

# Cautious Optimism and the 2025 Philippine Midterm Elections

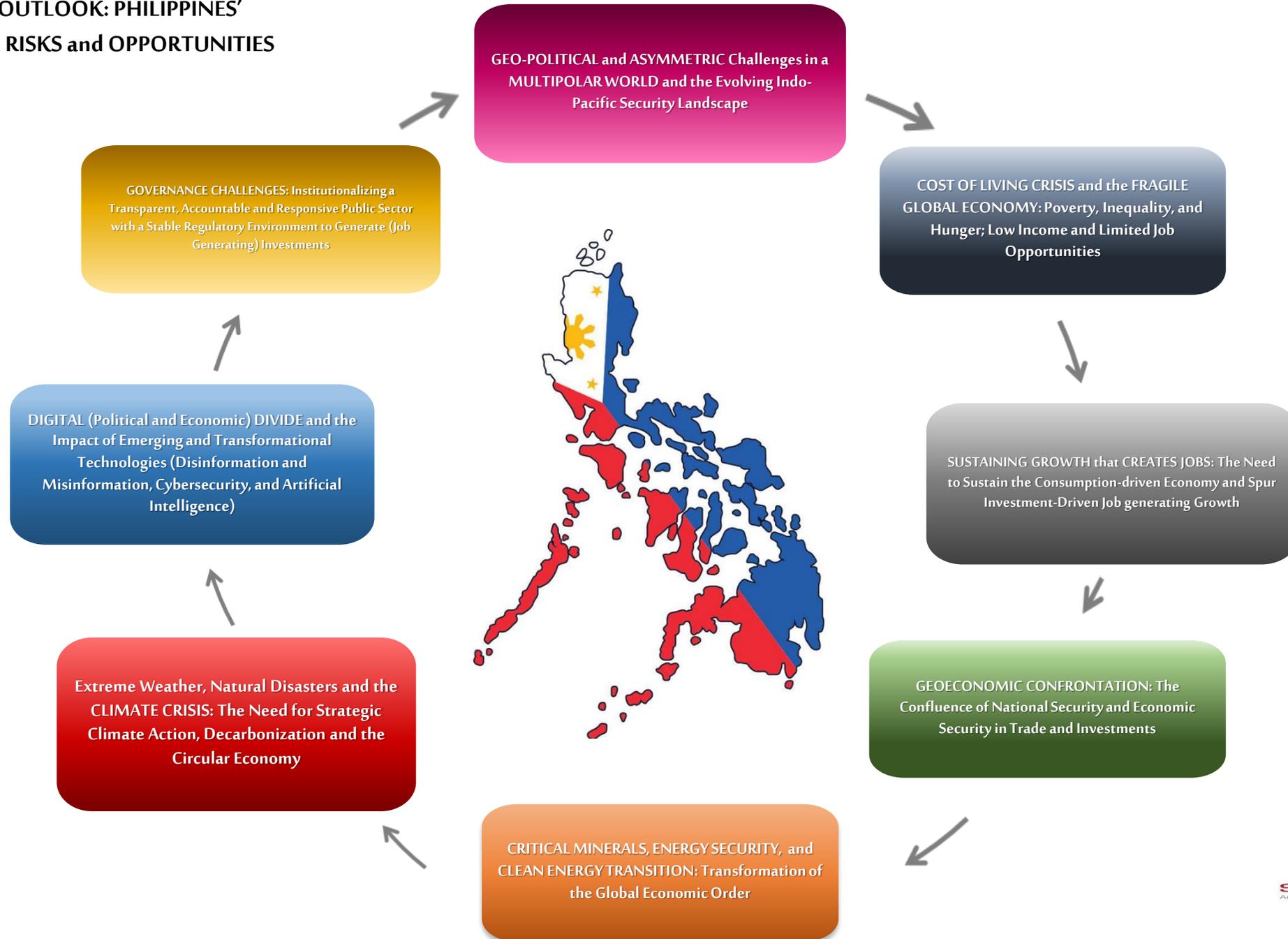
**Prof. Victor Andres “Dindo” Manhit**

*Founder and CEO*

Stratbase Group

# 2025 GEOSTRATEGIC OUTLOOK: PHILIPPINES'

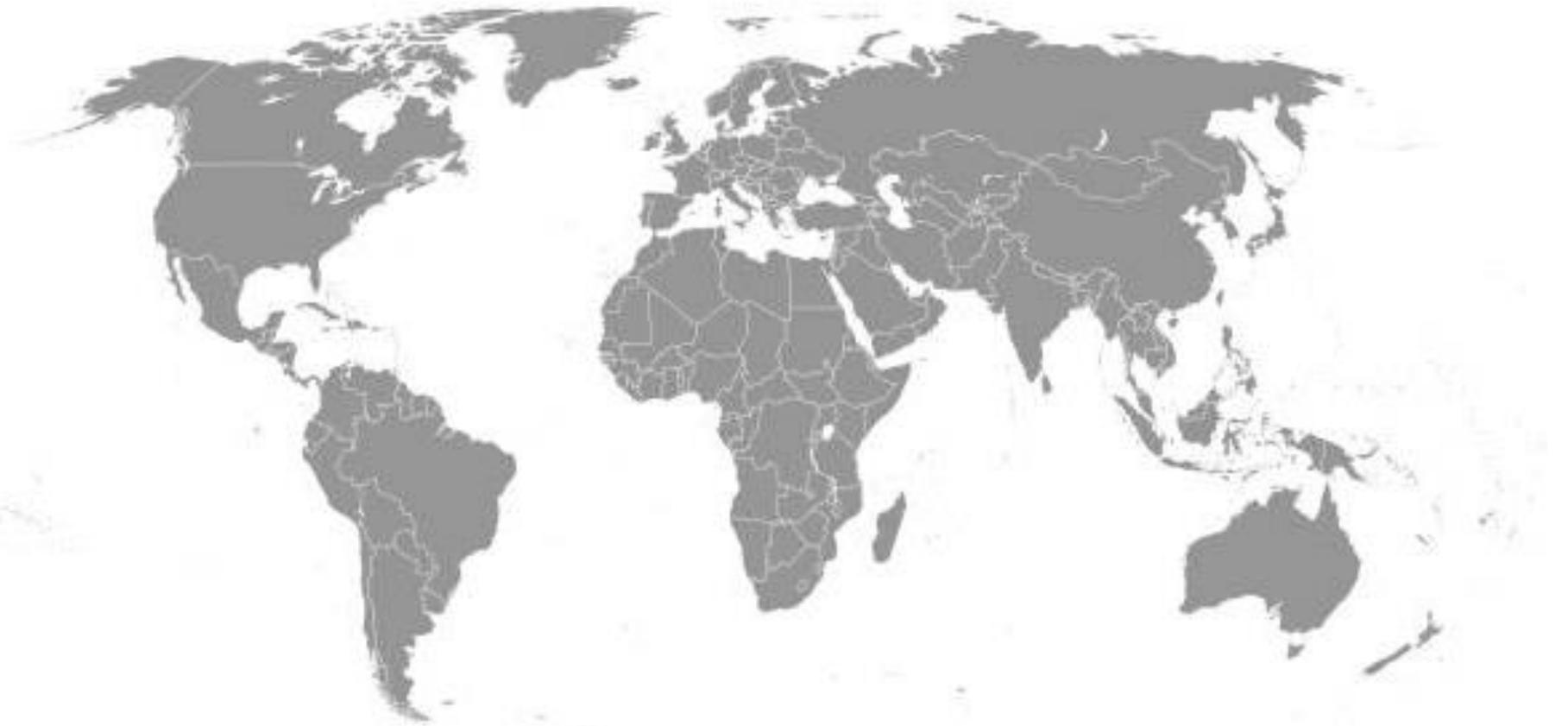
## EIGHT GEOPOLITICAL RISKS and OPPORTUNITIES



# THE WORLD IN 2025

*Trump 2.0, Rise of Populism, Illiberal  
Democracy, and Anti-Immigration  
Sentiments*

*Continuing Wars in the Middle East,  
Russia's Invasion of Ukraine, China's  
Hegemonic Aspirations, and North Korea's  
Nuclear Threat*



## The World in 2025

**Global Dis-order or a Complex and Competitive Geopolitical Architecture:** China's aggressive rise and Russia's violent disruptions, aggressive rogue states: Iran and North Korea



**Strategic Importance of the Philippines in the Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific:**

*Maritime Security and Rise of the QUAD +, AUKUS, and the Trilaterals, Supply Chains Diversification, Data Connectivity, Critical Minerals and the Green Transition*

## 2025 GDP Projection



Rank	Country	Rank	Country
1	United States	16	Indonesia
2	China	17	Turkey
3	Germany	18	Netherlands
4	Japan	19	Saudi Arabia
5	India	20	Switzerland
6	United Kingdom	21	Poland
7	France	22	Taiwan
8	Italy	23	Belgium
9	Canada	24	Sweden
10	Brazil	25	Ireland
11	Russia	26	United Arab Emirates
12	South Korea	27	United Arab Emirates
13	Australia	28	Singapore
14	Spain	29	Austria
15	Mexico	30	Israel
		31	Thailand
		32	Philippines
		33	Norway
		34	Vietnam
			Malaysia

Source: International Monetary Fund (as of January 2025)

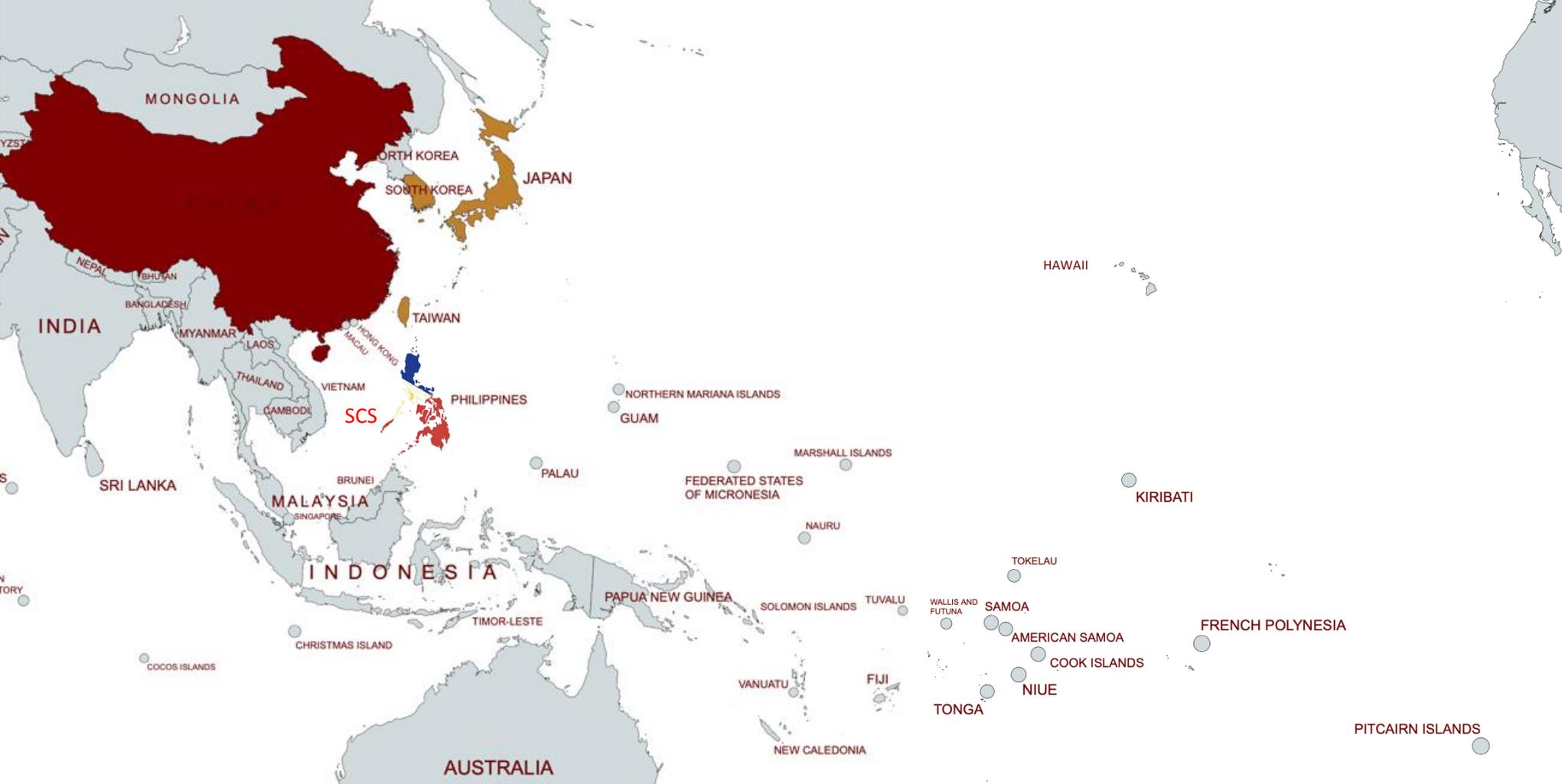
According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Philippines is expected to become the **28th largest economy by 2029**, from the **32nd largest economy today**.

S&P Global Market Intelligence says that the Philippines GDP is forecast to reach **USD 1 trillion** in 2033.

### The G7 Countries + EU and its Allies.

The Expansion of BRICS and its Evolution into a Geopolitical Bloc but with India and Indonesia Playing a Neutral Role

# China's hegemonic aspirations and the China Dream

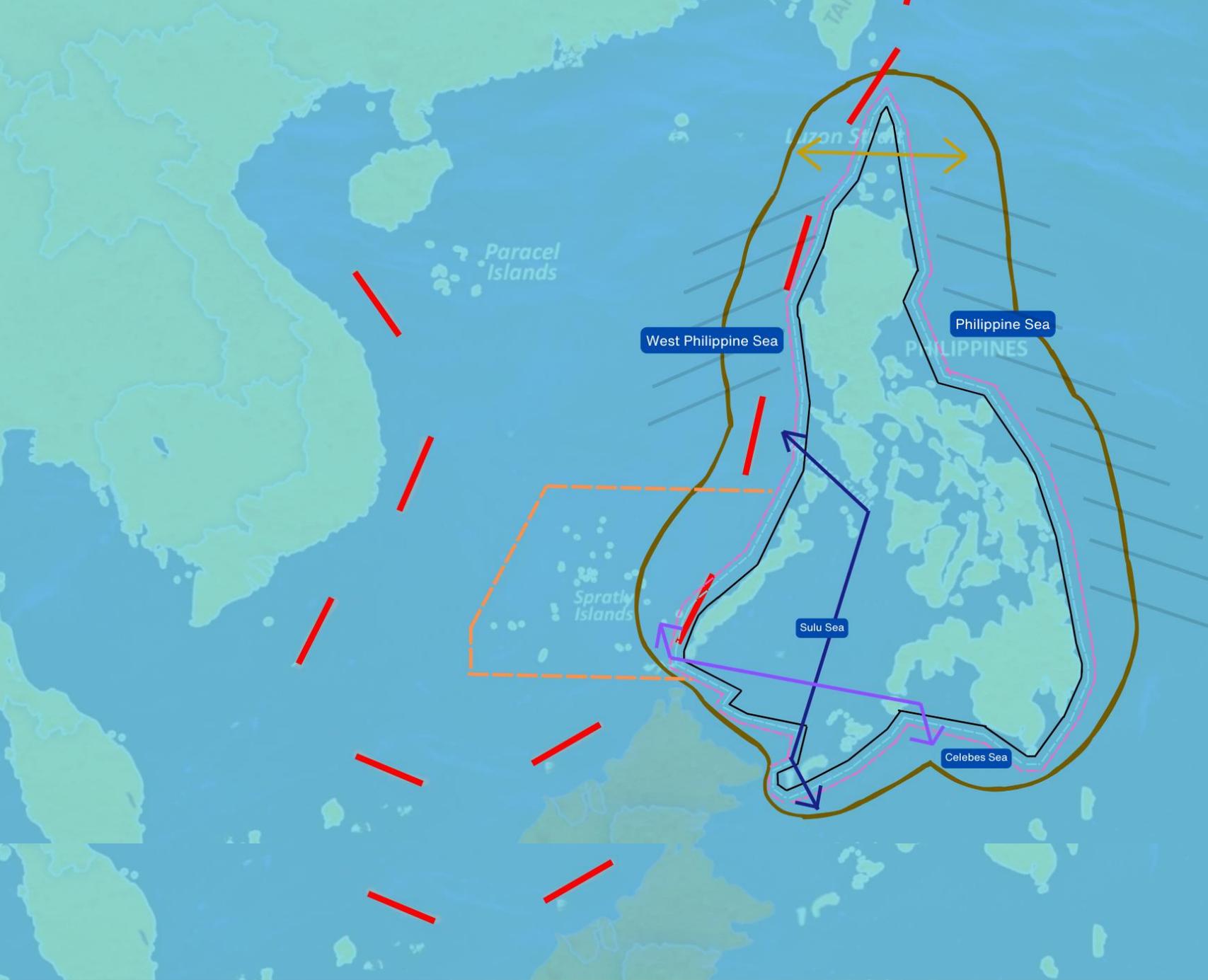


ASEAN under Beijing's Shadow; Expansionism in East Asia... and ambitions towards the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Islands?

## 2016 Arbitral Ruling

China's claims to historic rights, or other sovereign rights or jurisdiction, with respect to the maritime areas of the South China Sea encompassed by the relevant part of the 'nine-dash line' are **contrary to the Convention** and without lawful effect to the extent that they exceed the geographic and substantive limits of China's maritime entitlements under the Convention. The Tribunal also declares that the **Convention superseded any historic rights, or other sovereign rights or jurisdiction**, in excess of the limits imposed therein.

On China's historic rights claim, the Arbitral Tribunal upheld the Philippine position that the **nine-dashed line cannot serve as legal basis to claim any maritime entitlement** (territorial sea, EEZ or ECS) under UNCLOS. In short, **"there is no legal basis for any Chinese historic rights, or sovereign rights and jurisdiction beyond those provided for in the Convention in the waters of the South China Sea encompassed by the 'nine-dash line.'"**



## LEGEND

- ..... China's 10-Dash Line
- Philippine EEZ (200 NM)
- Philippine Archipelagic Baselines (RA)
- ..... Territorial Sea (12 NM)
- ..... Contiguous Zone (24 NM)
- ..... Kalayaan Group of Islands

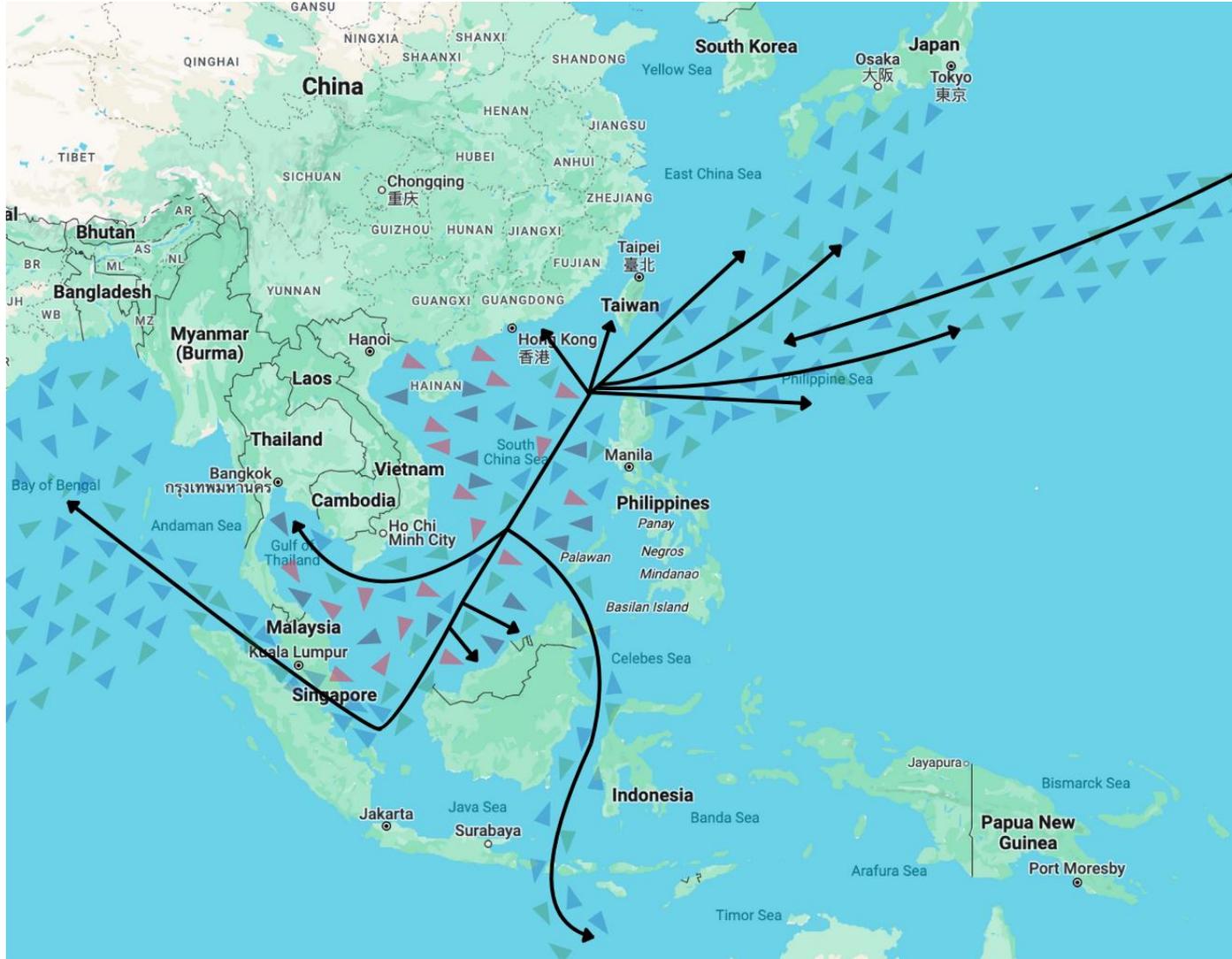
## ARCHIPELAGIC SEA LANES ACT

- Philippine Sea - Balintang Channel - West Philippine Sea
- Celebes Sea - Sibutu Passage - Sulu Sea - Cuyo East Pass - Mindoro Strait - West Philippine Sea
- Celebes Sea - Basilan Strait - Sulu Sea - Nasubata Channel - Balabac Strait - West Philippine Sea

## MARITIME ZONES ACT

- West Philippine Sea
- Philippine Sea
- Sulu Sea
- Celebes Sea

The Maritime Zones Act covers the four main bodies of water in the Philippines.



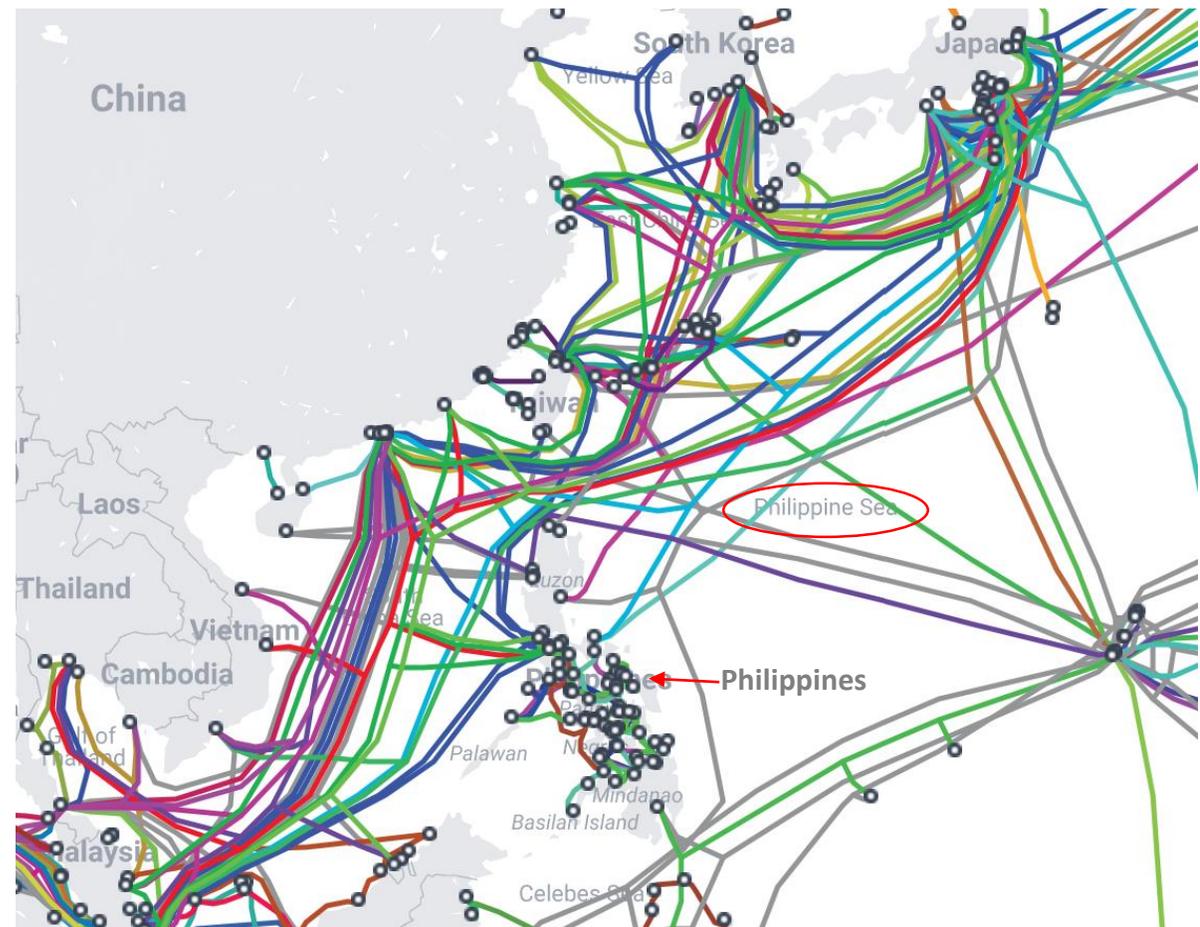
Asia remained the world-leading maritime freight area with Asian ports, in both developed and developing regions, loading around 4.6 billion tons of goods, or about 42% of total goods loaded in ports worldwide and receiving 7.1 billion tons, equivalent to 64% of total goods discharged worldwide. A significant portion of trade passes through the **Malacca Strait, South China Sea and West Philippine Sea**, which makes these strategic waterways vital for the economy of the Indo-Pacific region. More than \$5 trillion in trade flows through its waters each year, one-third of all global maritime commerce.

**Map:** Generated by Stratbase ADR Institute from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Handbook of Statistics 2023. Retrieved from [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tdstat48\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tdstat48_en.pdf)

The **Philippine Seas** serve as a **home to submarine cables** that connect major economic players such as the **United States, European Union, and Japan** among others. Any **disruptions or instability in the West Philippine Sea** not only jeopardize the country's connectivity but also **hinder the seamless flow of information and trade**, impeding economic development and cooperation in the region.

**Geopolitical tensions and climate imperatives** (energy-intensive nature of submarine cables) are complicating the laying of cost-effective **subsea cable routes** in the Indo-Pacific.

They **imperil the physical backbone of the internet** that underlies trade and the modern interconnected economy.



Source: TeleGeography – Submarine Cable Map (as of February 2025)

**ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO)**  
**(January 2025)**

Economy	Gross Domestic Product (Percent year-on-year)				
	2023 (Actual)	AREO 2024 October Update		AREO 2024 January Update	
		2024 <sup>f</sup>	2025 <sup>f</sup>	2024 <sup>f</sup>	2025 <sup>f</sup>
<b>ASEAN+3</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.2</b>
ex. Lao PDR and Myanmar	–	–	–	–	–
<b>Plus-3</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>4.0</b>
China	5.2	5.0	5.1	5.0	4.8
Hong Kong, China	3.3	3.3	3.0	2.7	2.6
Japan	1.5	0.5	1.4	0.1	1.3
Korea	1.4	2.5	2.0	2.2	1.9
<b>ASEAN</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>4.8</b>
Ex. Lao PDR and Myanmar	–	–	–	–	–
Brunei Darussalam	1.4	4.0	2.1	5.0	3.0
Cambodia	5.0	5.6	5.9	5.7	5.8
Indonesia	5.0	5.1	5.2	5.1	5.1
Lao PDR	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.6
Malaysia	3.6	4.7	4.9	5.1	4.7
Myanmar	3.5	1.8	2.0	3.2	1.0
<b>The Philippines</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>6.3</b>
Singapore	1.1	2.4	2.0	4.0	2.7
Thailand	1.9	2.8	3.3	2.8	3.1
Vietnam	5.0	6.2	6.6	7.1	6.5

- According to the latest Quarterly Update of the **ASEAN+3 Regional Economic Outlook (AREO)** released in **January 2025**, the Philippine economy is estimated to have grown 5.8% in 2024, and is **projected to grow** a further **6.3% in 2025**.
- **Firm private consumption**, alongside **improvement in investment** has continued to anchor growth, with external demand providing additional lift to growth.

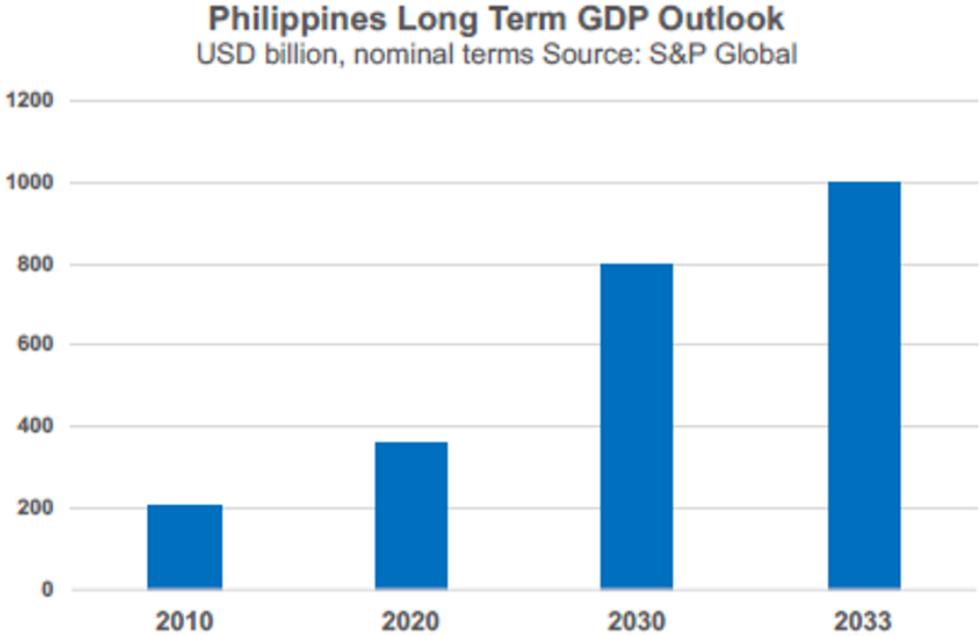
According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Philippines is expected to become the **28th largest economy by 2029**, from the 32nd largest economy today.



Global ranking in economic size			
	2024	2029	+/-
Malaysia	36	35	1
Singapore	29	31	-2
Vietnam	34	30	4
Philippines	33	28	5
Thailand	30	33	-3
Indonesia	16	16	0

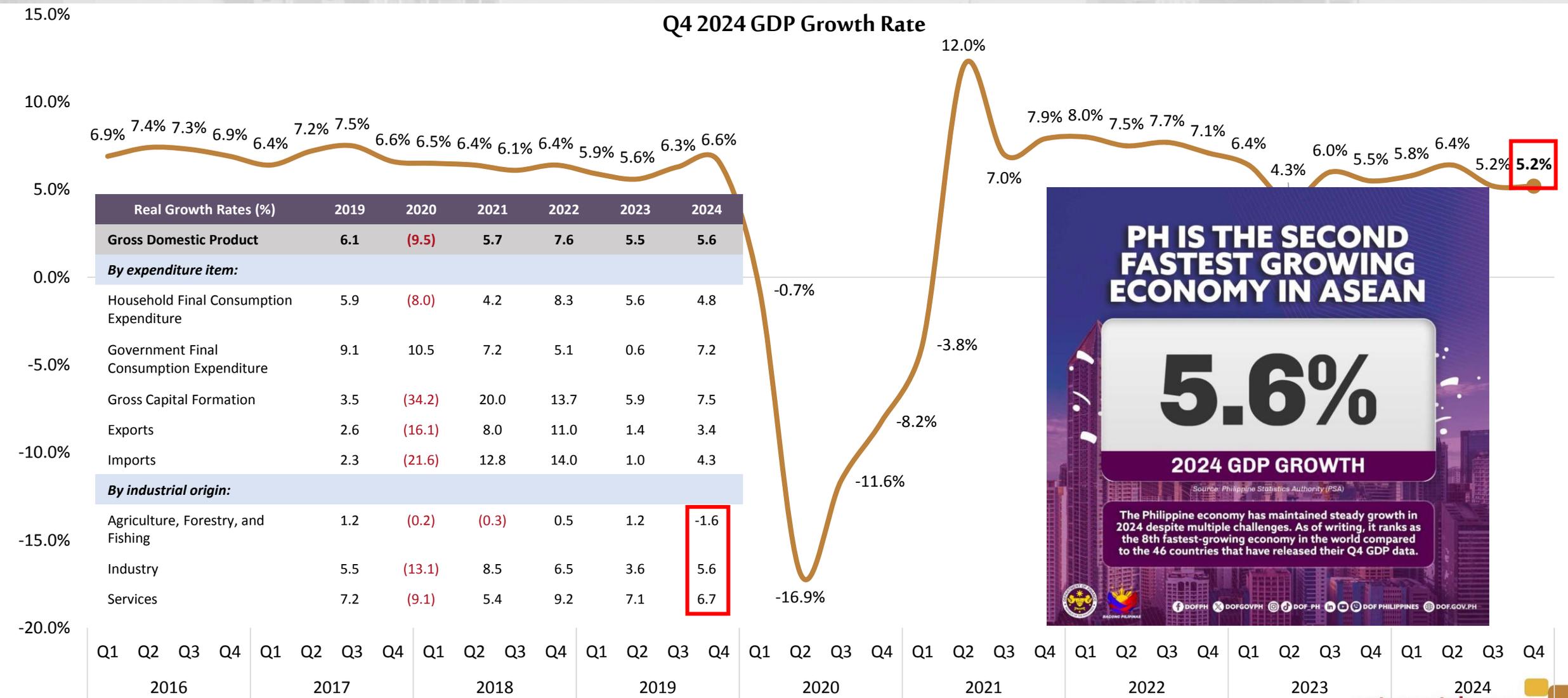
Source: IMF, Macrobond, HSBC

## S&P Global Market Intelligence



➤ Philippines GDP is forecast to reach USD 1 trillion in 2033.

# SUSTAINING GROWTH that CREATES JOBS: The Need to Sustain the Consumption-driven Economy and Spur Investment-Driven Job generating Growth



Real Growth Rates (%)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Gross Domestic Product</b>	6.1	(9.5)	5.7	7.6	5.5	5.6
<b>By expenditure item:</b>						
Household Final Consumption Expenditure	5.9	(8.0)	4.2	8.3	5.6	4.8
Government Final Consumption Expenditure	9.1	10.5	7.2	5.1	0.6	7.2
Gross Capital Formation	3.5	(34.2)	20.0	13.7	5.9	7.5
Exports	2.6	(16.1)	8.0	11.0	1.4	3.4
Imports	2.3	(21.6)	12.8	14.0	1.0	4.3
<b>By industrial origin:</b>						
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing	1.2	(0.2)	(0.3)	0.5	1.2	-1.6
Industry	5.5	(13.1)	8.5	6.5	3.6	5.6
Services	7.2	(9.1)	5.4	9.2	7.1	6.7

**PH IS THE SECOND FASTEST GROWING ECONOMY IN ASEAN**

**5.6%**

**2024 GDP GROWTH**

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)

The Philippine economy has maintained steady growth in 2024 despite multiple challenges. As of writing, it ranks as the 8th fastest-growing economy in the world compared to the 46 countries that have released their Q4 GDP data.

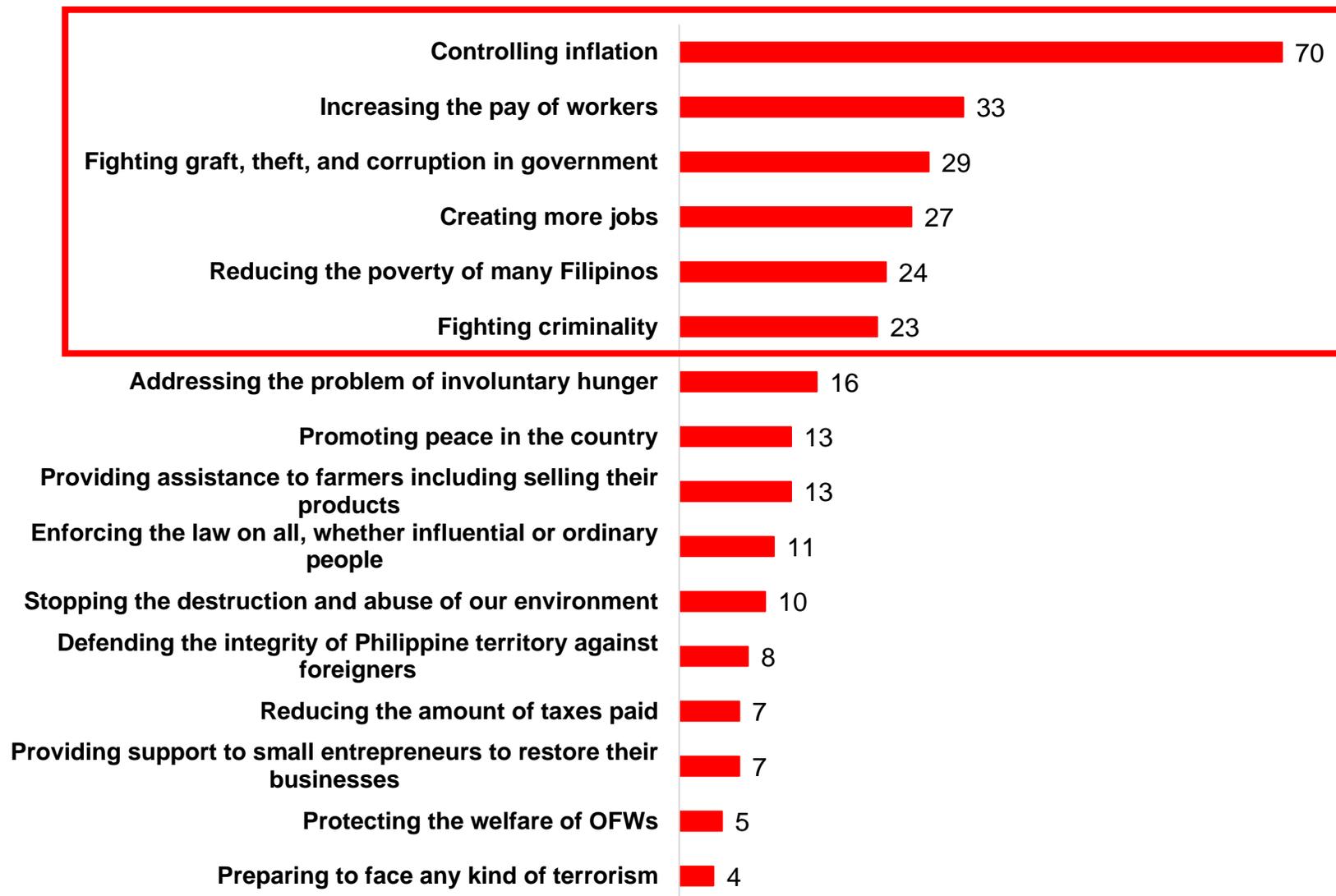
DOFPH DOFGOVPH DOF.PH DOF PHILIPPINES DOF.GOV.PH

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)



## Most Urgent National Concerns

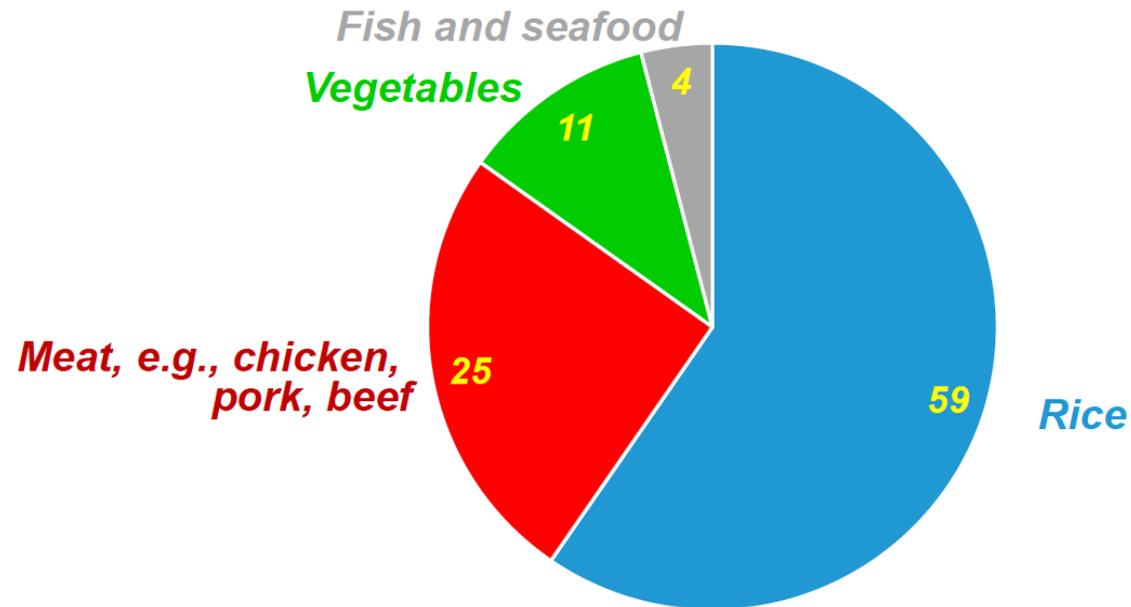
January 2025 / Philippines  
(in Percent/Multiple Response, up to 3 allowed)



For the first quarter of 2025, **seven out of ten Filipinos** or 70% remain to be **greatly concerned about controlling inflation**. 36% are concerned about **increasing the pay of workers**, while 27% are concerned about **creating more jobs**.

**Fighting graft and corruption** and **fighting criminality** have also risen to be a top concern of the the Filipino people as of January 2025.

## 59% FELT MOST SIGNIFICANT PRICE INCREASE IN RICE OVER THE PAST THREE MONTHS: PHILIPPINES, JAN 2025



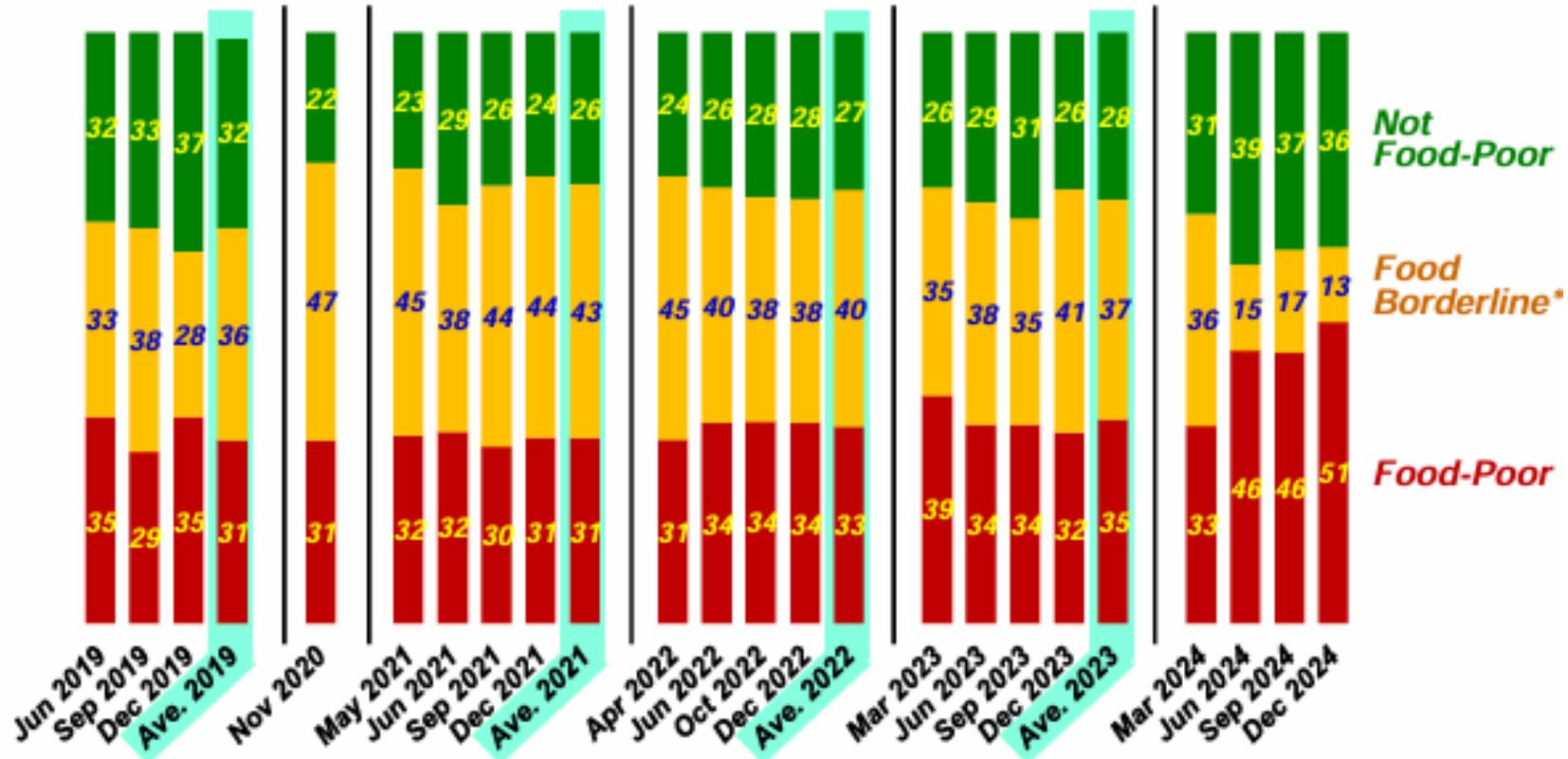
Note: Don't know and Refused responses are not shown.

Q. Sa nakaraang tatlong buwan, alin sa mga sumusunod na pagkain ang pinaka-nadama ninyo ang pagtaas ng presyo?  
(SHOW CARD, ONE ANSWER ONLY: Bigas; Karne, halimbawa, manok, baboy, baka; Isda at iba pang lamang dagat; Gulay)

Commissioned by Stratbase Consultancy.

As of January 2025, **rice** remains to be the **top food item** which Filipinos feel has had the **most significant price increase** over the past three months – with nearly **6 out of 10 Filipinos** agreeing on this.

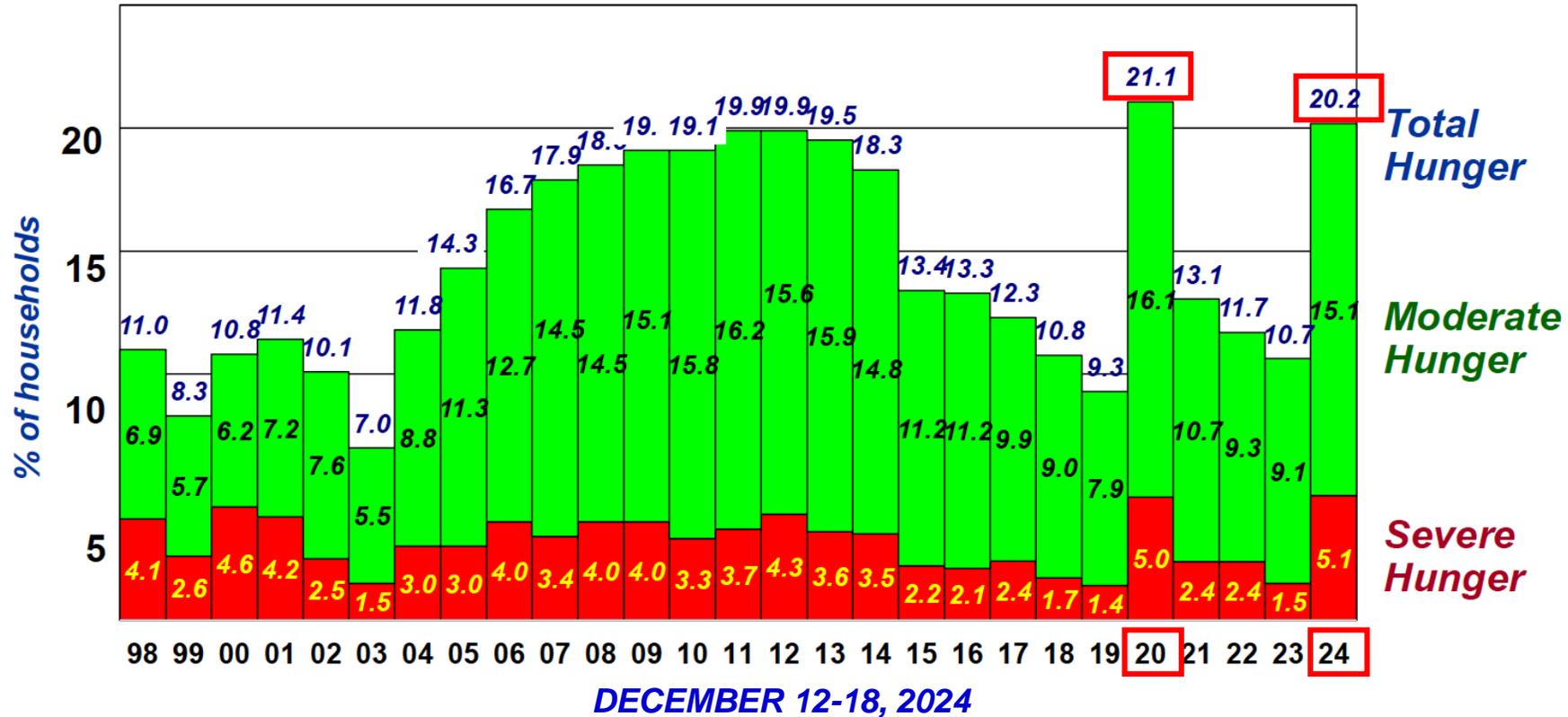
## SELF-RATED FOOD POVERTY: FAMILIES WHOSE FOOD IS “MAHIRAP”: PHILIPPINES, JUN 2019 TO DEC 2024



December 12-18, 2024

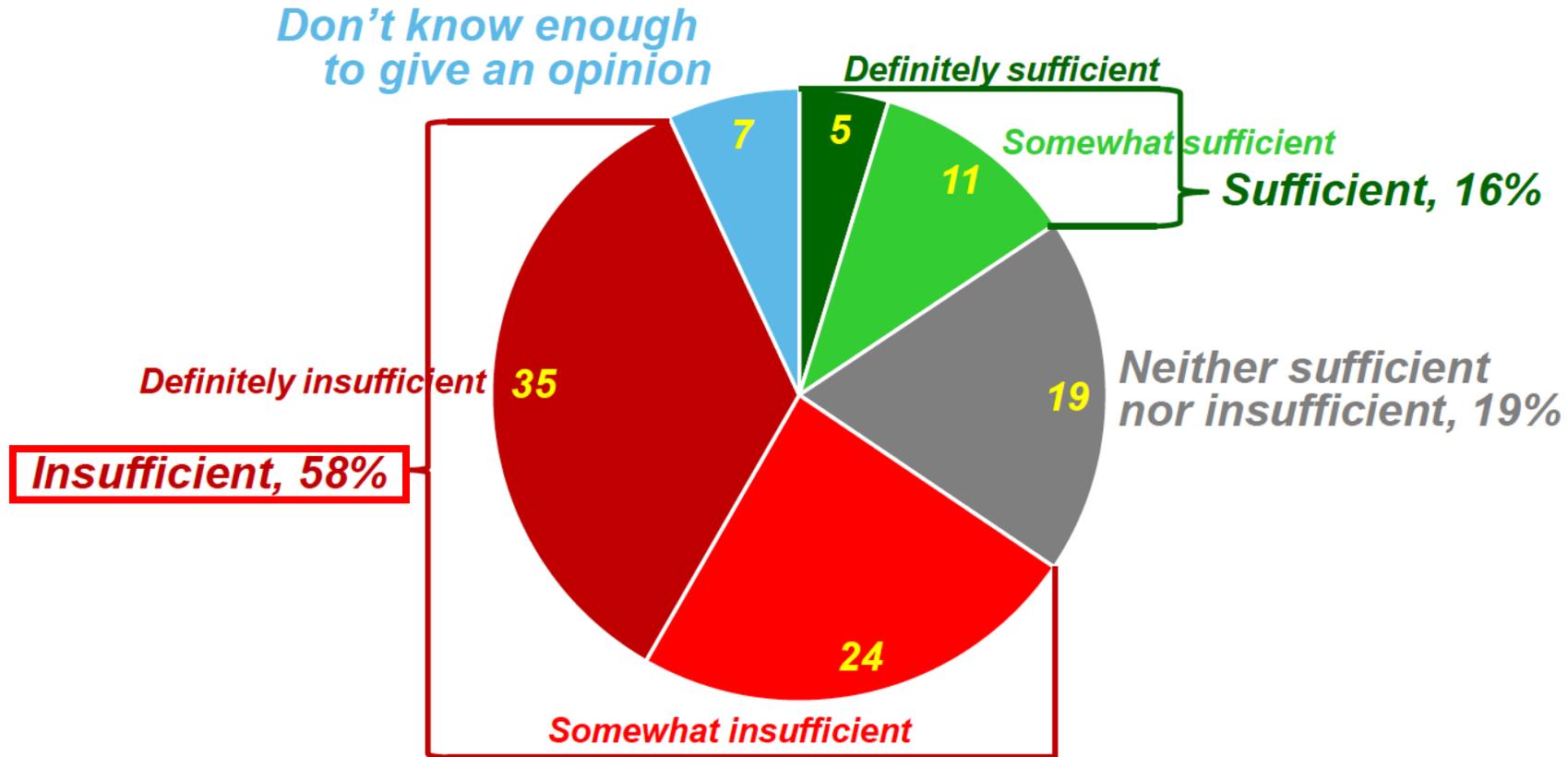
The estimated number of Self-Rated Food-Poor families was **14.1 million** in December 2024. This was the **highest in over 20 years**, since the 51% in March 2004.

## TOTAL, MODERATE, AND SEVERE HUNGER, PHILIPPINES, ANNUAL AVERAGES



Hunger in the country went up to 25.9% in December 2024 from the recorded 22.9% in September 2024. 25.9% of Filipino families experienced involuntary hunger.

# 58% CONSIDERED THE ADMINISTRATION'S SOLUTION TO INFLATION TO BE INSUFFICIENT: PHILIPPINES, JAN 2025



Note: Figures may not add up due to rounding error.

Q. Sa inyong palagay, ang ibinigay bang solusyon ng Administrasyong Marcos upang malutas ang pagtaas ng presyo ng mga bilihan at serbisyo o 'inflation' ay (SHOW CARD: Talagang sapat, Medyo sapat, Hindi sapat at hindi rin kulang, Medyo kulang, Talagang kulang, o Hindi sapat ang inyong kaalaman upang magbigay ng opinion)?

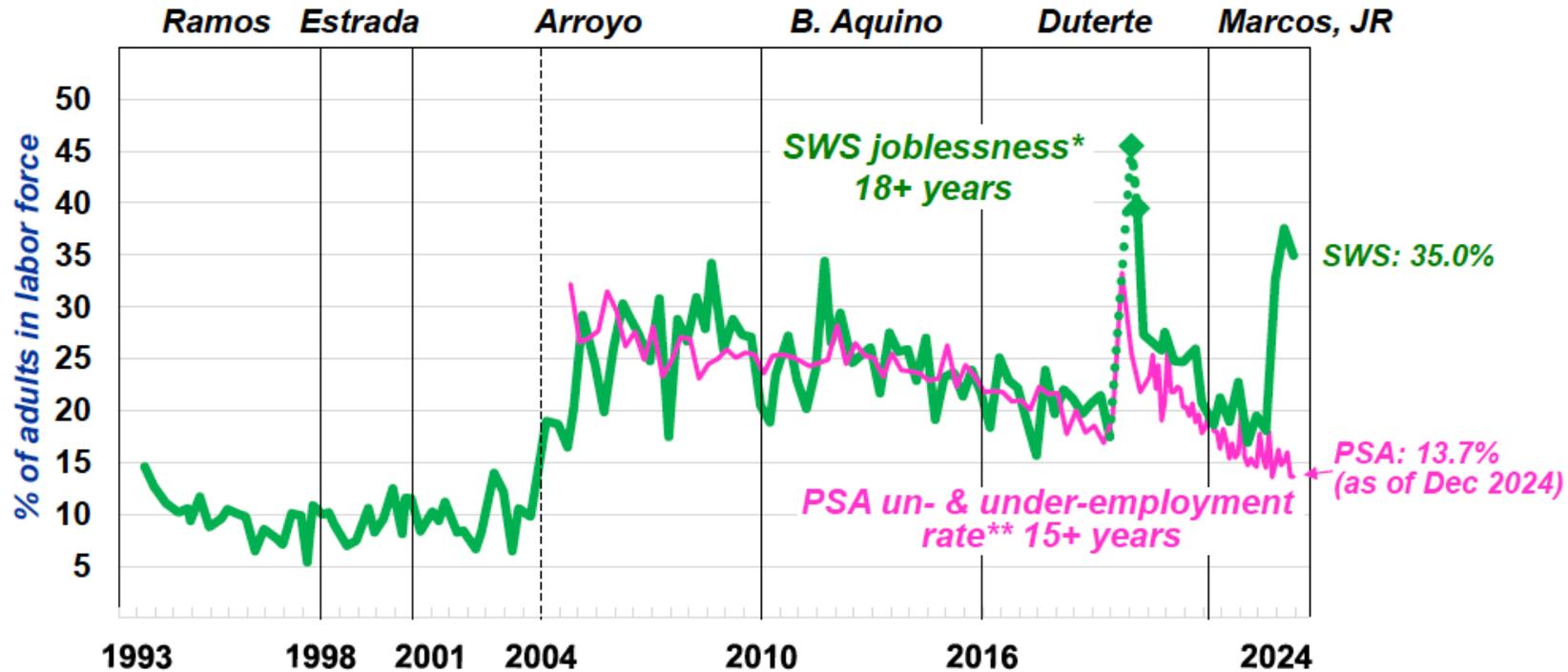
Commissioned by Stratbase Consultancy.

## COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE RATINGS OF THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION ON SELECTED NATIONAL ISSUES

September and November 2024 / Philippines  
(In Percent)

Selected National Issues	Approval		Change*	Undecided		Change*	Disapproval		Change*
	PR1&2		Nov24	PR1&2		Nov24	PR1&2		Nov24
	Sep 24 (A)	Nov 24 (B)	minus Sep24 (B - A)	Sep 24 (C)	Nov 24 (D)	minus Sep24 (D - C)	Sep 24 (E)	Nov 24 (F)	minus Sep24 (F - E)
Protecting the welfare of OFWs	65	60	- 5	24	31	+ 7	10	9	- 1
Responding to the needs of areas affected by calamities	59	57	- 2	32	33	+ 1	9	10	+ 1
Defending the integrity of Philippine territory against foreigners	47	50	+ 3	34	35	+ 1	18	16	- 2
Promoting peace in the country	47	42	- 5	36	36	0	17	23	+ 6
Fighting criminality	42	37	- 5	37	39	+ 2	21	24	+ 3
Stopping the destruction and abuse of our environment	40	40	0	41	39	- 2	19	21	+ 2
Enforcing the law on all, whether influential or ordinary people	39	35	- 4	45	45	0	17	20	+ 3
Providing assistance to farmers including selling their products	36	40	+ 4	41	37	- 4	23	23	0
Creating more jobs	28	23	- 5	40	40	0	31	37	+ 6
Addressing the problem of involuntary hunger	21	20	- 1	42	44	+ 2	37	36	- 1
Increasing the pay of workers	21	19	- 2	41	36	- 5	38	45	+ 7
Fighting graft and corruption in government	18	16	- 2	38	40	+ 2	44	45	+ 1
Reducing the poverty of many Filipinos	14	13	- 1	39	38	- 1	47	50	+ 3
Controlling inflation	2	2	0	17	16	- 1	81	82	+ 1

## SWS JOBLESSNESS RATE ROSE SHARPLY BY MID-2024: PHILIPPINES, SEP 1993 TO DEC 2024



According to the Philippine Statistics Authority in December 2024, the unemployment rate decreased to 3.1%. The underemployment rate slightly rose to 10.9%, with 5.48 million people.

\* % of the Labor Force without a job at present and looking for a job.

\*\* % of the Labor Force unemployed and underemployed.

Note: All points connected by broken lines are from mobile phone surveys. Face-to-face interviewing resumed in November 2020.

Sources: Social Weather Surveys and Philippine Statistics Authority

**DECEMBER 12-18, 2024**

**AWARENESS OF SELECTED GOVERNMENT SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS AND OPINION ON THEIR HELPFULNESS TO UNDERPRIVILEGED FILIPINOS, PHILIPPINES, JAN 2025**

	Base: Those aware of government social welfare programs						
	<u>Aware</u>	<u>Not aware</u>	<u>Very helpful</u>	<u>Somewhat helpful</u>	<u>Somewhat not helpful</u>	<u>Not at all helpful</u>	<u>Don't know enough</u>
Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)	93%	7%	66%	24%	5%	4%	--
Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD)	84	16	51	37	7	5	--
Ayuda sa Kapos ang Kita Program (AKAP)	70	30	42	39	10	9	--
Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS)	34	66	42	38	12	8	--
Walang Gutom Program (WGP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program	32	68	48	33	12	7	--

In a national survey conducted by **Pulse Asia** on **January 18-25, 2025**, **8 out of 10 Filipinos** believe that **4PS, AKAP, and TUPAD** are **very beneficial** to the overall economic well-being of Filipinos.

**FERDINAND MARCOS JR.**

**AWARENESS, TRUST,  
(JAN 2025) AND SATISFACTION RATINGS (DEC 2024)**

	<u>Aware</u>	<u>Much trust</u>	<u>Und.</u>	<u>Little trust</u>		<u>Satisfied</u>		
						<u>Jun24</u>	<u>Sep24</u>	<u>Dec24</u>
Jul 2024	99%	64%	14%	21%				
Sep 2024	99	57	17	25	Total PH	55%	58%	51%
Dec 2024	98	54	19	25	NCR	57	61	53
<b>Jan 2025</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>26</b>	Bal. Luzon	60	60	60
NCR	98%	52%	24%	24%	Visayas	55	57	50
Bal. Luzon	99	60	20	19	Mindanao	46	52	32
Visayas	99	44	23	31	Urban	52	55	48
Mindanao	99	37	24	36	Rural	60	61	54
ABC	99%	60%	18%	19%	Men	56	58	51
D	99	49	23	27	Women	54	57	51
E	96	53	20	26				

Those with “Much Trust” in President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. **slightly declined** from 54% in December to 50% in January, while those with “Little Trust” **slightly increased** at 26%.

Those who are **undecided** toward their confidence in the President also **increased from 14%** in July **to 22%** in January.

Results show that the President’s trust rating in **Mindanao increased**, where the number of people with “Much Trust” in his leadership went up from 33% in December to 37% in January.

## SARA DUTERTE

### **AWARENESS, TRUST, (JAN 2025) AND SATISFACTION RATINGS (DEC 2024)**

	<u>Aware</u>	<u>Much trust</u>	<u>Und.</u>	<u>Little trust</u>		<u>Satisfied</u>		
						<u>Jun24</u>	<u>Sep24</u>	<u>Dec24</u>
Jul 24	99%	65%	13%	21%	Total PH	65%	57%	52%
Sep 24	98	55	16	27	NCR	59	51	39
Dec 24	98	52	17	29	Bal. Luzon	56	47	41
<b>Jan 25</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	Visayas	66	55	58
NCR	97%	36%	24%	39%	Mindanao	82	82	79
Bal. Luzon	98	33	25	41	Urban	64	55	51
Visayas	99	55	20	23	Rural	65	59	54
Mindanao	100	78	11	10	Men	61	55	50
ABC	98%	40%	27%	31%	Women	68	58	55
D	99	50	20	29				
E	98	47	20	32				

Compared within the six-month period of July to December, it can be noted that those with “Much Trust” in Duterte **significantly went down by 16%** from 65% in July to 49% in January.

Consequently, those who have “Little Trust” in the Vice President **increased from 21% in July to 30% in January**, while those who are undecided also climbed from 13% in July to 20% in December.

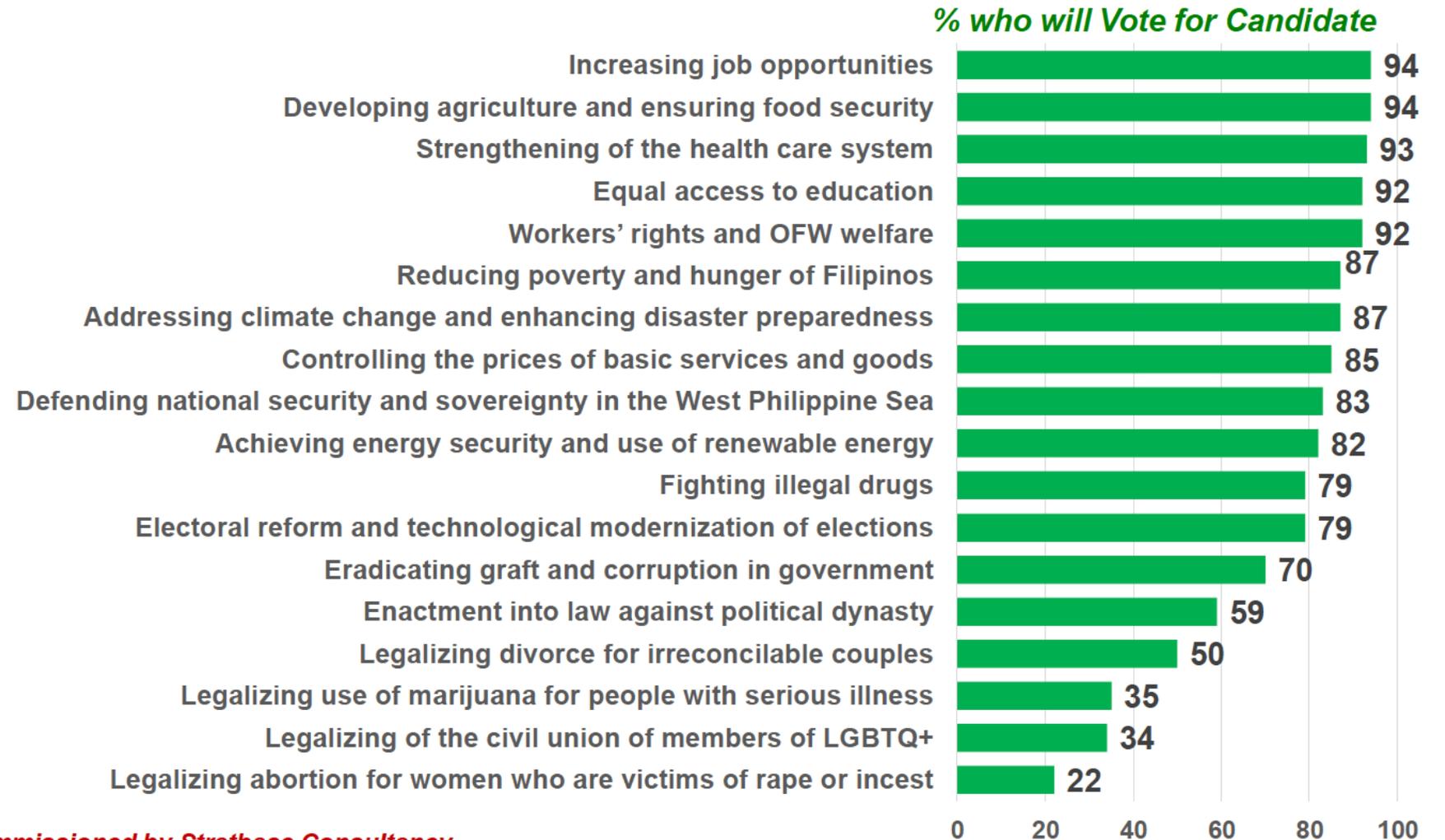
Survey results also reveal that the **massive erosion in Duterte’s trust** was mostly concentrated in the **National Capital Region, Balance Luzon, and South Luzon**.



# Issues Going Into 2025 Elections

## **JOBS, FOOD SECURITY, AND HEALTH TOP VOTERS' PREFERRED ADVOCACIES FOR A CANDIDATE: PHILIPPINES, JAN 2025**

The issues of **job creation, food security, and strengthening the health care system** are the three outstanding components of a platform that should be advocated for the 2025 elections.



**Commissioned by Stratbase Consultancy.**

## WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE GOING TO SUPPORT A PRO-CHINA CANDIDATE IN THE MAY 2025 NATIONAL ELECTIONS

September 6 - 13, 2024 / Philippines  
(In Percent)

Base: Those who are registered voters in their city/municipality, 91%								
<i>Are you going to support a candidate in the May 2025 national elections who is PRO-CHINA at present or in the past?</i>	RP	LOCATION				CLASS		
		NCR	BL	VIS	MIN	ABC	D	E
Will support	5	3	3	2	10	10	5	2
Will not support	73	83	65	85	74	72	73	74
Cannot say	23	14	32	14	16	18	23	24

Contextualized by the persistent aggression perpetrated by China in the West Philippine Sea and its penetration into the various domains of Philippine society, the **rejection of pro-China candidates** in the **May 2025 national elections** are at **73%**. Only 5% of Filipinos say they “will support” a pro-China candidate, while 23% are ambivalent.

In a national SWS survey as of **January 2025**, **83% of Filipinos would vote** for a candidate that advocates for **defending national security and sovereignty in the West Philippine Sea**.

**ONE'S CHOICE BETWEEN CANDIDATES WITH OPPOSING STANCES TOWARD THE WEST  
PHILIPPINE SEA ISSUE, FEB 2025**

	<u>PH</u>	<u>NCR</u>	<u>Bal Luz</u>	<u>N Luz</u>	<u>C Luz</u>	<u>S Luz</u>	<u>Vis</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Urban</u>	<u>Rural</u>
A candidate who <u>believes</u> that the Philippines must assert our rights against China's aggressive actions in the West Philippine Sea	78%	87%	83%	77%	85%	85%	76%	67%	82%	75%
A candidate who <u>does not believe</u> that the Philippines must assert our rights against China's aggressive actions in the West Philippine Sea	22	13	17	23	15	15	24	33	18	25

**MOST HELPFUL SOURCES OF NEWS OR INFORMATION IN CHOOSING  
CANDIDATES WHOM THEY WILL VOTE FOR IN THE MAY 2025 ELECTIONS: OVERALL**

January 18 - 25, 2025 / Philippines

(In Percent / Multiple Response, up to 3 allowed)

<i>Base: Total interviews*, 100%</i>								
<i>Of the following, which will be most helpful to you in <u>choosing whom to vote for in the elections of May 2025?</u> Which is the second most helpful? And the third?</i>	RP	LOCATION				CLASS		
		NCR	BL	VIS	MIN	ABC	D	E
<b>News about a candidate</b>	<b>86</b>	93	82	89	88	93	87	73
On TV	62	73	66	59	52	68	65	31
On the internet	44	55	37	50	47	56	44	40
Social media	44	55	36	50	46	56	43	40
Facebook	40	53	33	45	43	47	40	38
YouTube	14	17	12	14	16	27	12	14
TikTok	2	2	2	2	5	6	2	3
X/Twitter	1	0	1	0	1	2	1	0
Instagram	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Online news sites	2	2	2	2	3	0	2	0
Internet podcasts	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
On radio	20	14	15	27	26	15	20	24
In the newspaper	1	2	1	3	0	2	1	0
<b>Candidate's participation in discussions or debates</b>	<b>39</b>	40	54	26	21	43	39	34
On TV	33	36	48	22	12	36	34	24
On the internet	6	6	7	3	6	6	6	6
On radio	3	0	5	1	4	2	3	5
<b>Commercials / ads</b>	<b>36</b>	32	33	41	39	33	37	29
On TV	27	28	26	32	24	24	29	13
On the internet	6	5	6	3	7	7	5	8
On radio	5	1	2	6	10	3	5	9
On newspaper or magazine	0.3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

**SOURCES OF NEWS: OVERALL**  
 January 18 - 25, 2025 / Philippines  
 (In Percent / Multiple Response, up to 3 allowed)

<i>Base: Total Interviews*, 100%</i>								
	LOCATION					CLASS		
	<u>RP</u>	<u>NCR</u>	<u>BAL</u> <u>LUZ</u>	<u>VIS</u>	<u>MIN</u>	<u>ABC</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>
<b>TELEVISION</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>54</b>
National	79	90	88	77	59	87	82	51
Local	9	0	5	15	16	5	10	6
<b>RADIO</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>34</b>
National	19	8	30	8	11	13	20	11
Local	17	0	7	30	32	14	16	24
<b>NEWSPAPER</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Broadsheet</i>	1	0	0	2	0	2	0	1
National	0.5	0	0	1	0	2	0	0
Local	0.2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
<i>Tabloid</i>	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Local	0.03	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>INTERNET</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>68</b>
Online news sites	4	2	7	0	3	5	4	1
Facebook	74	82	73	75	70	72	75	66
X / Twitter	1	1	1	0	2	6	0	1
YouTube	37	58	32	37	37	51	36	32
Other social media sites	4	3	6	2	5	2	5	5
<b>Family / Relatives</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Friends / Acquaintances</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>31</b>

## WHETHER OR NOT THE NUMBER OF SENATORIAL CANDIDATES CHOSEN BY THE RESPONDENT MAY STILL CHANGE

January 18 - 25, 2025 / Philippines  
(In Percent)

Base: Total Interviews*, 100%								
<i>Could we know if the number of candidates you will be voting for as senator may still change? IF YES, will it increase or decrease?</i>	RP	LOCATION				CLASS		
		NCR	BL	VIS	MIN	ABC	D	E
		<b>Yes, it will still change</b>	<b>45</b>	53	63	27	25	57
It will increase	39	46	54	21	22	47	39	33
It will decrease	3	1	4	3	3	7	3	4
I don't know yet if it will increase or decrease	3	5	4	3	0	3	3	3
I don't know yet if it will change or not change	18	16	15	21	24	15	18	20
The number will not change	7	6	3	10	12	2	8	8
The number will not change but some names might change	29	25	20	42	39	26	30	31

## 2025 ELECTIONS: SENATORIAL PREFERENCES

January 18 - 25, 2025 / Philippines  
(Multiple Responses, up to 12 names allowed)

Base: Total Interviews*, 100%			
	Aware	Voting for	Rank
TULFO, ERWIN (LAKAS)	99	62.8	1
GO, BONG GO (PDPLBN)	99	50.4	2-3
SOTTO, TITO (NPC)	99	50.2	2-4
TULFO, BEN BITAG (IND)	97	46.2	3-8
CAYETANO, PIA (NP)	98	46.1	4-8
BONG REVILLA, RAMON, JR. (LAKAS)	98	46.0	4-8
MARCOS, IMEE R. (NP)	100	43.3	4-12
LACSON, PING (IND)	99	42.4	4-12
REVILLAME, WILLIE WIL (IND)	98	41.9	7-13
DELA ROSA, BATO (PDPLBN)	100	41.2	7-14
BINAY, ABBY (NPC)	96	41.1	7-14
PACQUIAO, MANNY PACMAN (PFP)	97	40.6	7-14
VILLAR, CAMILLE (NP)	93	38.4	9-14
LAPID, LITO (NPC)	99	37.7	10-14
PANGILINAN, KIKO (LP)	98	29.1	15-16
AQUINO, BAM (KNP)	96	27.4	15-18
HONASAN, GRINGO (RP)	92	25.2	16-18
ABALOS, BENHUR (PFP)	85	24.8	16-18
ONG, DOC WILLIE (AKSYON)	93	20.2	19-21
TOLENTINO, FRANCIS TOL (PFP)	87	19.3	19-21
SALVADOR, PHILLIP IPE (PDPLBN)	93	18.4	19-21
BOSITA, COLONEL (IND)	36	12.5	22-24
MARCOLETA, RODANTE (IND)	52	12.5	22-24
SINGSON, MANONG CHAVIT (IND)	83	11.4	22-24
BONDOC, JIMMY (PDPLBN)	43	4.6	25-27
QUERUBIN, ARIEL PORFIRIO (NP)	46	3.7	25-29
RODRIGUEZ, ATTY. VIC (IND)	13	3.6	25-29
QUIBOLOY, APOLLO (IND)	90	3.0	26-31
DE GUZMAN, KA LEODY (PLM)	18	2.5	26-40
MONTEMAYOR, JOEY (IND)	6	2.2	28-45
CASTRO, TEACHER FRANCE (MKBYN)	18	1.9	28-47
CASIÑO, TEDDY (MKBYN)	28	1.7	29-48
MENDOZA, HEIDI (IND)	13	1.7	29-48
RAMOS, DANILO (MKBYN)	6	1.6	29-51
GONZALES, NORBERTO (PDSP)	17	1.6	29-51
TAPADO, MICHAEL BONGBONG (PM)	7	1.5	29-51

## VOTER PREFERENCE FOR SENATORS FOR THE 2025 ELECTIONS, TOTAL PHILIPPINES, DEC 2024 TO FEB 2025

NAME	DEC 2024		JAN 2025		FEB 2025	
	RANK	%	RANK	%	RANK	%
* Tulfo, Erwin (LAKAS)	1	45	1	45	1	45
Go, Bong Go (PDPLBN)	3-4	32	3-4	37	2	38
* Lapid, Lito (NPC)	11	23	3-4	37	3	36
* Sotto, Tito (NPC)	5	31	2	38	4-5	34
Tulfo, Ben Bitag (IND)	6	30	6	34	4-5	34
* Bong Revilla, Ramon, Jr. (LAKAS)	2	33	11-13	29	6-7	33
* Cayetano, Pia (NP)	3-4	32	7-8	33	6-7	33
* Lacson, Ping (IND)	7	27	5	35	8-9	32
Dela Rosa, Bato (PDPLBN)	12-14	21	10	30	8-9	32
* Pacquiao, Manny Pacman (PFP)	8-9	26	7-8	33	10-12	30
* Binay, Abby (NPC)	10	25	9	31	10-12	30
Revillame, Willie Wil (IND)	8-9	26	11-13	29	10-12	30
* Villar, Camille (NP)	12-14	21	15	26	13	29
* Marcos, Imee R. (NP)	12-14	21	14	28	14	24
Pangilinan, Kiko (LP)	15	20	11-13	29	15	22
* Abalos, Benhur (PFP)	16-17	17	18-19	19	16	17
Aquino, Bam (KNP)	16-17	17	16-17	20	17	16
* Tolentino, Francis Tol (PFP)	19-20	14	20-21	13	18	15
Salvador, Phillip Ipe (PDPLBN)	21	10	20-21	13	19-20	14
Honasan, Gringo (RP)	18	15	18-19	19	19-20	14
Bosita, Colonel (IND)	23	8	22	11	21-22	10
Marcoleta, Rodante (IND)	24	6	23	7	21-22	10
Bondoc, Jimmy (PDPLBN)	26-27	3	25-26	4	23	7

# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

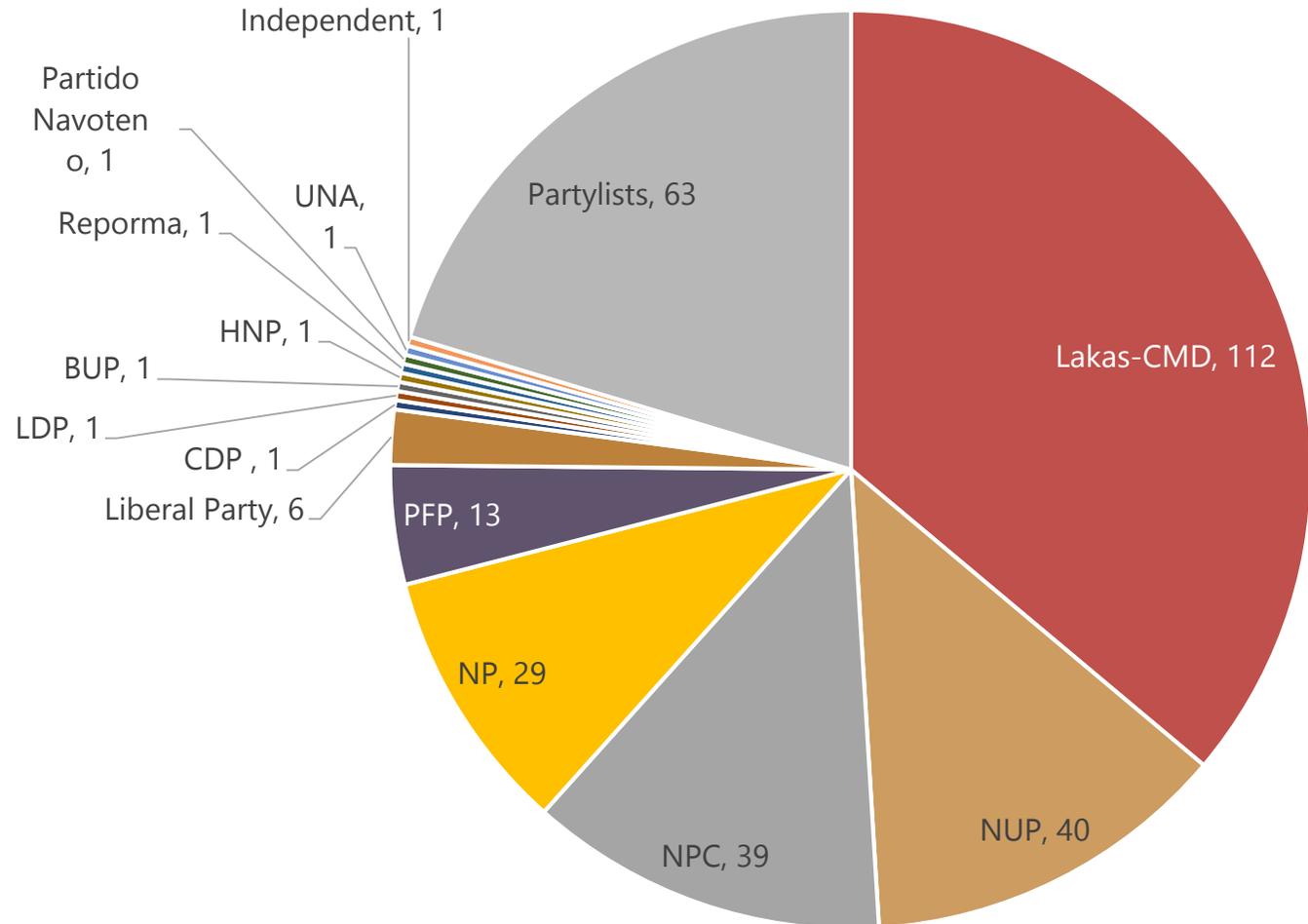
*as of January 2025*

**Martin Romualdez**  
*Speaker of the House*  
*Representative, Leyte 1<sup>st</sup> District*

**Tobias "Toby" Tiangco**  
*District Representative*  
*City Of Navotas, Lone District*

There are **63 Partylist representatives** (53 Partylist Groups)

Supportive of the Speaker: 56



## Key Reform Legislations Passed in the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress

1. Ease of Paying Taxes Act
2. Real Property Valuation and Assessment Reform Act
3. CREATE MORE (Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises-Maximize Opportunities for Reinvigorating the Economy) Act
4. Amendments to the Government Procurement Reform Act
5. Anti-Financial Accounts Scamming Act
6. Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act
7. Amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law
8. VAT on Digital Services
9. Enterprise-Based Education and Training Framework Act
10. Philippine Natural Gas Industry Development Act
11. Self-Reliant Defense Posture Revitalization Act
12. Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act
13. Philippine Maritime Zones Act
14. Internet Transactions Act (2023)
15. Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Code of the Philippines (2023)

## Bills Near Passage

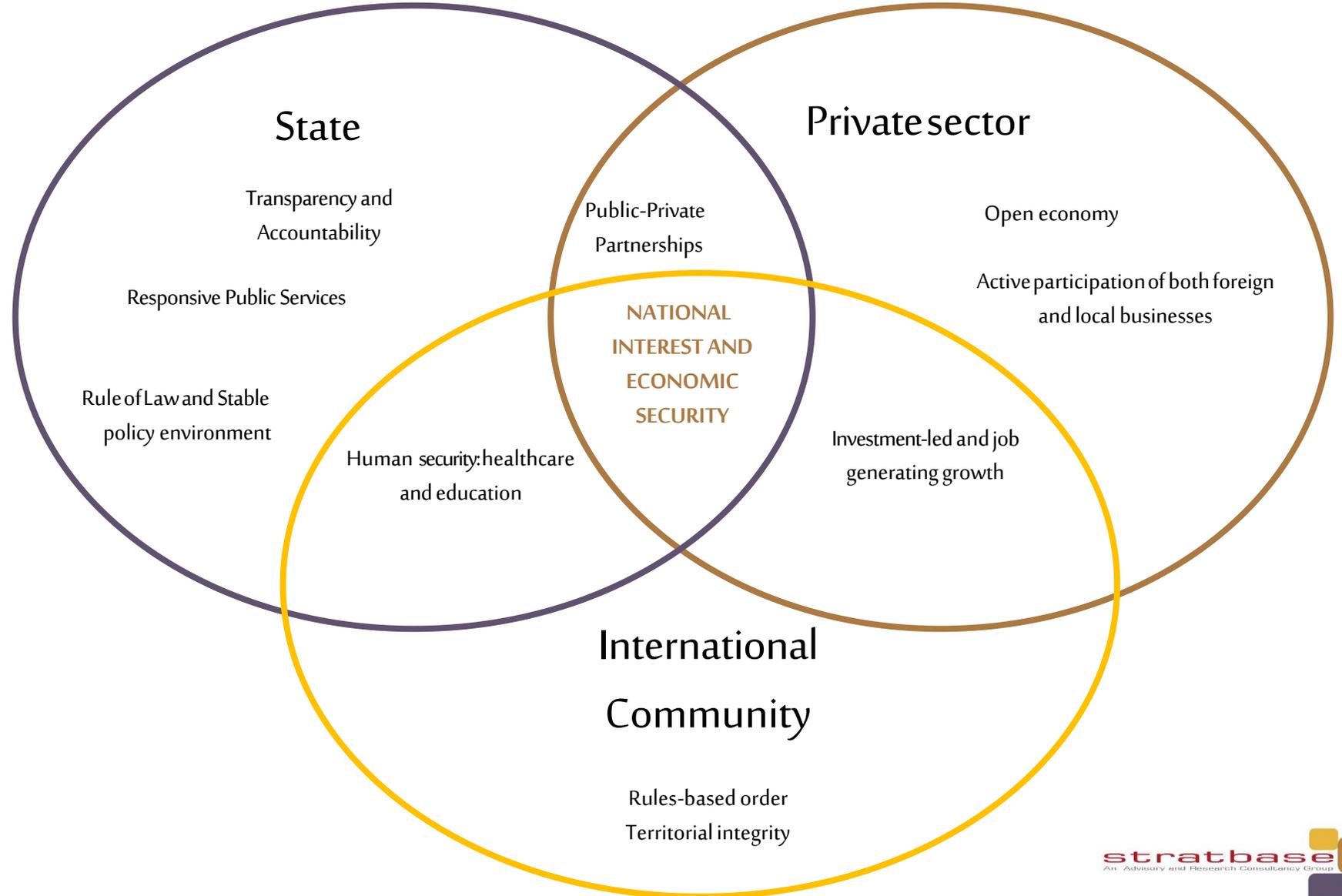
1. Amendments to the Foreign Investors' Long-Term Lease Act *(for Bicameral discussion)*
2. Blue Economy Act *(for Bicameral discussion)*
3. Economy, Planning, and Development Act *(Passed by both Houses, Bicameral Conference Committee Report ratified)*
4. Capital Markets Efficiency Promotions Act *(Passed by both Houses, Bicameral Conference Committee Report ratified)*
5. E-Government Act / E-Governance Act *(for Bicameral discussion)*
6. Rationalization of the Mining Fiscal Regime *(for Bicameral discussion)*
7. Open Access in Data Transmission Act *(for Bicameral discussion)*
8. Virology Act of the Philippines *(for Bicameral discussion)*
9. Amendments to the Universal Health Care Act *(for Bicameral discussion)*
10. Accelerated and Reformed Right-of-Way (ARROW) Act *(pending in the Senate)*
11. New Government Auditing Code *(pending in the Senate)*
12. Department of Water Resources *(pending in the Senate)*

# Geopolitical and Geo-economic Opportunities and the Need for Strategic Collaboration to Sustain Economic Growth in 2025

---

**Navigating  
an Increasingly  
Complex  
Geostrategic  
Landscape: Derisking,  
Diversifying and  
Deglobalization**

---



# Thank you!

*Cautious Optimism and the 2025 Philippine Midterm Elections*



## 2022

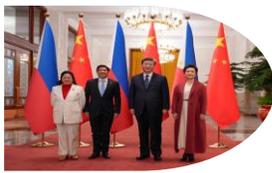


**September 21:** President Marcos Jr. gave a speech at the **UN General Assembly** where he met with **US President Joe Biden**, **France President Emmanuel Macron**, **British Prime Minister Liz Truss**, **South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol**, and **Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida** at the sidelines.

**November 20-22:** **US Vice President Kamala Harris** visited the Philippines and did a **historic visit to Palawan** as the **first US official to visit the area**. She **reaffirmed the US' commitment** to stand with the Philippines.



## 2023



**January 3-5:** President Marcos Jr.'s state visit to **China**, where he met with **President Xi Jinping** who agreed to establish **direct communications channel** between their foreign ministries to handle South China Sea disputes peacefully

**July 31:** President Marcos Jr. received **European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen**, who pledged **European Union's** enhanced cooperation on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific



**February 2:** President Marcos Jr. received **US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin** for a courtesy call to discuss and sign the **Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA)**

**August 29:** President Marcos Jr. received **UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly** to discuss the new **UK-Philippines Enhanced Partnership**, which covers deepening defense and security ties



**February 8-12:** President Marcos Jr.'s state visit to **Japan**, where he signed terms of reference on **humanitarian** assistance and disaster relief activities between the **Japan Self-Defense Forces** and the **Armed Forces of the Philippines**

**September 8:** President Marcos Jr. received **Prime Minister Anthony Albanese** and signed a **strategic partnership agreement** to expand existing defense and maritime cooperation with **Australia**



**April 30-May 4:** President Marcos Jr.'s state visit to the **United States**, where he met **President Biden**, who reaffirmed their **ironclad alliance commitments** to the Philippines

**September 28:** President Marcos Jr. and **French President Emmanuel Macron** tackled **West Philippine Sea security issues** in a phone call





**October 16:** Canada agreed to lend its dark vessel detection system to the Philippines for free for 5 years to enhance the Philippines' maritime domain awareness in its EEZ.

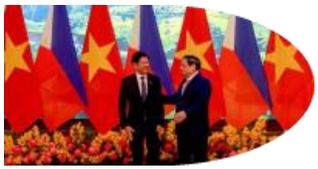


**December 15-18:** President Marcos Jr. attended the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit in Japan, where he met with Prime Minister Kishida. Both agreed to fast-track conclusion of the Reciprocal Access Agreement negotiations and signed a memorandum of cooperation between the two nations' coast guards.

## 2024



**January 10:** President Marcos Jr. received Indonesian President Joko Widodo. During this bilateral meeting, both leaders agreed to strengthen border and defense cooperation, including the buying and selling of defense equipment.



**January 29-30:** President Marcos Jr.'s state visit to Vietnam, where he signed agreements on incident prevention and management in the South China Sea and maritime cooperation between the two nations' coast guards.



**February 28-29:** President Marcos Jr.'s state visit to Australia, where he signed with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese agreements focused on enhancing cyber and maritime security cooperation.



**March 4-6:** President Marcos Jr. attended the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit, where he urged state leaders to address security challenges collectively and respect the rules-based international order.

**November 3:** President Marcos Jr. received Japanese Prime Minister Kishida, who assured Japan's continued cooperation on defense equipment and technology and maritime security capacity building.



**November 20:** President Marcos Jr. visited the US Indo-Pacific Command and met with Admiral John Aquilino who provided a base operational overview and discussed regional security cooperation.



**March 11-13:** President Marcos Jr.'s working visit to Germany, where he met with Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who assured Germany's continued support and commitment to bolstering maritime cooperation with the Philippines.



**March 14-15:** President Marcos Jr.'s state visit to the Czech Republic where he met with President Petr Pavel, who expressed continued support for the AFP modernization program.



**March 19:** President Marcos Jr. received Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who assured the United States' commitment to the Mutual Defense Treaty and expressed confidence in the future of Philippines-US relations under the Marcos administration.





**March 24:** India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar firmly reiterated India's support to the Philippines during his trip to the Philippines.



**April 18:** President Marcos Jr. received New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon with both agreeing to elevate the countries' bilateral ties to a Comprehensive Partnership by 2026, deepening their defense and trade relationship



**May 16:** Norwegian State Secretary Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik visited Manila and had a closed-door luncheon with government and military officials. He affirmed that Norway supports a rules-based international order.



**June 3:** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited the Philippines and met with President Marcos Jr. where he thanked country's support following Russia's invasion of Ukraine then announced the opening of a Ukrainian embassy in the capital.



**June 6:** Sweden's Defense Minister Pål Jonson engaged in bilateral discussions with Sec. Teodoro. He also highlighted the interconnectedness of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific security and Sweden's increased involvement in the latter region.



**July 8:** Japan and the Philippines' Foreign and Defense Ministers met for the Second Japan-Philippines Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting ("2+2"). The Ministers reviewed progress in security and defense cooperation, including the Japan-Philippines Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA).

**July 30:** The US and the Philippines' Foreign and Defense Ministers met in Manila for the 4th Philippine-U.S. 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue. Discussions included the US' commitment to increase investments in EDCA locations and allocation of USD500 million in foreign military financing to the Philippines, which will support the modernization of the Philippines' Armed Forces and Coast Guard.



**August 4:** German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius and Philippine Defense Minister Gilberto Teodoro committed to signing a defense cooperation arrangement this year, vowing to uphold international rules-based order in the region as tensions flare over in the West Philippine Sea.



**September 5:** Polish Foreign Minister and Former Defense Minister Radosław Tomasz Sikorski visits the Philippines and gives a statement officially supporting the rules-based international order with the Philippines.



**September 6:** The Italian Navy's carrier strike group shared naval aviation best practices with the Philippine Navy during a goodwill visit to Manila.



**September 14:** The Italian Navy's Amerigo Vespucci, a 93-year old training ship on a global voyage, docked in Manila for a five-day goodwill visit.



**September 17:** Two German naval ships, FGS Baden-Württemberg and FGS Frankfurt am Main, docked in the ports of Manila for a four-day visit, the first in over 20 years, as part of their Indo-Pacific Deployment 2024.

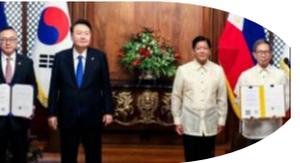




**September 25:** American and Philippine officials have agreed to indefinitely station a **US mid-range missile system in northern Philippines** to enhance deterrence against China. The system includes Tomahawk and Standard Missile-6 missiles capable of reaching over 1,000 miles.



**September 28:** Combined armed and defense forces from the **Philippines, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States** conducted a **maritime patrol in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of Manila** the same day that China announced it was holding a naval drill near Bajo de Masinloc (Scarborough or Panatag Shoal).



**October 7:** **South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol** conducts a state visit to Manila, the first by a South Korean president since 2011. He signed a **maritime cooperation agreement** and vowed to aid with the modernization of the military.



**October 8:** President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. signed the **Self-Reliant Defense Posture (SRDP) Revitalization Act** to boost the Philippines' defense capabilities through a sustainable national defense industry driven by research, innovation, and public-private collaboration.



**October 8:** The **US Navy, Philippine Navy, and allied forces including Australia, Japan, Canada, and France**, commenced **Exercise Sama Sama 2024** near Subic Bay to strengthen maritime security and interoperability in the Indo-Pacific.



**October 24:** During the culminating activity of **KAMANDAG 2024**, **US and Philippine Marines successfully simulated the defense of Palawan's Apuwaran Beach** against a **West Philippine Sea landing force**.

**November 15:** The **Armed Forces of the Philippines** concluded the **8th AJEX "DAGIT-PA,"** showcasing enhanced interoperability through multi-domain exercises, including the first unilateral training in the West Philippine Sea.



**November 18:** The **Philippines and the US** signed the **General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)** enabling real-time sharing of classified intelligence to strengthen their defense alliance.



**November 19:** **US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin** emphasized the **ironclad US-Philippine mutual defense treaty** and strengthened defense ties during his fourth visit to the Philippines.



**November 21:** The **Philippines and New Zealand** reaffirmed their **defense cooperation** on regional security, disaster response, and upholding a rules-based international order, particularly concerning the West Philippine Sea.



**November 21:** Defense chiefs from the **Philippines, United States, Australia, Japan and South Korea** met in their first five-way dialogue, where they vowed to continue upholding respect for **"international law and sovereignty"** in the region.



**November 23:** **Three U.S. aircraft carriers** will be in **Asia** by next week after months of absence amid concerns of **Chinese activity** in the lead up to the inauguration of **President-elect Donald Trump**. The **USS Carl Vinson** was deployed to the Pacific while the **USS George Washington** was deployed to Japan.



**November 28:** The **G7 countries' foreign ministers** have intensified their criticism of **China's "dangerous" maritime behavior**, naming the **Philippines** as a **target of Chinese vessels' aggression** for the first time in their annual joint statement.





**December 1:** Japan will provide the Philippines with a coastal surveillance radar to enhance ship monitoring amid South China Sea tensions with China. Under the Official Security Assistance framework, Japan will also deliver defense equipment to Mongolia, Djibouti, and Indonesia.



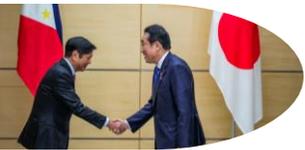
**December 4:** The European Union and the Philippines have agreed to strengthen cooperation in maritime, defense, and cybersecurity through initiatives like the IORIS platform and ESIWA project, while also emphasizing adherence to international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. This marks a step towards addressing hybrid threats and enhancing regional security in the Indo-Pacific.



**December 10:** Japan hosted the inaugural United States-Japan-Philippines Maritime Dialogue in Tokyo, where the three countries discussed regional maritime issues, expressed concerns over China's unlawful behavior in the South China Sea, and reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing trilateral cooperation on maritime security.



**December 11:** Senate Bill 2903, sponsored by Senate President Chiz Escudero, has reached the Senate plenary. It seeks to modernize the Philippine Coast Guard by enhancing capabilities, stabilizing ranks, providing additional benefits, and proposing a fixed three-year term for the commandant to ensure leadership continuity.



**December 16:** The Philippine Senate ratified the Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) with Japan, enabling enhanced military cooperation, joint training, and disaster response efforts, while strengthening defense ties amid shared security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.

**January 5:** Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. and AFP chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. emphasized prioritizing territorial defense and strengthening military capabilities. They also reaffirmed their commitment to protecting national sovereignty and enhancing defense across various platforms.



**January 15:** President Marcos Jr. welcomed Japan's Foreign Minister Iwaya Takeshi at Malacañang, where Iwaya called for stronger security and economic cooperation. Their meeting followed Marcos' recent trilateral call with Japan and the US, reinforcing commitments to a free and rules-based Indo-Pacific.



**January 21:** The US, Australia, India, and Japan reaffirmed their Quad alliance to counter China's influence, strengthen a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, and address regional security, including Taiwan, the South China Sea, and North Korea, while advancing cybersecurity and defense initiatives like AUKUS.



**January 22:** US Secretary of State Marco Rubio reaffirmed America's "ironclad" defense commitment to the Philippines during a call with Foreign Minister Enrique Manalo, condemning China's "dangerous" actions in the South China Sea. This follows increased US-Philippines security cooperation under President Marcos Jr., including expanded military bases and joint maritime exercises, amid growing regional tensions with China.





**January 23:** Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr., together with Philippine Ambassador to the US Babe Romualdez, and newly appointed US National Security Adviser (NSA) Mike Waltz met where they reaffirmed the Philippines' and the US' long-standing alliance and security cooperation.



**January 23:** The French aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* and its escorts will visit the Philippines in February, highlighting growing maritime security ties between the two nations. Ahead of the visit, the carrier is participating in the Le Perouse 2025 exercise, reinforcing France's commitment to regional stability and defense cooperation with Manila.



**January 27:** The Philippines will participate in Talisman Sabre 2025, the largest military exercise in the southern hemisphere, alongside 19 nations to enhance regional defense cooperation. This move reflects the Philippines' growing defense ties with Australia and the U.S., complemented by continued involvement in exercises like ALON and Balikatan.



**January 28:** The Philippine Army will use the US Mid-Range Capability missile system in the upcoming Combined Arms Training Exercise (CATEX) Katihan in February, focusing on training and familiarization. Despite China's concerns, the Philippine military emphasized its right to deploy defense assets as needed.



**February 5:** The Philippines and New Zealand are finalizing a visiting forces agreement, expected to be completed by year-end, amid rising tensions in the South China Sea. This would be the Philippines' fourth such pact, following agreements with the US, Australia, and Japan, as part of efforts to strengthen defense partnerships and address regional security concerns.



**February 5:** Australia, Japan, the Philippines, and the US conducted a Multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity within the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone to enhance cooperation, interoperability, and support for a free and open Indo-Pacific, in line with international law and UNCLOS.



**February 6:** Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro and the United States Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth held a call to align with defense and security priorities for both the US and the Philippines.



**February 7:** U.S. President Donald Trump and Japan Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba reiterated their strong opposition to any attempts by the People's Republic of China (PRC) to change the status quo by force or coercion in the East China Sea. The two leaders reaffirmed their strong opposition to the PRC's unlawful maritime claims, militarization of reclaimed features, and threatening and provocative activities in the South China Sea.



**February 9:** The Philippines and Canada are finalizing a defense pact for troop deployments and joint training, with signing expected by 2025, strengthening military ties amid West Philippine Sea tensions.



**February 12:** The Philippines, US, and Canada will conduct a joint patrol within the Philippine exclusive economic zone (EEZ) to enhance cooperation and interoperability among their armed forces. The activity, held under international law, underscores their commitment to maritime rights and freedom of navigation amid rising tensions in the region.



**February 15:** Philippine Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio met at the Munich Security Conference to discuss strengthening economic and security ties, particularly in response to China's actions in the South China Sea. They also explored cooperation in infrastructure, critical minerals, IT, and energy, while Manila seeks clarity on the impact of the US foreign aid freeze.



**February 16:** The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) strengthened its defense ties with Germany following talks between AFP Chief General Romeo Brawner Jr. and German Defense Chief General Carsten Breuer, focusing on cyber warfare, military training, and maritime cooperation. The partnership aims to enhance interoperability and support regional stability.



**February 17:** The Philippines and Germany agreed to boost military cooperation in cyber warfare, training, and maritime activities at the Munich Security Conference. Meanwhile, the Philippines strengthens defense ties as the Coast Guard monitors China's presence off Zambales.



**February 18:** The Philippines and Japan agreed to strengthen security cooperation against destabilizing actions in the South and East China Seas, reaffirming their commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.



**February 20:** President Marcos Jr. seeks to strengthen the Philippines' economic, defense, and diplomatic ties with the Czech Republic, following discussions with Czech Defense Minister Jana Černochová in Manila. Building on his 2024 visit to Prague, he aims to enhance cooperation in trade, security, renewable energy, and labor, benefiting over 7,000 Filipinos working in the Czech Republic.

**February 20:** The Department of National Defense supports Japan's expanded defense cooperation with ASEAN, as discussed at the 14th Japan-ASEAN Defense Vice-Ministerial Forum in Fukuoka, Japan. The Philippines reaffirmed its commitment to regional security collaboration, highlighting Japan's role in strengthening maritime security, cybersecurity, and other key areas under the JASMINE initiative.



**February 20:** The Philippines and New Zealand have finalized the text of their Status of Visiting Forces Agreement and plan to sign it in the second quarter of 2025. The deal will strengthen defense ties by allowing military exercises in each other's territories, similar to existing agreements with the US and Australia.



**February 21:** Filipino and French forces conducted a Maritime Cooperative Activity in the West Philippine Sea, showcasing military cooperation and strengthening defense capabilities. The exercise, featuring warships, aircraft, and various drills, aimed to enhance interoperability and communication amid rising tensions in the region.



**February 23:** Japanese Defense Minister Gen Nakatani visited La Union to inspect a mobile air surveillance radar system provided under a \$10.65 million security deal with the Philippines. The visit highlights growing defense ties amid regional tensions, with further talks on military cooperation set for February 24.



**March 3:** Military leaders from the Philippines, US, Japan, and Australia met in Taguig City to enhance regional defense cooperation, focusing on interoperability, joint exercises, and information-sharing. The CORE 4 alliance reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening security in the Indo-Pacific, with the next engagement set for May 2025 in Hawaii.

