

From Mr Duterte's perspective, criticism of human rights abuses was the biggest source of friction in the relationship. While the US under Mr Trump need not endorse these policies, it must find a way to work more closely with Manila as an unwavering friend and ally.

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President Obama's "pivot" to Asia, later rebranded as a "rebalance", has failed in its objective of reassuring allies, checking America's relative decline and slowing China's rise in the region. Rearmament in the Philippines and Mr Duterte's embrace of Beijing and Moscow are evidence of that.

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Mr Trump has a genuine opportunity to reinforce America's presence in Asia and confirm its role as a guarantor of stability and peace. There is a possibility however that he will do the opposite and allow his dealmaking instincts to upset the balance. The consequences of that would be a much riskier region, vulnerable to conflagration.

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