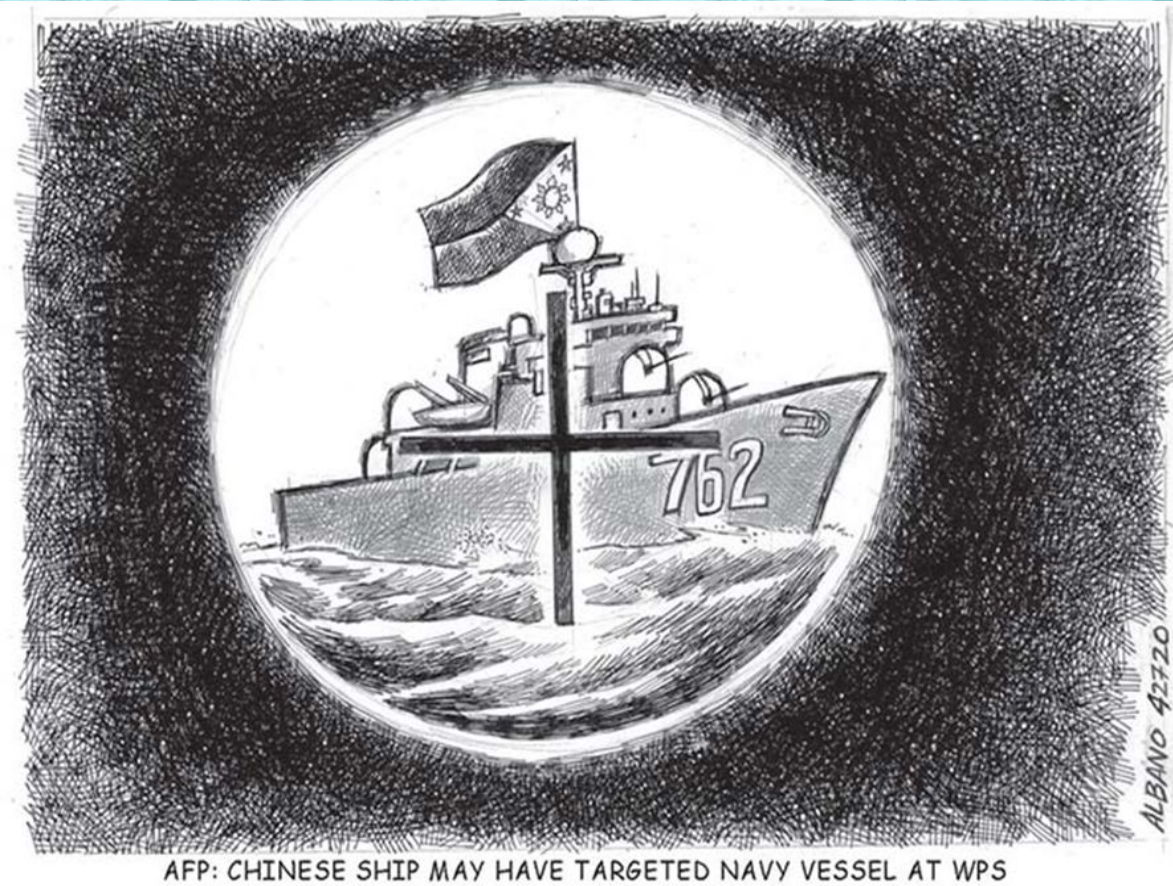


Developing the Philippines Maritime Capability: The Need to Shift from a Legislative-Based to Capability-Driven Force Modernization Program?



The Future of Philippine Foreign Policy: On Maritime Security and Capability, May 31, 2022, 9:00 to 11:00 AM

Introduction



The current Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Modernization Program is based on Republic Act 10349 which was passed during the term of the late President Benigno Aquino III in the aftermath of the 2012 Scarborough Shoal standoff between China and the Philippines.

Introduction

At the time of the Scarborough Shoal stand-off, the Philippine Navy (PN) was equipped with obsolete surface combatants that included six ships that were classified as corvettes but were actually Second World War destroyer escorts or mine sweepers; the more modern *BRP Gregorio Del Pilar* was actually a former U.S. Coast Guard Cutter; and none of its ships were armed with anti-ship nor anti-aircraft missiles.



Introduction



This was the PN's status in particular, and the AFP's in general despite the fact that RA 10349 is actually the second attempt to modernize the AFP since 1995 with the enactment of the defunct Republic Act (RA) 7898 during the term of President Fidel Ramos almost 17 years ago.

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During this period, the Philippine Congress released only Php5.4 billion after nearly six years after the law was passed and this was way below the promised Php50 billion for the first five years of the program as it used its “power of the purse” to micromanage the implementation of the program.



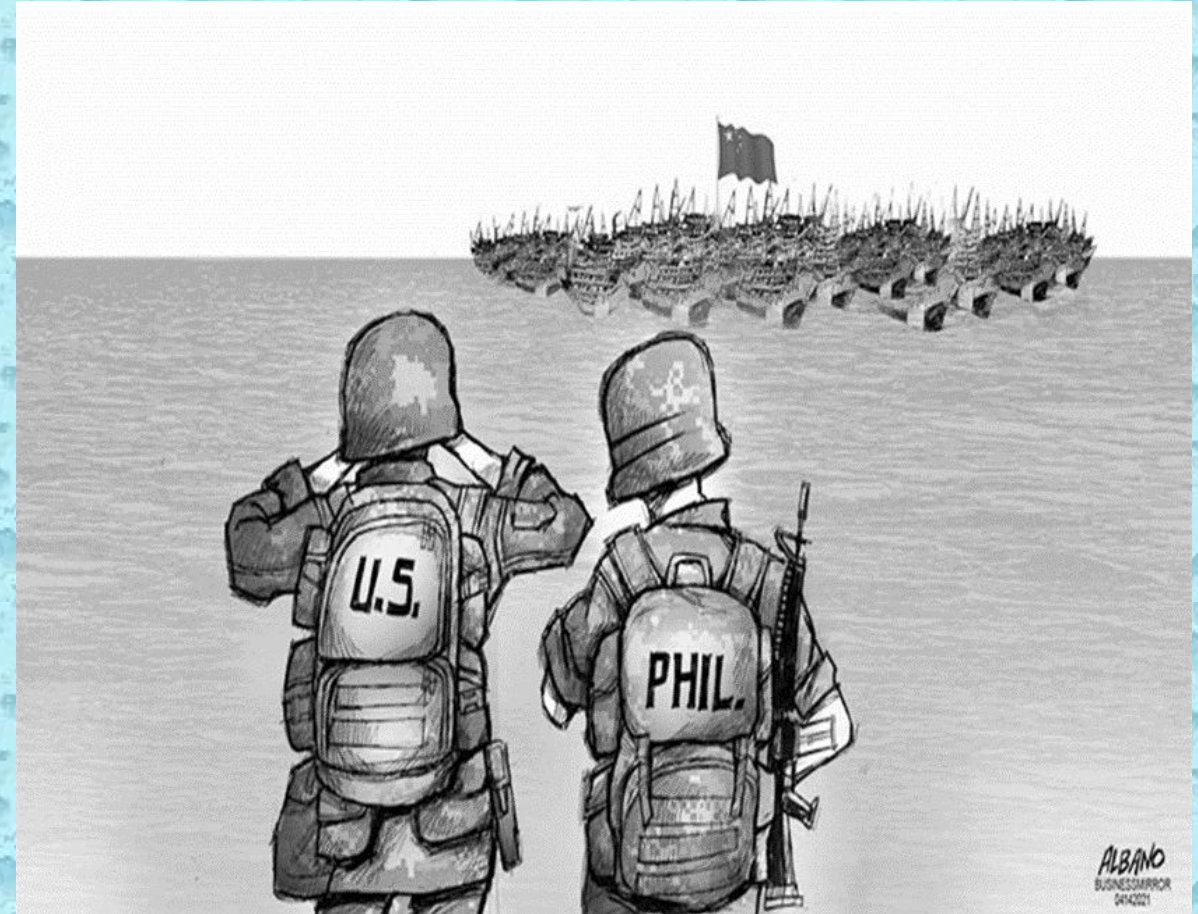
Introduction



The delay in the implementation of this modernization program led to its being temporarily shelved off because of the Asian financial crisis in 1997 and Philippine military's focus on domestic insurgencies.

Introduction

RA 10349 offers to provide a second and a more expansive force modernization program as it provides a multi-mission oriented force capable of addressing both internal and external security; this is broader to RA 7898's goal of focusing on the development of Philippine maritime capabilities by giving primal importance to the development of the PN and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).



Introduction



The two programs were originally conceived in 1995 as the country's response to an existential threat—China's maritime expansion in the South China Sea --through posturing, financing and developing military capabilities to address national security concerns emanating from the country's maritime environment.

Introduction

Given that the Philippines, in the second decade of the 21st century, faces escalating threats in the West Philippine Sea, enhancing the country's external defense capabilities becomes more important than ever as the government tries to maximize the utilization of limited funds, identified patterns for proper arms acquisition, and address the underlying factors accounting for its slow pace of implementation.

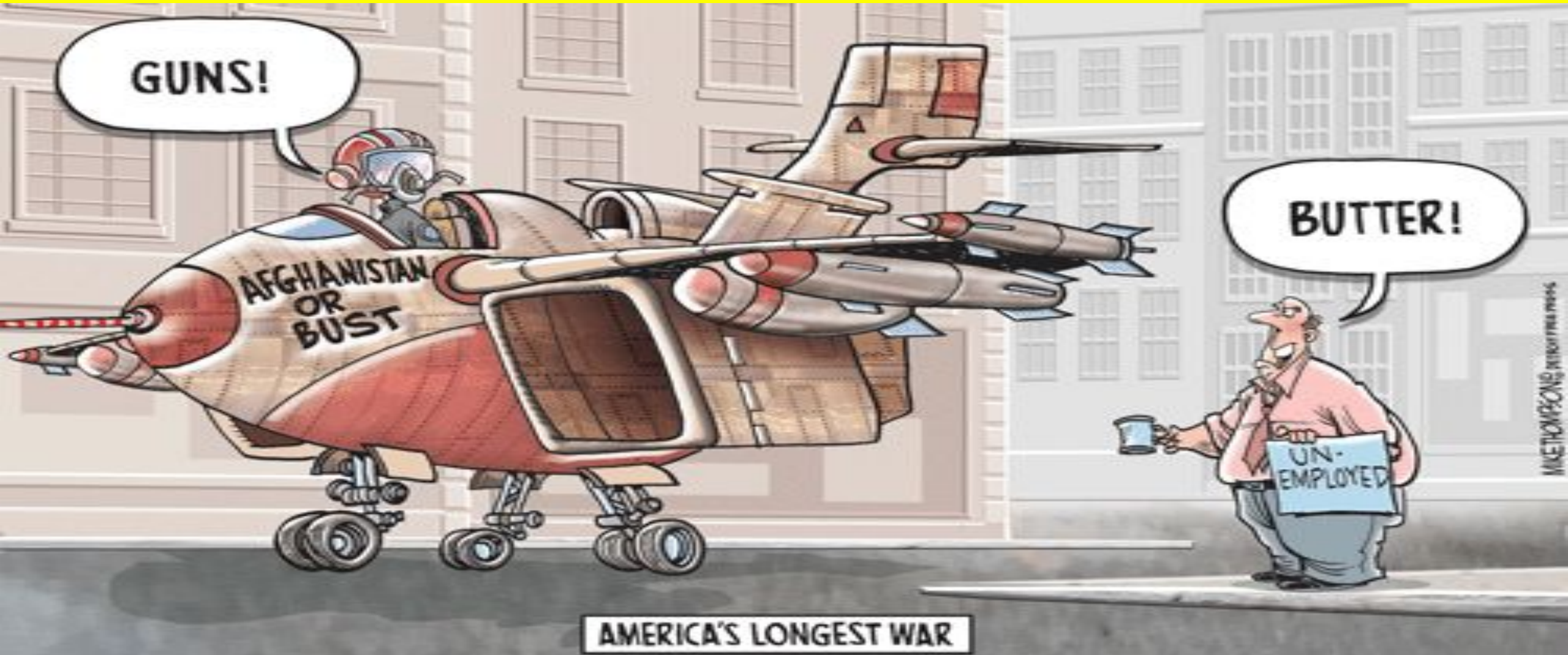


Introduction



What has been ignored in the implementation of the long-delayed AFP modernization program is the need to examine and understand the inertia of a legislative based-force in contrast to capability- driven force modernization as the foundation of building up the Philippines maritime capabilities in the 21st century.

Legislative-based versus Capability-Driven Force Modernization

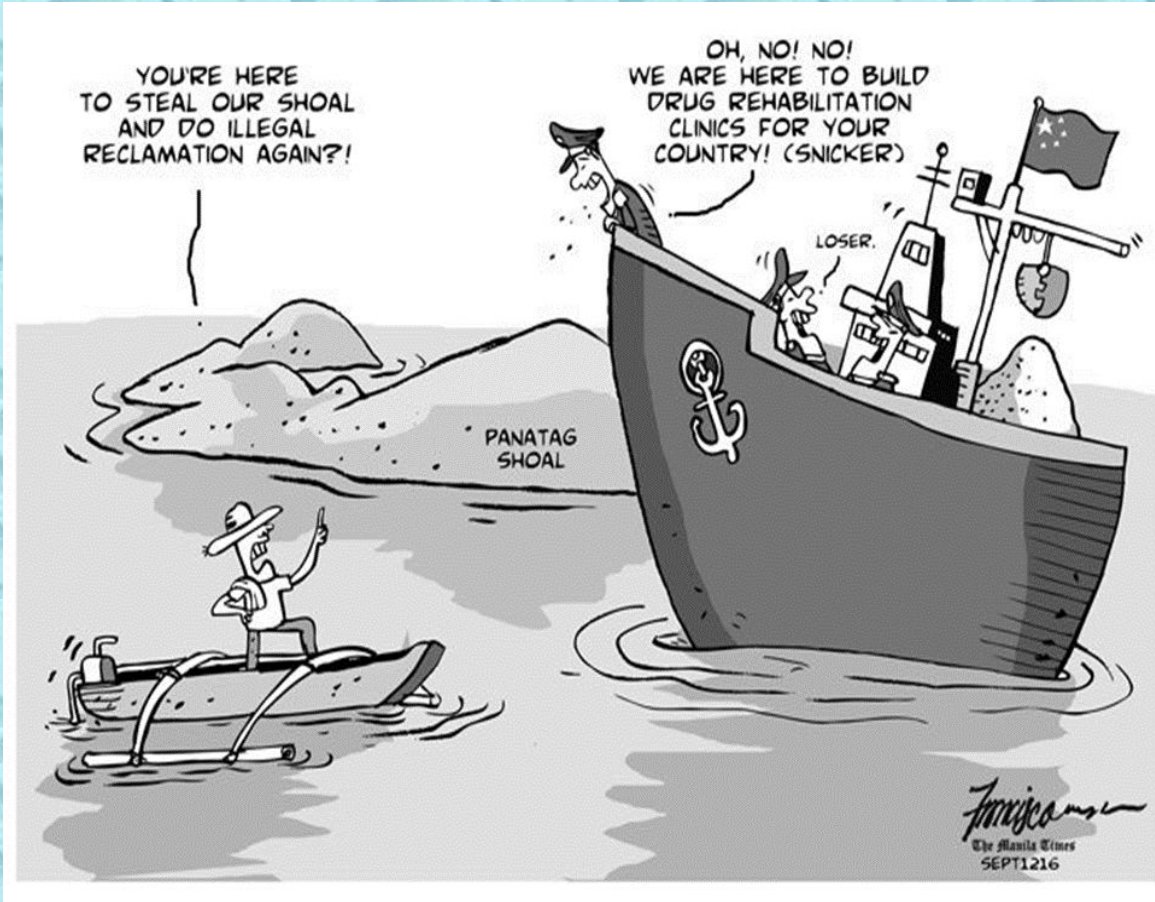


Legislative-based versus Capability-Driven Force Modernization

The AFP modernization program is essentially a form of defense planning which is all about preparations for the security of a polity in the future (near, medium—, and far-term) given that such planning should be conducted both in peacetime and wartime.



Legislative-based versus Capability-Driven Force Modernization



Defense planning in all national polities should be a central concern to key decision-makers since it is intensely highly political for two important reasons:

Legislative-based versus Capability-Driven Force Modernization

The function of national security is almost inevitably a heavy burden on any given society, given that there will always be alternative uses of limited resources aside from ensuring the protection of the polity and its members.



Legislative-based versus Capability-Driven Force Modernization



The obvious fact that the future is neither reliably known nor knowable means that typically there is scope for political argument over what the country needs in order to be sufficiently secure.

Legislative-based versus Capability-Driven Force Modernization

Given that decision-makers usually ignore anything about the future, they need to answer the following key questions regarding defense planning, such as: What to buy (weapons acquisition)? How much to buy? When to much? Determining which is more important quality versus quantity? And what type of force structure?



Legislative-based versus Capability-Driven Force Modernization



In most developed and industrialized powers, defense planning and acquisition is capability-driven which is based on the need to match and offset the capabilities of the potential opponent and by the constant need to replacing aging equipment with more modern version of similar pies of the same weapon system.

Legislative-based versus Capability-Driven Force Modernization

A capability-driven approach involves articulating the effects that the armed forces need to achieve, and the capabilities necessary for their attainment.



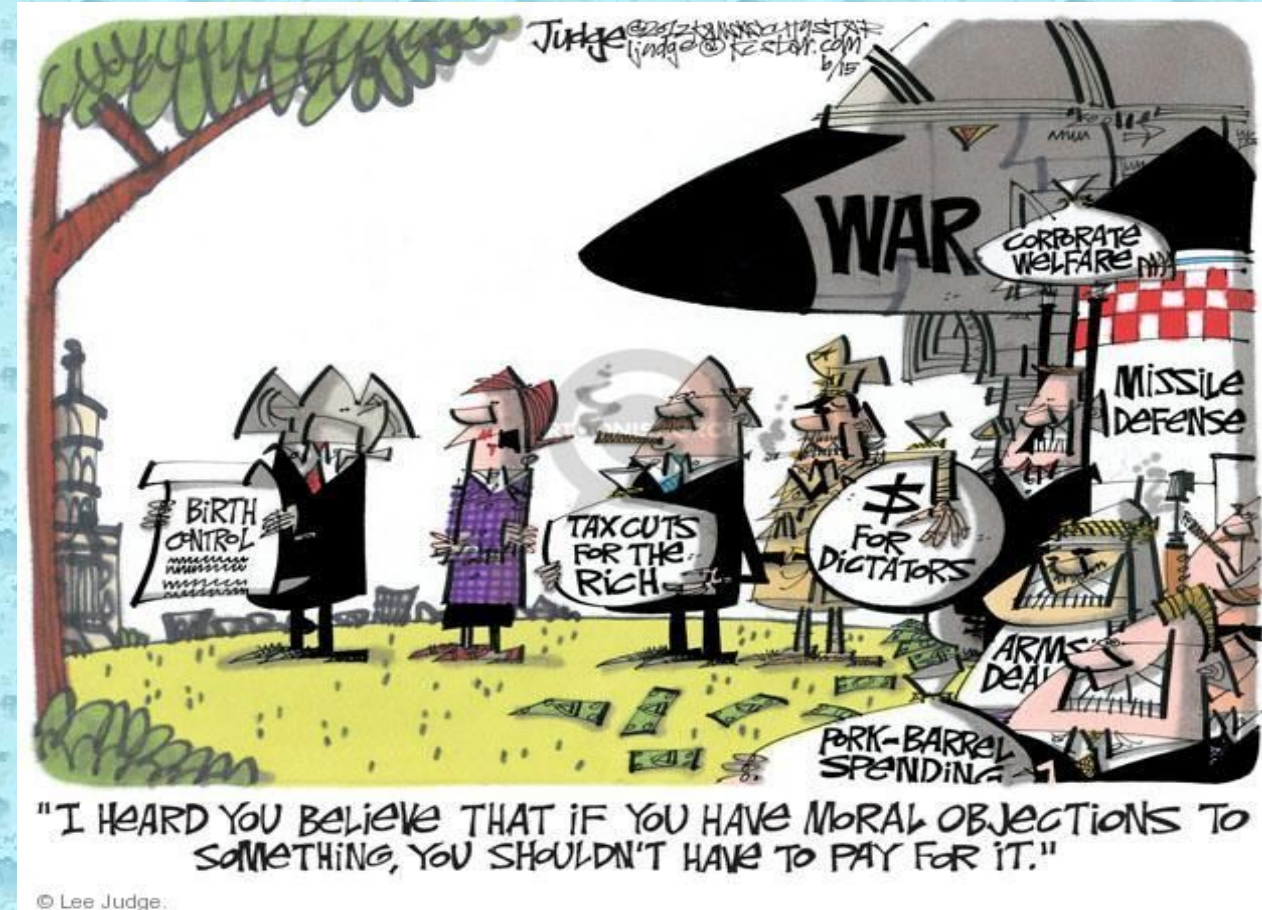
Mike Luckovich



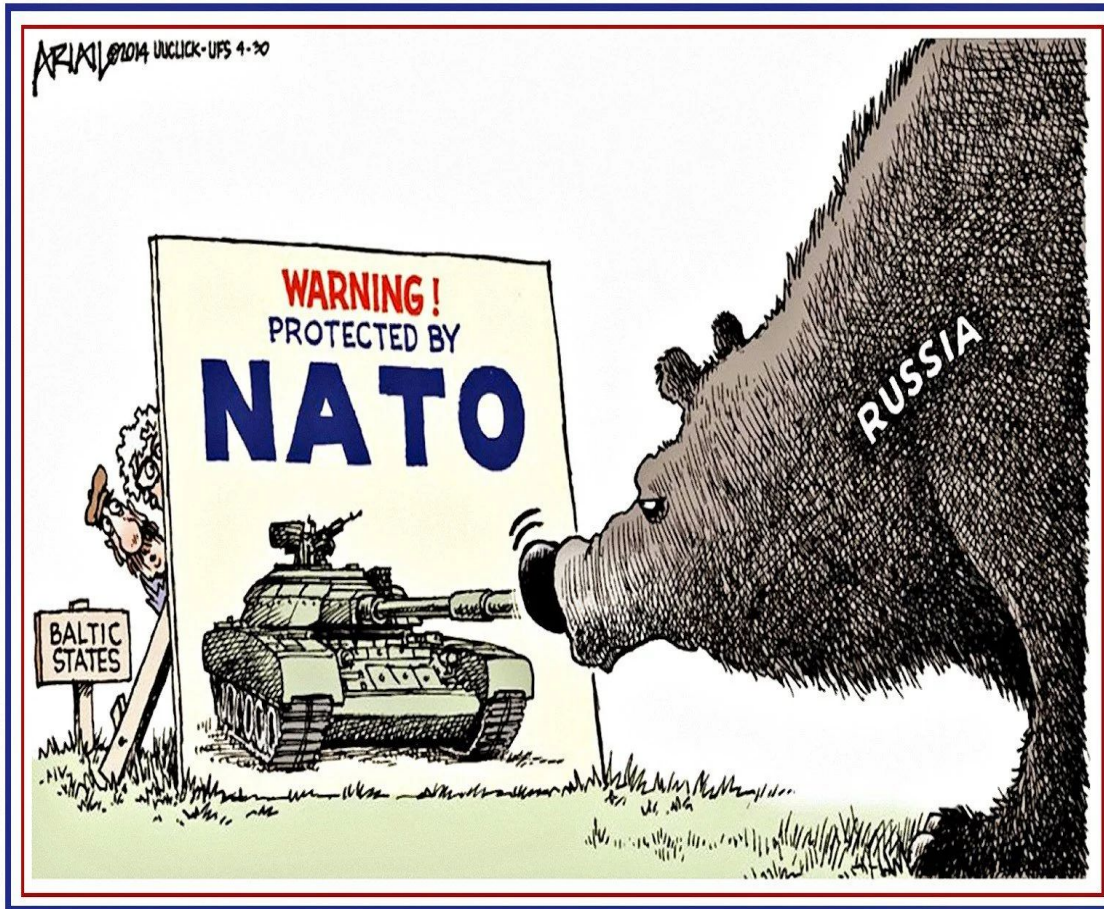
The main challenge in a capability-driven force modernization is to identify and to formulate solutions for the requirements of national defense adequate enough to address existential threats that cannot be defined with certainty in times of peace.

Legislative-based versus Capability-Driven Force Modernization

These are the principles uncertainties decision-makers face when they decide to implement a capability-driven force modernization program in particular, and defense planning in general:



Legislative-based versus Capability-Driven Force Modernization



- The polity's own political and economic demands.
- Strategic choices by the polity's adversaries.

Legislative-based versus Capability-Driven Force Modernization

- Most relevant geographic contexts for conflict.
- Quality of combat performance of the polity's armed services, adversaries, and allies.

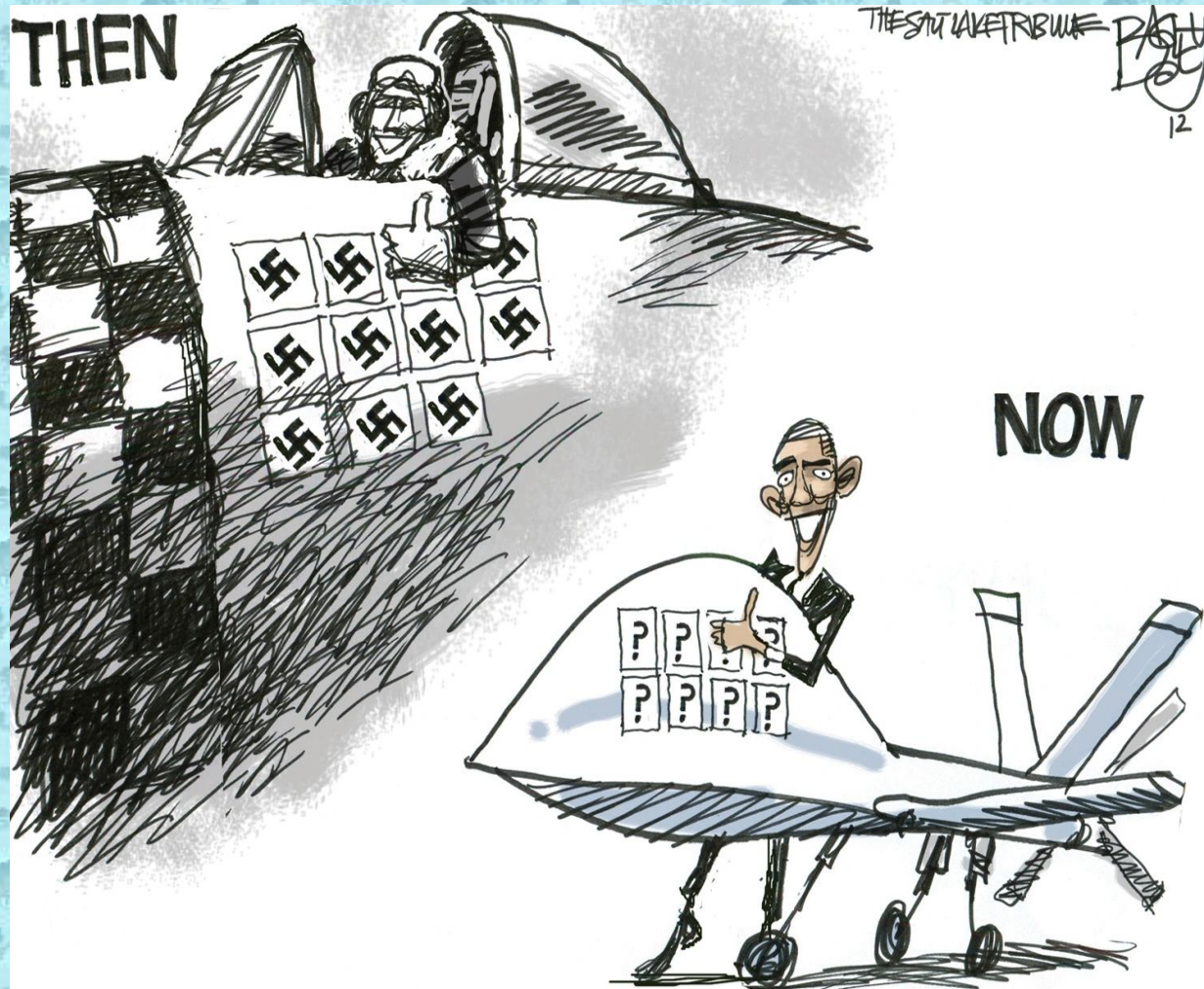


Legislative-based versus Capability-Driven Force Modernization



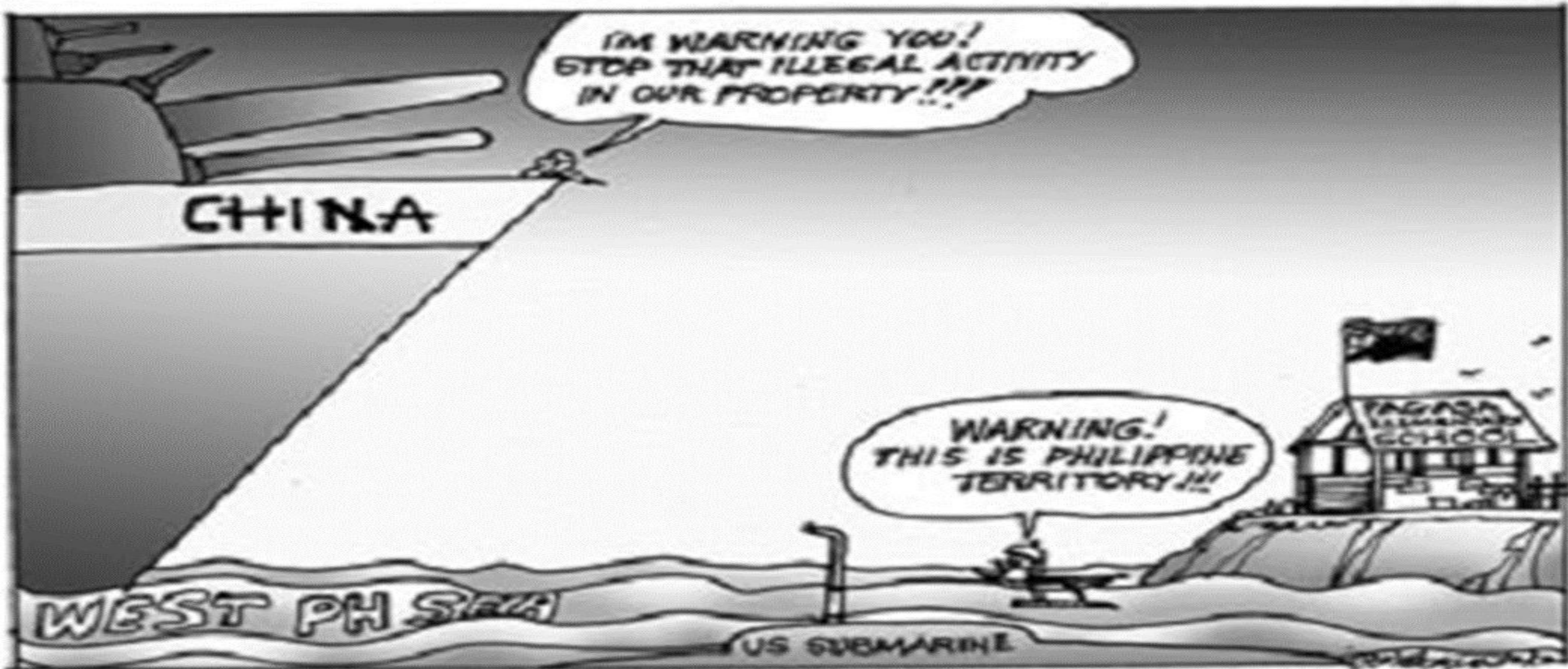
- The course and dynamics of the particular conflicts.

Legislative-based versus Capability-Driven Force Modernization



Capability-driven force modernization is all about the successful acquisition of military materiel that is focused on the development of desired capabilities, reflecting the fact that the specifications of requirements should be located within a strategic framework of an agreed defense policy based on a grand strategy that analyses the overall security environment of the state, and the role of the defense capability in promoting national security.

The AFP Modernization Program as a Case of a Legislative-Based Forces Force Modernization Effort



The AFP Modernization Program as a Case of a Legislative-Based Forces Force Modernization Effort

The first legislated attempt to modernize the AFP was the passage of Republic Act 7898 that was enacted in response to China's occupation of Mischief in 1995 and also because of the withdrawal of American forces from their Philippine bases in November 1992.



The AFP Modernization Program as a Case of a Legislative-Based Forces Force Modernization Effort



RA 7898 provided a 15-year modernization program that was formulated so that the PN would get most of the program's allocated fund to develop its inshore and offshore patrol, surface warfare, detection, and maritime surveillance capabilities.

The AFP Modernization Program as a Case of a Legislative-Based Forces Force Modernization Effort

The law, however, enabled Congress to determine the program's objectives and funding requirements, and thus, it had significant leverage over the implementation of the 15-year modernization program.



The AFP Modernization Program as a Case of a Legislative-Based Forces Force Modernization Effort



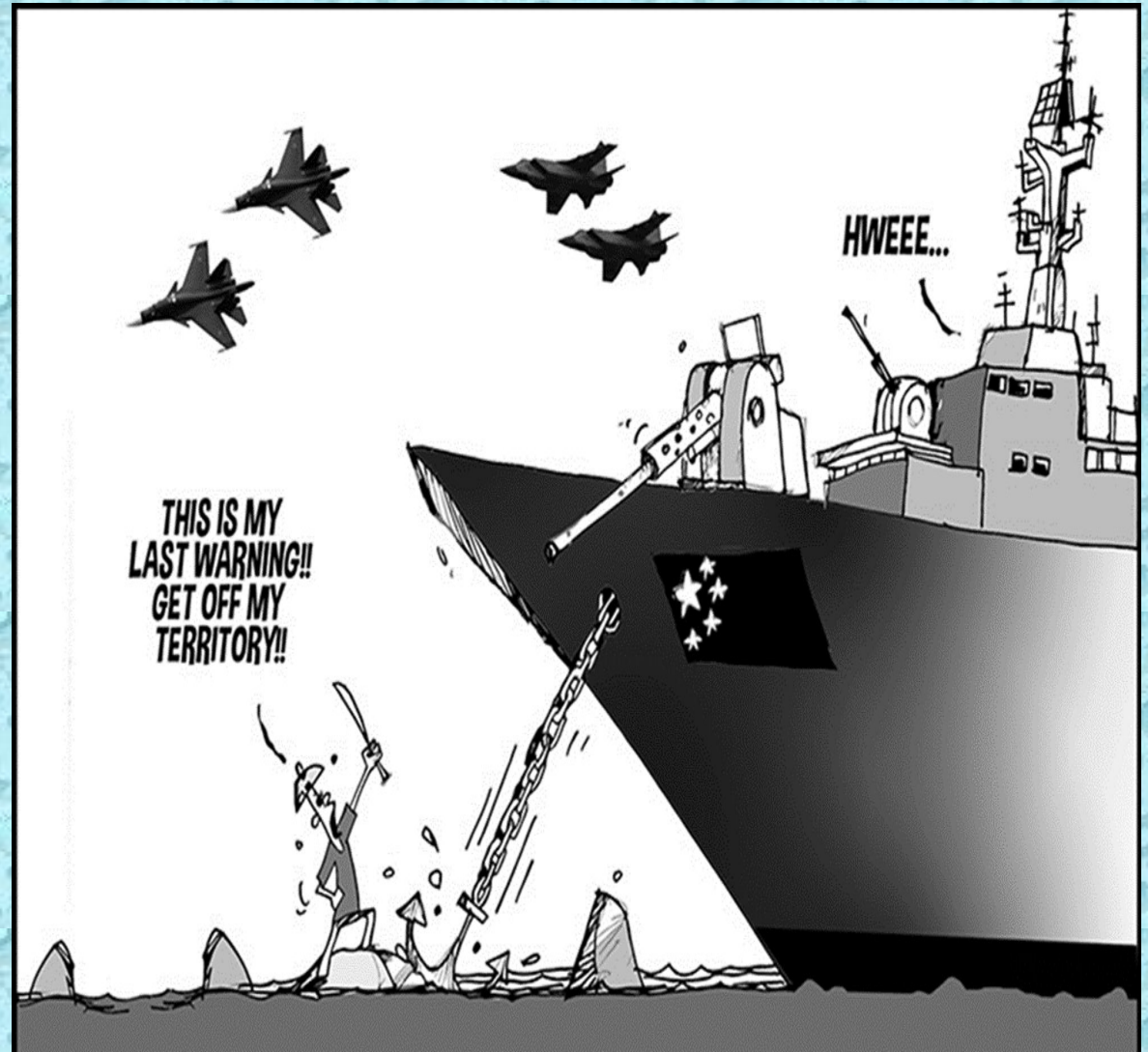
Despite Congress' passage of the law, the 15-year modernization program was never implemented because of questions regarding what service should be given priority, demand by the Senate for the AFP to formulate a Table of Organization and Equipment for the next 15 years, and Congress's decision to reduce the budget from Php331 to Php165 billion.

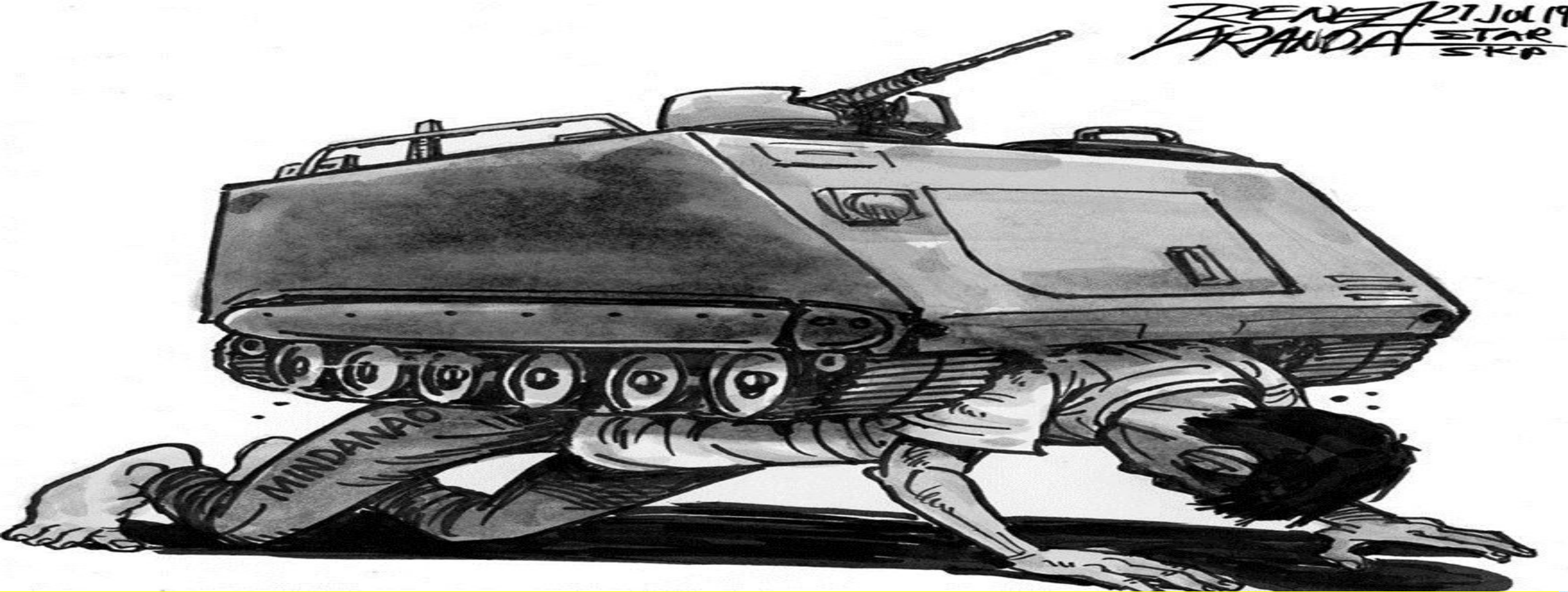


The program was also adversely affected by the sharp depreciation of the Philippine peso, the reduction of government spending because of its acquiescence to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the light of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and the resurgence of Muslim and communist insurgencies.

The AFP Modernization Program as a Case of a Legislative-Based Forces Force Modernization Effort

President Benigno Aquino III spoke of “enhanced security” for national defense and put forward the country’s claim for territories in the South China Sea through capability upgrades and modernization of the air-force and navy.

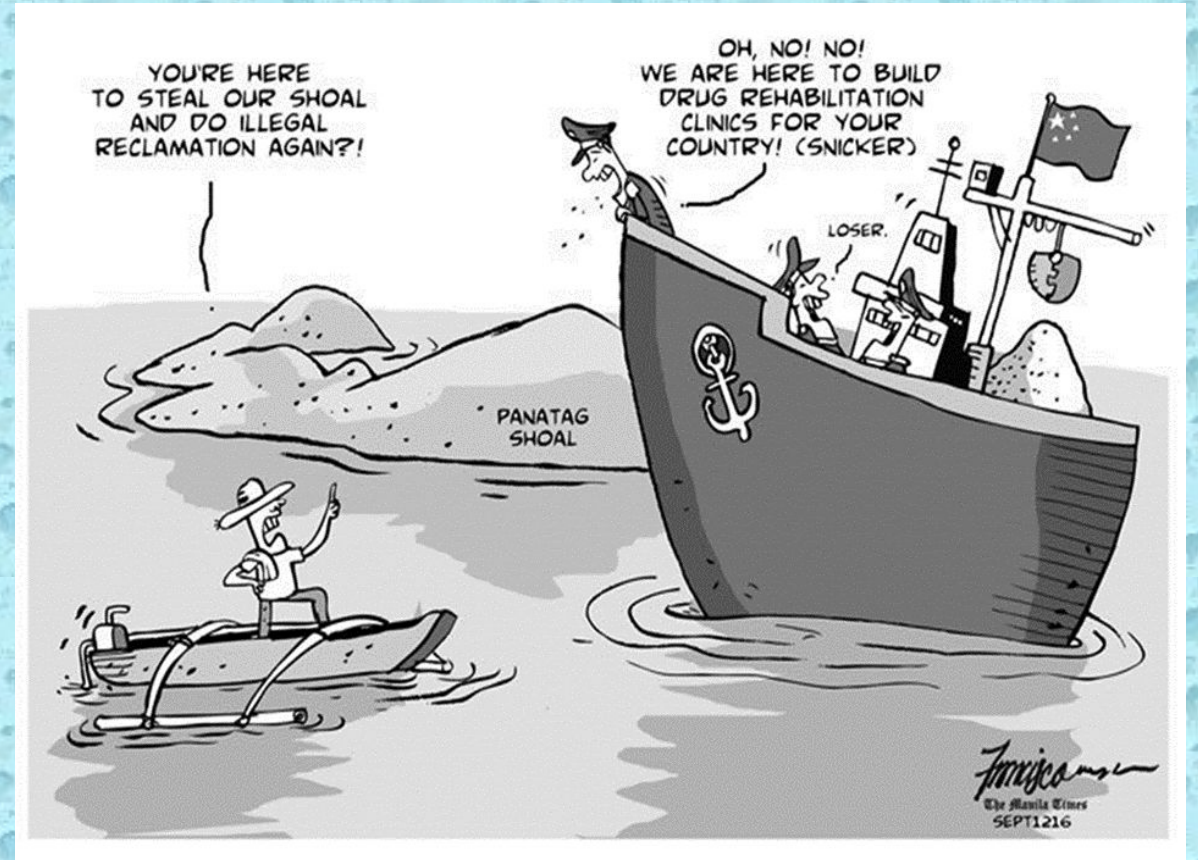




Despite its determination to boost the AFP's territorial defense capabilities, however, the Aquino administration was constrained by insufficient financial resources.

The AFP Modernization Program as a Case of a Legislative-Based Forces Force Modernization Effort

The Aquino Administration recognized both the urgency of modernizing the armed forces especially the PN and PAF on the one side, and the limitations that competing demands (especially funds for education and public infrastructure) put on the military modernization on the other side.



The AFP Modernization Program as a Case of a Legislative-Based Forces Force Modernization Effort



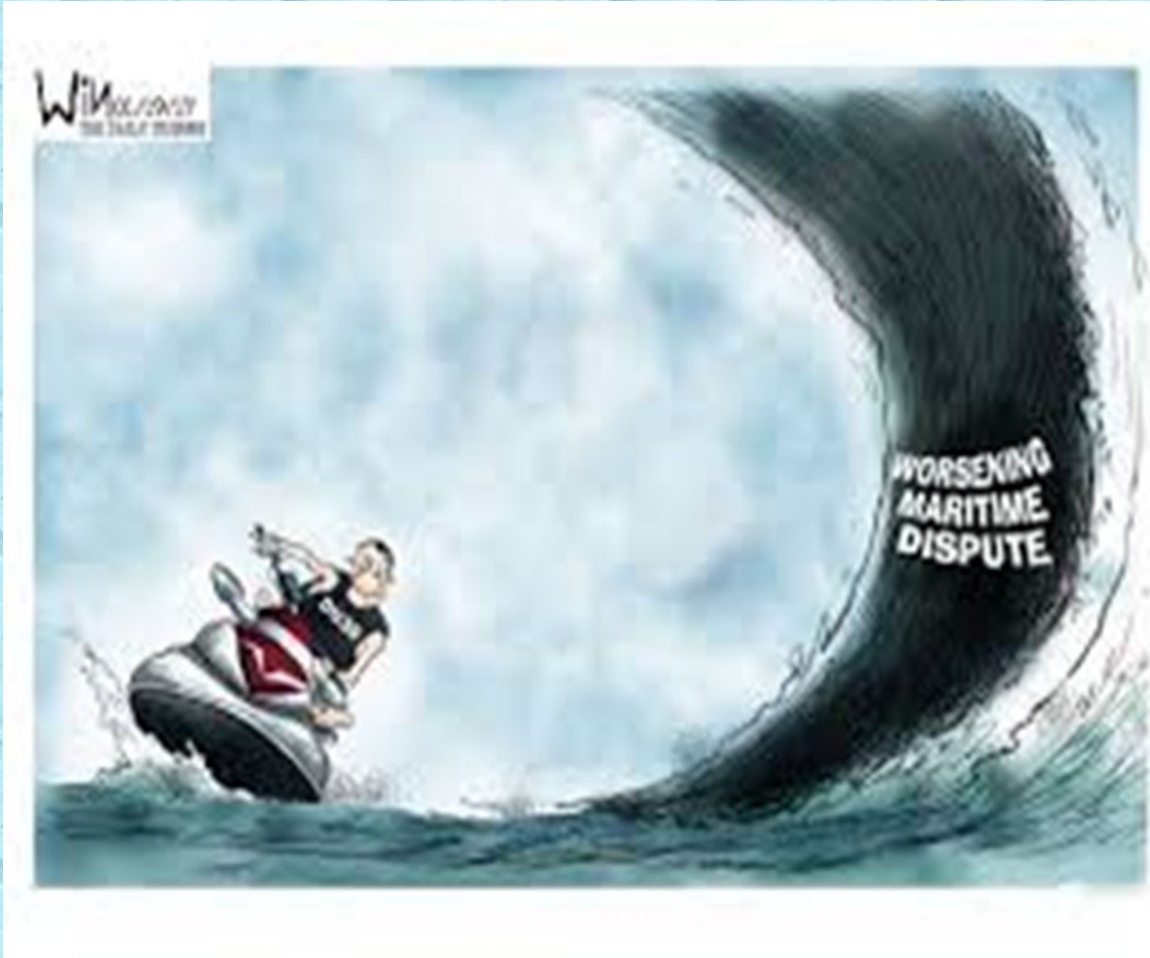
Interestingly, the Duterte Administration met the Philippine military's expectation that it would continue to finance its modernization program that was started and given priority by its predecessor from 2011 to 2016 as it increased the 2017 defense budget by 15% from the 2016 level.

The AFP Modernization Program as a Case of a Legislative-Based Forces Force Modernization Effort

More significantly, it also augmented the annual supplemental allotment for the AFP's acquisition of military equipment from Php 15 billion (US\$300 million) to Php 25 billion (US\$500 million) reflecting the administration's intention of accelerating the Philippine military's modernization program.



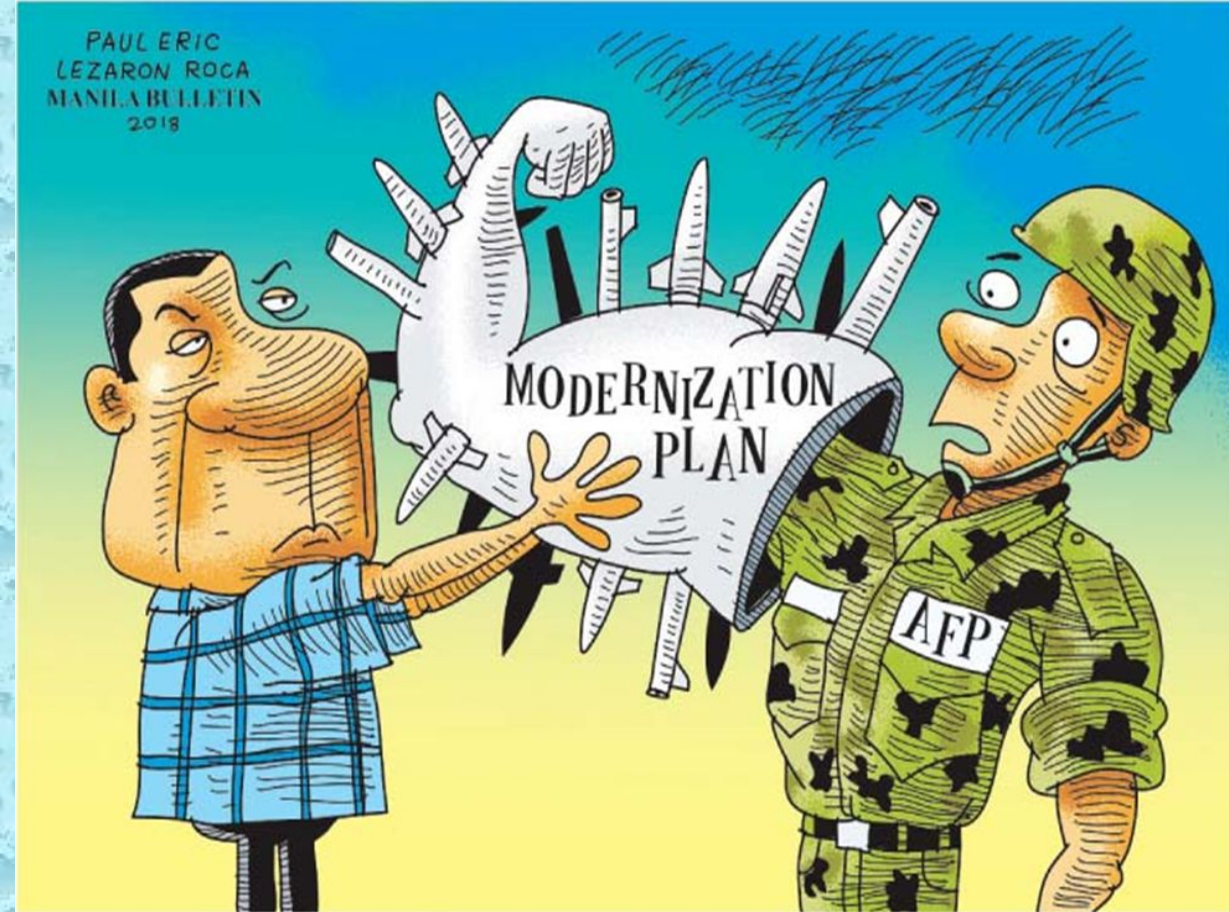
The AFP Modernization Program as a Case of a Legislative-Based Forces Force Modernization Effort



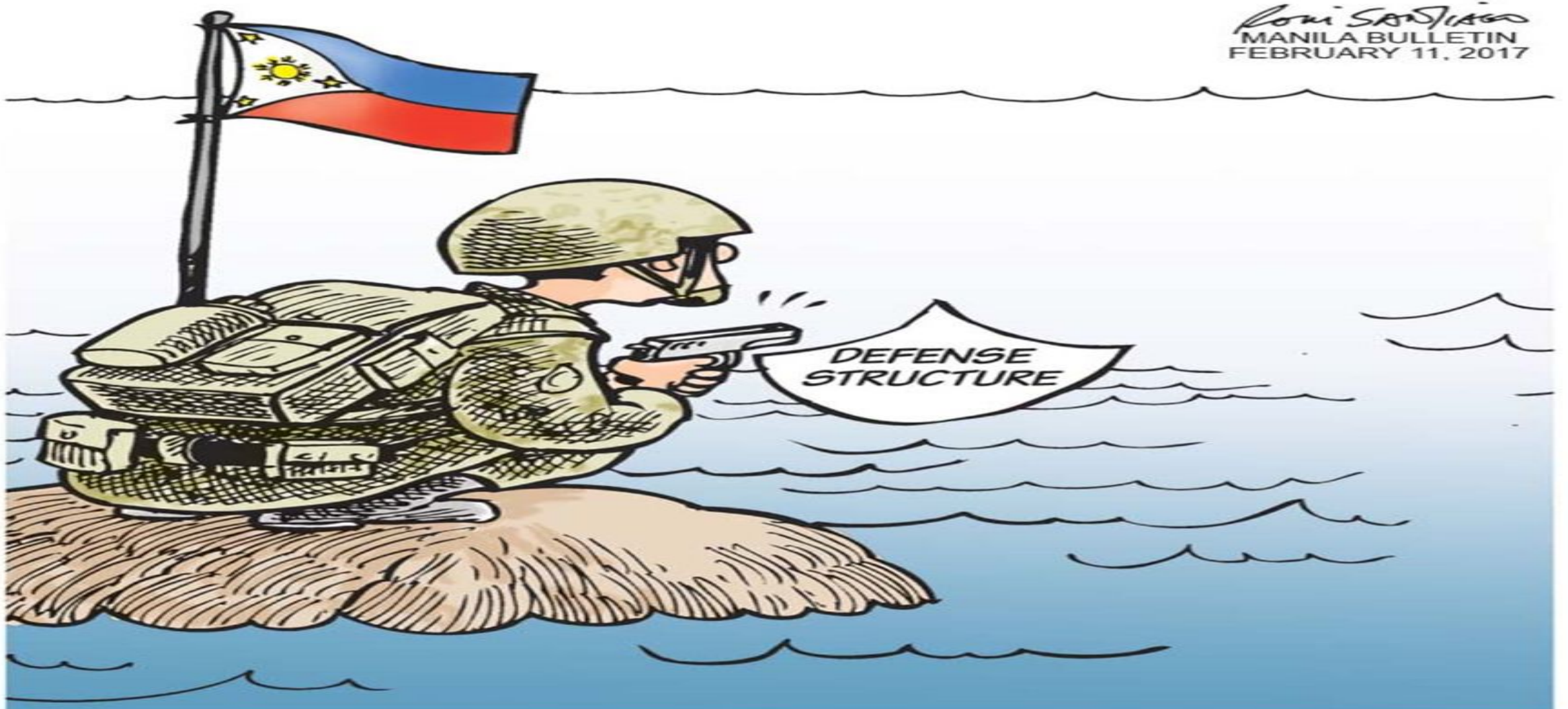
This phase provides big-ticket items that the AFP would acquire, with the lion-share of the US\$ 56 billion modernization fund going to the PN and the PAF.

The AFP Modernization Program as a Case of a Legislative-Based Forces Force Modernization Effort

The PN is procuring two more missile-capable frigates, amphibious assault vehicles, anti-submarine helicopters, multi-role vessels, and even submarines; while the PAF is planning to acquire two squadrons of multi-role fighters and 12 more FA-50 lead-in fighter planes to complement its current inventory of 12 aircraft acquired during the first phase or horizon of the modernization program.



The Consequences of a Legislative-Based Forces Modernization



The Consequences of a Legislative-Based Forces Modernization

Both RA 7898 and 10349 ensured that the allocation of financial resources for additional defense expenditures had to go through a very complex, legalistic and tedious legislative process and that any force modernization program for the AFP would be determined by the legislators' agenda.



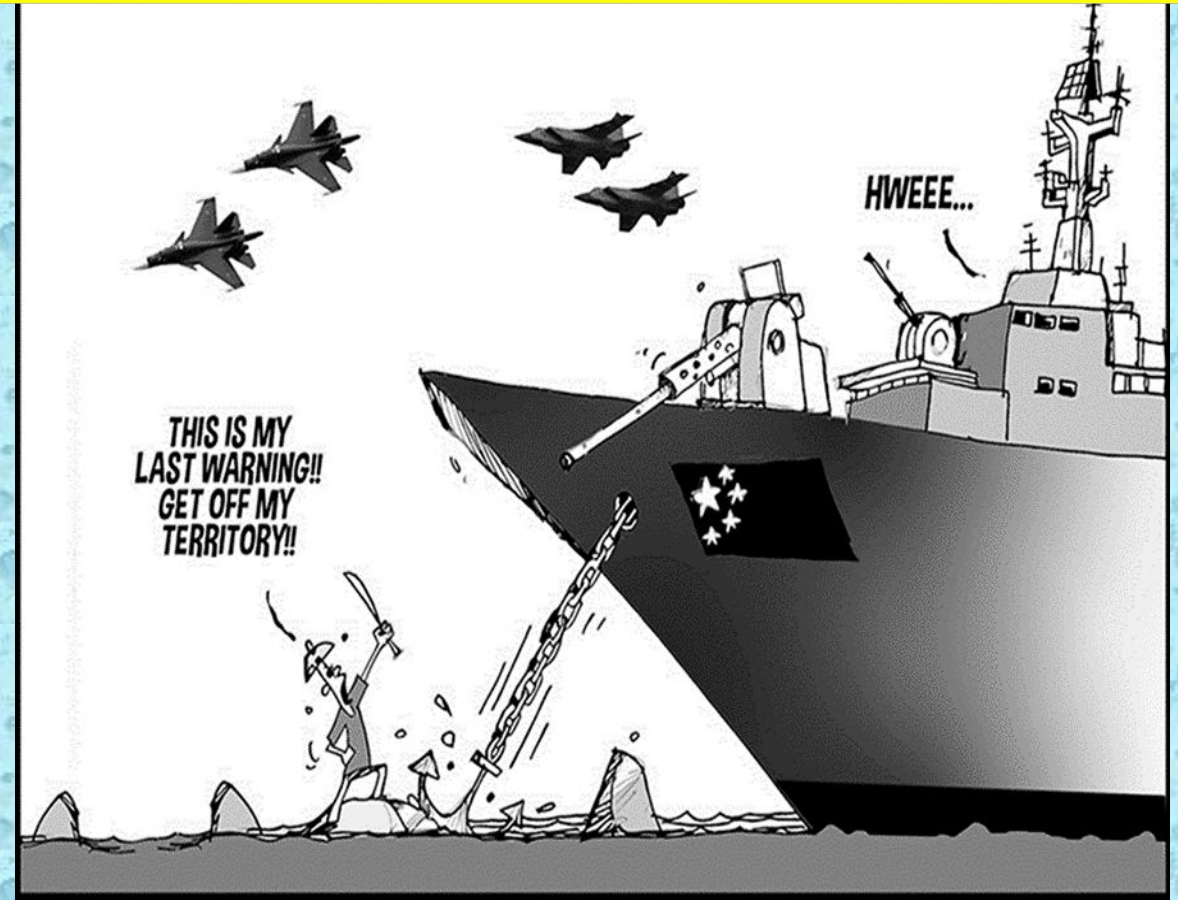
The Consequences of a Legislative-Based Forces Modernization



It has been argued that the modernization program is not actually intended to modernize the AFP but to simply equalize the distribution of resources to all the services because while the Philippine Army (PA) takes the lion share of the annual defense budget; funds for the modernization program are utilized as a way for the PN and PAF to catch-up with the army in terms of budget allocation.

The Consequences of a Legislative-Based Forces Modernization

It has been also observed that strategy-based planning was lacking in the implementation of the AFP modernization program as the priority security threats (whether it is external or internal threats) are not linked with the intended capability.



The Consequences of a Legislative-Based Forces Modernization



Ideally, the National Defense Strategy should have been the basis for the AFP in crafting its overall modernization plan; however, in practice, the meager AFP Modernization Funds released by the DBM was being apportioned to GHQ, AFP and the major services as their “fair share” thereby preventing them to acquire major defense equipment.

The Consequences of a Legislative-Based Forces Modernization

Despite stated goals of developing the capabilities of the PN and the PAF, the allocation of the overall defense spending shows that the priority is still geared on internal security operation with the PA absorbing most of the annual defense budgets and project under the modernization program because of historical antecedent, legislative mandate, organizational facticity.



The Consequences of a Legislative-Based Forces Modernization



Consequently, despite the PN's acquisition of a few surface combatants since 2020, the vast majority of its warships are armed only with deck and machine guns and their effectiveness against enemy warships or aircraft is very limited; while the navy, as a whole, faces great challenges in coordinating and sustaining operations far out in the open seas.

From Legislative-based to Capability-Driven Force Modernization



From Legislative-based to Capability-Driven Force Modernization

In the second decade of the 21st century, the clear and present danger is now primarily maritime, and territorial nature; however; the overall defense budget and force modernization efforts are still focused on internal security and the build-up of the Philippine Army.



From Legislative-based to Capability-Driven Force Modernization



There is a need for a rethinking of the force modernization to ensure that the AFP, as a tri-service armed forces, is well-equipped to address long-term external security threats that are still hidden by the fog of peace.

From Legislative-based to Capability-Driven Force Modernization

The goal should be geared to the development of PN's limited sea-denial and power projection capabilities enhanced by the development of both the PAF and PA as without joint operation and support from the air force and army, the isolated and limited PN capabilities would be significantly constrained.

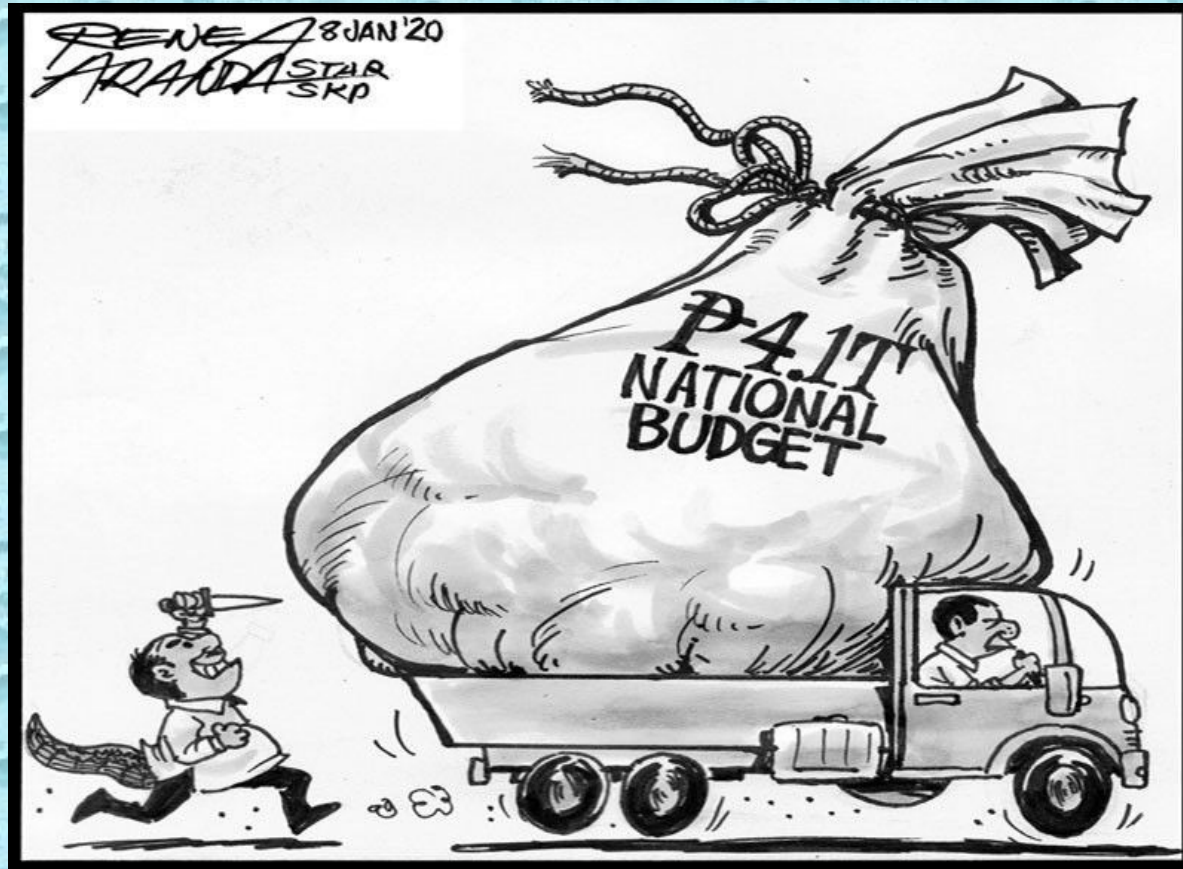


From Legislative-based to Capability-Driven Force Modernization

- Immediate formulation by the National Security Council (NSC) of a new National Security Strategy (NSS) based on the July 12 2016 Arbitral Ruling on the South China Sea Dispute.



From Legislative-based to Capability-Driven Force Modernization



Repeal Republic Act 10349 and instead passed a law or a policy guideline that requires the Philippine government to put the annual defense budget at two percent of the Gross Domestic Product.

From Legislative-based to Capability-Driven Force Modernization

Wean the AFP from internal security so that the Philippine military can single mindedly focus on the development of its territorial defense capabilities with an emphasis on developing its capability to wage an asymmetrical warfare in the country's maritime domain.



From Legislative-based to Capability-Driven Force Modernization



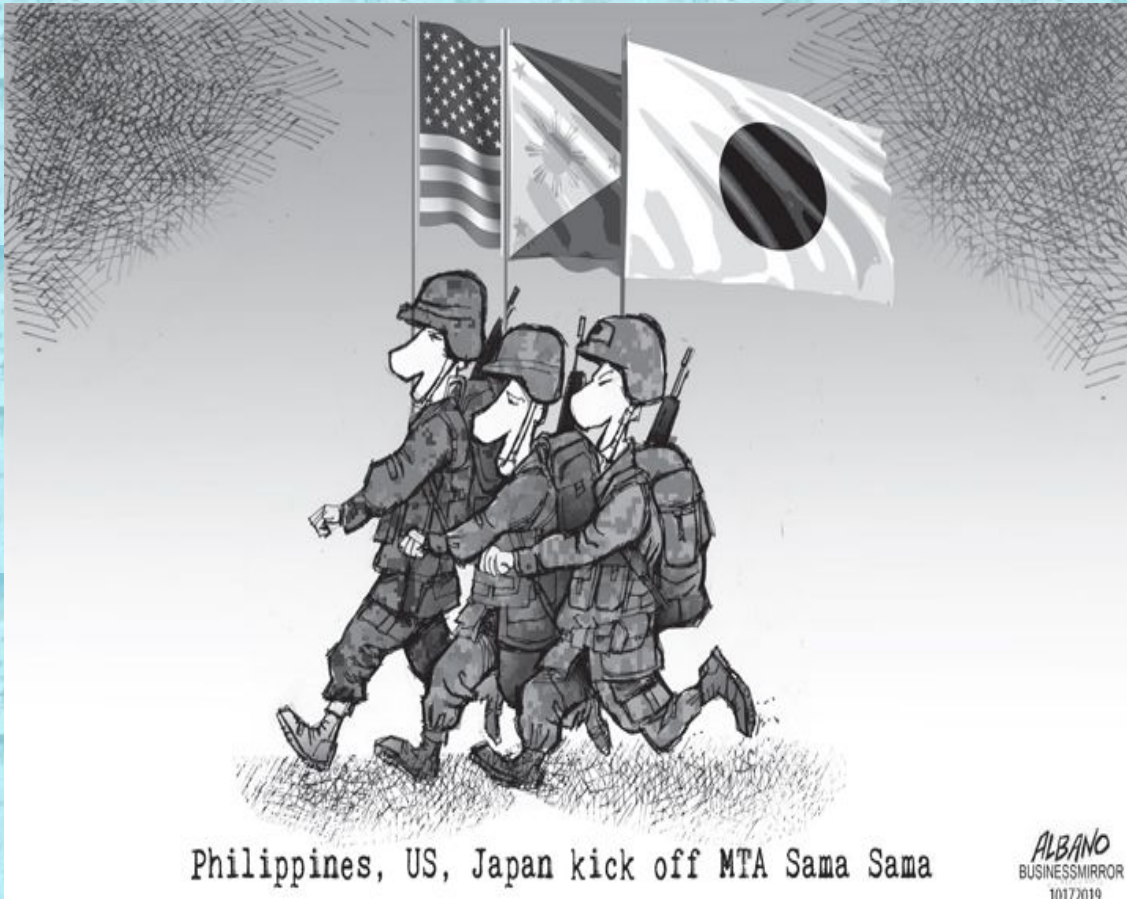
Strengthening the Philippine-U.S. alliance by fully implementing the 2014 EDCA and forming with the U.S. a bilateral “4+4 strategic, diplomatic, economic, and public health dialogue mechanism that will advance a comprehensive security partnership between the two allies.

From Legislative-based to Capability-Driven Force Modernization

- Enhancing Philippine security partnerships with other U.S. allies such as Japan, the Republic of Korea and Australia, and establishing ties with new and emerging minilaterals—QUAD, ANKUS, etc.



From Legislative-based to Capability-Driven Force Modernization



Formulate a medium-term policy guideline that will link the AFP modernization program with the defense policies of the country's formal treaty ally and its security partners as this will open the Philippine military to variety of material and ideational benefits, allowing it to develop interoperability with its ally and partners' defense systems and capabilities.

Thank you very much
for your attention

