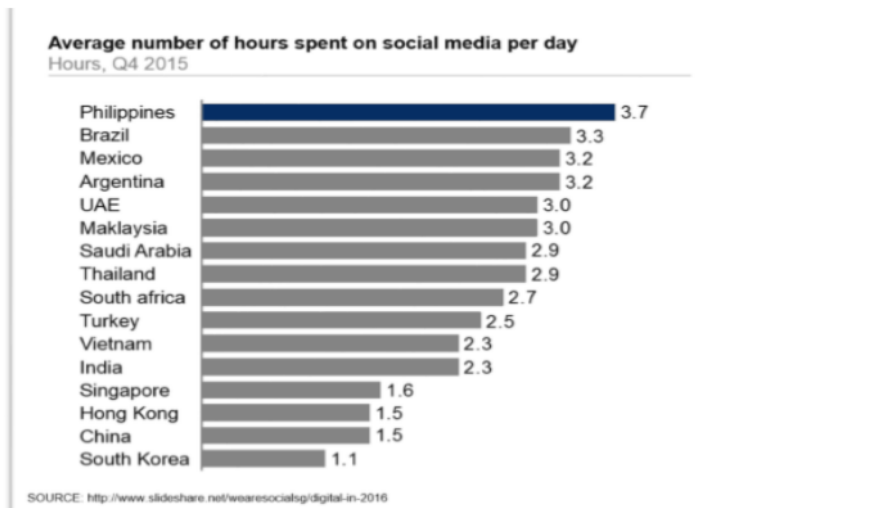
	Unfinished Revolution	Great Nation	Good Governance	Masa
Nationalist <i>(identity)</i>	Aguinaldo Quezon Osmeña Laurel			
Developmentalist <i>(modernity)</i>	<i>Garcia</i> <i>Marcos</i>	Roxas Quirino Macapagal- Arroyo	<i>Ramos</i>	<i>Duterte</i> <i>Macapagal</i>
Reformist <i>(accountability)</i>			Aquino Aquino III	<i>Magsaysay</i>
Populist <i>(equity)</i>	<i>Estrada</i>			

Note: Italicised names are "mixed-narrative presidencies".

Source: Teehankee, 2016

Duterte's political strategy is closely related to the discursive building to construct the collective ideas of the Filipinos. The discourse about "change is coming" becomes idol discursive for the Filipinos. Duterte often yelled out controversial statements about the established "western" order to win the lower class society support such as anti-free market and anti-liberal democracy. Moreover, Duterte announced that he would reduce ties to the United States. He calls it as "pivot to China". A political strategy for power struggle in various arenas such as social media is effectively used by Duterte to construct anti-mainstream discourse to the masses in his campaigns. The use of social media is effective to gain public support because the Philippines has the highest social media usage rate in the world. Users in the Philippines spend an average of three hours every day on social media. It becomes the battle room for effective power discourse (see graph 1).

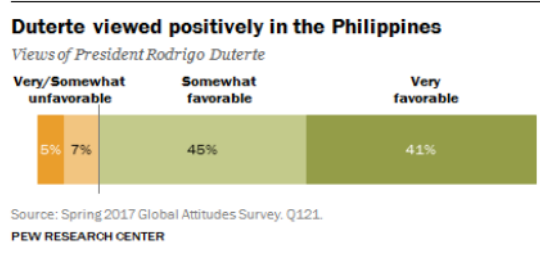
Graph 1: Filifinos total number of hours spent on social media per day



Source: Cook & Salazar, 2016

Graph 1 shows that internet communication, sending messages, and their implications on viral "change is coming" and "pivot to China" messages are effective. The Filipino social media users will quickly receive messages delivered by populist figures. It can be seen in the high level of Philippine people's support for Duterte (see table 3).

Table 3. Views of President Rodrigo Duterte



A report from the Global Attitude Survey, 2017 regarding the level of trust of Filipinos towards Duterte shows that 86 % of the Filipinos people view Duterte positively and only 12% of Filipino people who are not satisfied with Duterte performance. The data then supports argument that Duterte's discourse strategy of "change is coming" is successfully rooted in the hearts of the Filipino people (Pew Research Center, 2017).

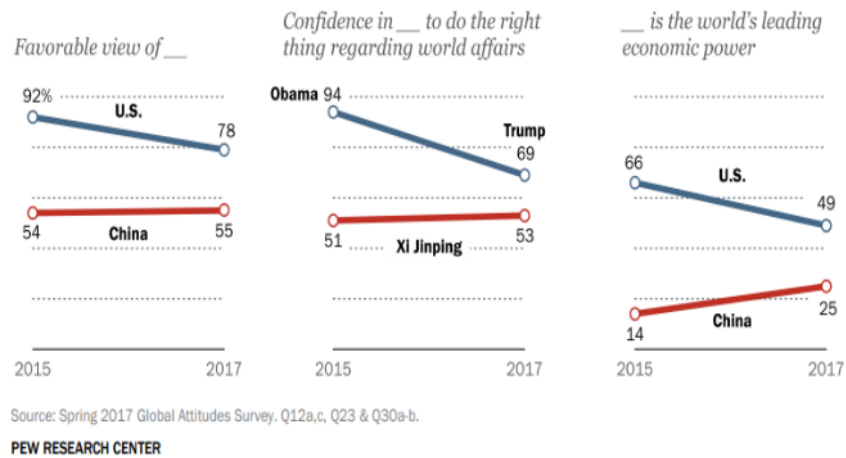
Populism discourse is increasingly gaining attention in academic and public when populist leaders arose and flourished throughout the world. The emergence of Chavez, Kirchner, Lula and Morales in Latin America, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Middle East, Erdogan and Viktor Orban in Europe, Joko Widodo and Duterte in Southeast Asia and even Donald Trump in the United States confirmed that populist leaders - both right and left- have resurgence and are in power. On one hand, the emergence of populist leaders has positive implications when they struggle for the prosperity of the people who have been marginalized and excluded by a corrupt system. On the other hand, it also has negative implications when they are ⁵ anti-democratic, anti-Western, anti-foreign and anti-market. It can be worse if the populist leaders are authoritarian and dictator. This is what happened in the Philippines. The appearance of Filipino populist figure, Rodrigo Duterte and ¹⁶ his victory in the 2016 presidential election has shocked many people. Duterte grabbed global headlines with his inflammatory statements. He announced his intention to reduce ties ¹³ with the United States and bolster links with China and Russia. The spirit of populism and nationalism are the main triggers for Duterte to promote independent foreign policy.

William D. Coplin states that a country's foreign policy is influenced by three factors; a country's domestic politics, which includes domestic conditions; capability a country's military and economy; international context relates to the situation in the country that becomes the objectives of foreign policy, as well as influences from other countries relevant to problems faced (Coplin 1992, 30). Philippine foreign policy is influenced by Duterte as a populism figure that emphasizes anti-US discourse. Duterte assumed that the Phillipines will get more benefit if the Philippine foreign policy shifts to China. Duterte also considered the conditions international economic and political inequality under the liberal democratic system.

The Philippine domestic situation is measured by public trust in China. Therefore, Duterte with the support of the Filipinos people can formulate his pivot to China policy (see graph 2).

Graph 2: Filifinos perceptions on the US and China

In the Philippines, narrowing gap on perceptions of the U.S. and China

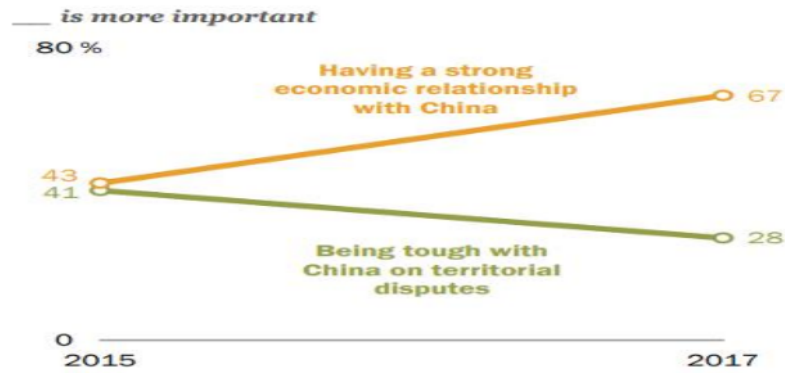


The Global Attitude Survey, 2017 shows that in 2017, 78% in the Philippines have a positive view of the U.S., down from 92% who expressed positive sentiment in 2015 and confidence in Trump is lower than trust in then-President Barack Obama was in 2015. Currently, 69% have confidence in Trump to do the right thing in world affairs, compared with 94% who expressed such confidence in Obama in 2015. Meanwhile, 53% of the Filipinos have confidence in Xi Jinping. On global economic status, in 2017, about half of Filipinos (49%) say that the U.S. is still the leading economic power, but that is down from 66% who said this in 2015. Furthermore, in 2015, 14% of the Filipinos name China as the world's leading economy. In 2017, it increased to 25%.

Report from the Global Attitude Survey is reinforced by the support of the Filipinos people to China based on its economy issue rather than to South China Sea conflict. The Filipinos realize that China would bring benefit for the Philippines in term of economy. But, this reason is not based on rational choice, but rather because of the Filipinos' trust in Duterte (see charts 3 and 4).

Grafik 3. Filipinos support on china based on economic relations and territorial disputes

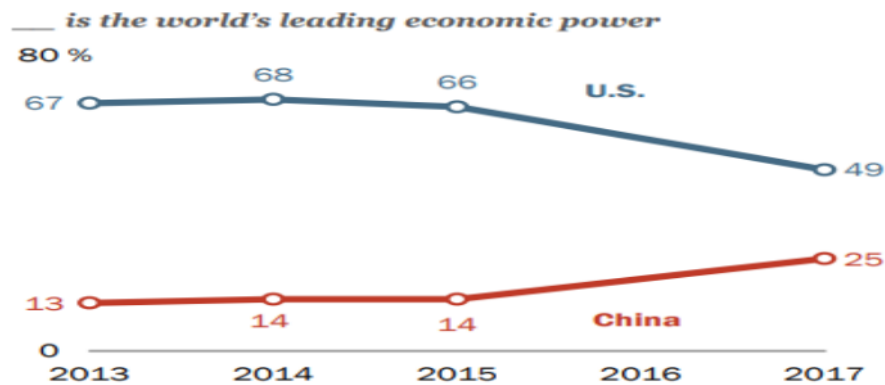
Among Filipinos, massive jump in support for strong economic relations with China at expense of being tough on territorial disputes



Source: Spring 2017 Global Attitudes Survey. Q125.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Graph 4. Filipinos confidence on the US and China as world’s leading economy

U.S. is still seen as world’s leading economy in the Philippines, but gap with China is narrowing

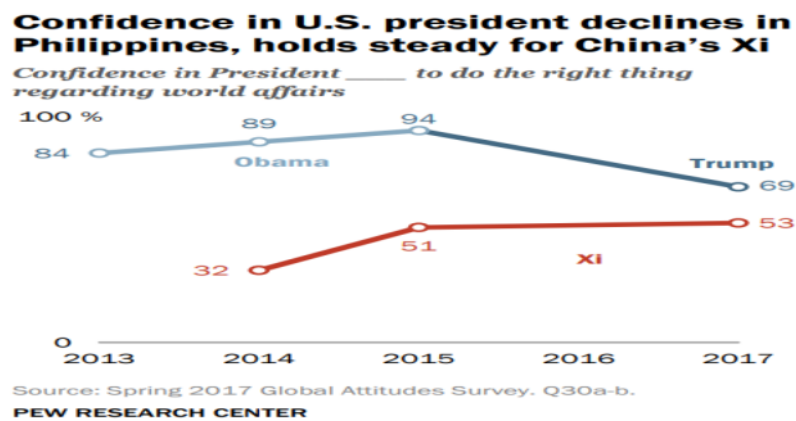


Source: Spring 2017 Global Attitudes Survey. Q23.
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Even though the US is still seen as world’s leading economy in the Philippines, the confidence has declined steadily from 67% in 2013 to 66% in 2015. Then, in 2017, it dropped dramatically to

49%. Meanwhile, the Filipinos confidence to China continues to grow from 13% in 2013, 14% in 2014 and 2015, and then rose significantly to 25% in 2016-2017. The increasing of the Filipinos people confidence to China especially to Xi Jin Ping emerges since Duterte led the Philippines. Thing this was supported by the trust of the Filipino people in the Chinese economy, and reduced it trust in the liberal US economy. He was supported by the trust of the Filipino people towards Xi Jin Ping (see graph 5).

Graph 5. Confidence in Trump and Xi Jin Ping



5. Conclusion

Populism has been fused in every ideology. It looks so soft that populism can melt in every discourse. The construction of knowledge related to populist figures makes a candidate can reach power. Duterte is a populist figure who dared to spell out the slogan “change is coming “as his political discourse strategy. As a result Duterte was able to defeat his all political rivals. The discursive collective ideas rooted in the Filipinos people have constructed a triumph of nationalism. He wins in every discourse arena. Anti-United States, anti-democracy, anti-free market, and anti-liberal capitalism make Duterte as a populist leader loved by his people. Survey shows that the Filipino people's trust in Duterte is extremely high. Duterte's discourse has implications for the destruction of the Filipino people's trust in the great Western discourse. By using his populist discourse, Duterte was able to gain the Filipinos people support. The discursive hegemony is "pivot to China, change is coming, anti-democracy, anti-United States, and anti-drug trafficking.” Since Duterte is supported by the majority of the Filipinos people, every data scientifically ensures that

the level of perception and confidence of the Filipino people has shifted to China. Domestic conditions, confidence to global economic leadership, and international situations support for Duterte's discourse.

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