

# POLÍTIKA

CRITICAL ISSUES OF PHILIPPINE POLITY

4TH QUARTER

## **Strategic Crossroads: Understanding the Geostrategic Challenges and Opportunities Shaping the Philippines**

Presents the geostrategic outlook and platform of Stratbase for the year 2024 by highlighting the Philippines' Eight Geopolitical Risks and Opportunities that Stratbase has been monitoring for the past year

## **Trends and Transformations in Philippine Economic Conditions on the Ground**

Shows the results of the latest surveys by third party institutions on the most pressing concerns of Filipinos, ratings of the national administration, optimism and expectations, and on other socio-economic issues

## **Foreign and Security Policy**

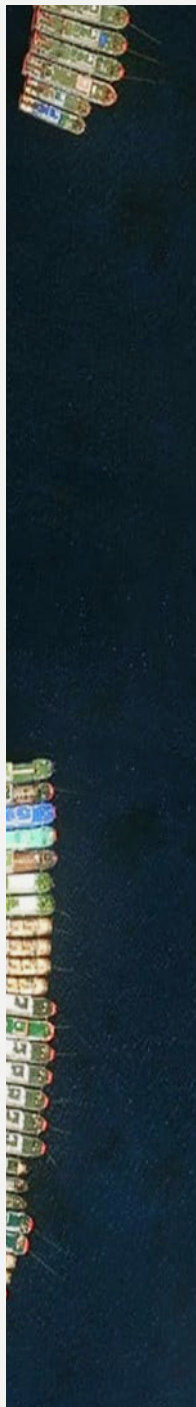
Provides an update to the continued tensions in the West Philippine Sea and emphasizes on the imperative of adopting "A Whole-of-Philippine Society Approach" in 2024

# CONTENTS

## ON THE COVER & CONTENTS

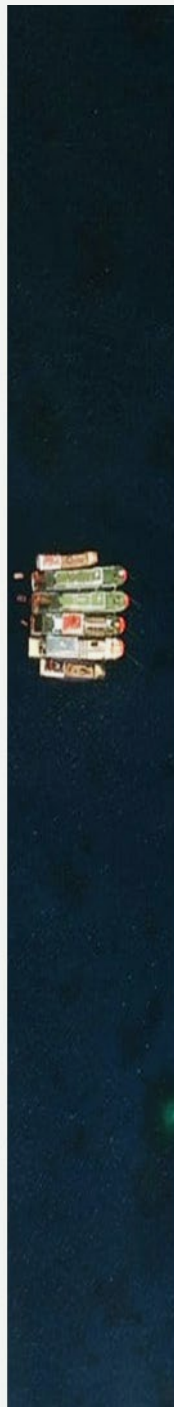
Credits to the following contributors:  
Prof. Victor Andres “Dindo” Manhit,  
Jaime Jimenez, Ph.D., Bones  
Palanca, Shanice Espiritu and  
Alyna Carlos

Picture credits to the following, cover page,  
contents page, and page 3:  
[onenews.ph/articles/bbm-to-cabinet-decide-who-you-want-to-hire](http://onenews.ph/articles/bbm-to-cabinet-decide-who-you-want-to-hire); [scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3129409/whitsun-reef-row-could-philippines-lose-another-south-china-sea](http://scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3129409/whitsun-reef-row-could-philippines-lose-another-south-china-sea) and [rappler.com/philippines/coast-guard-china-swarms-julian-felipe-reef-in-west-philippine-sea](http://rappler.com/philippines/coast-guard-china-swarms-julian-felipe-reef-in-west-philippine-sea)



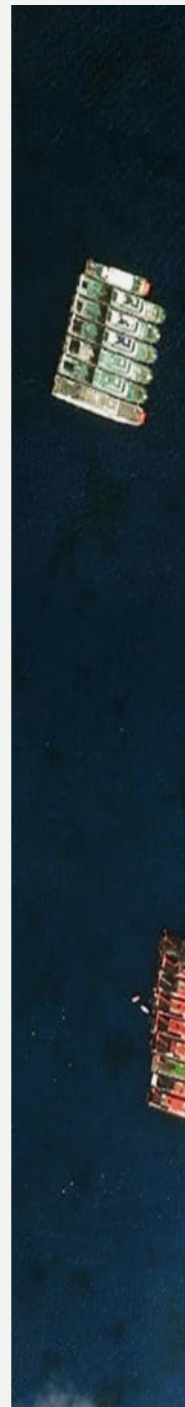
Strategic  
Crossroads:  
Understanding the  
Geostrategic  
Challenges and  
Opportunities  
Shaping the  
Philippines

*p.4*



Trends and  
Transformations  
in Philippine  
Economic  
Conditions on  
the Ground

*p.5*



Foreign and  
Security Policy

*p.10*



Legislative  
Updates and  
Developments

*p.15*



## OVERVIEW

The Philippines stands at strategic crossroads, where geostrategic challenges and opportunities intersect. Navigating these complexities requires a holistic approach that embraces diplomacy, economic integration, and security cooperation.

Although there has been improvement, there are still issues that need an all-encompassing strategy that addresses income disparity, encourages inclusive growth, and encourages investments in infrastructure and key industry sectors that promote job creation, among others. The Filipino people's resilience and ingenuity are crucial in helping the country manage the challenges of the contemporary world and in creating a vibrant socioeconomic system that reflects the varied goals of its citizens.

This issue of *Politika* examines the socioeconomic status of the Philippines, the significant developments in the West Philippine Sea, and the updates and movements in legislation before Congress went into recess in December 2023.

The first section, **Strategic Crossroads: Understanding the Geostrategic Challenges and Opportunities Shaping the Philippines**, provides the geostrategic outlook and platform of Stratbase for the year 2024. It emphasizes the Philippines' Eight Geopolitical Risks and Opportunities that Stratbase has been monitoring for the past years, which are reflective of the socio-economic and political economic concerns of Filipinos.

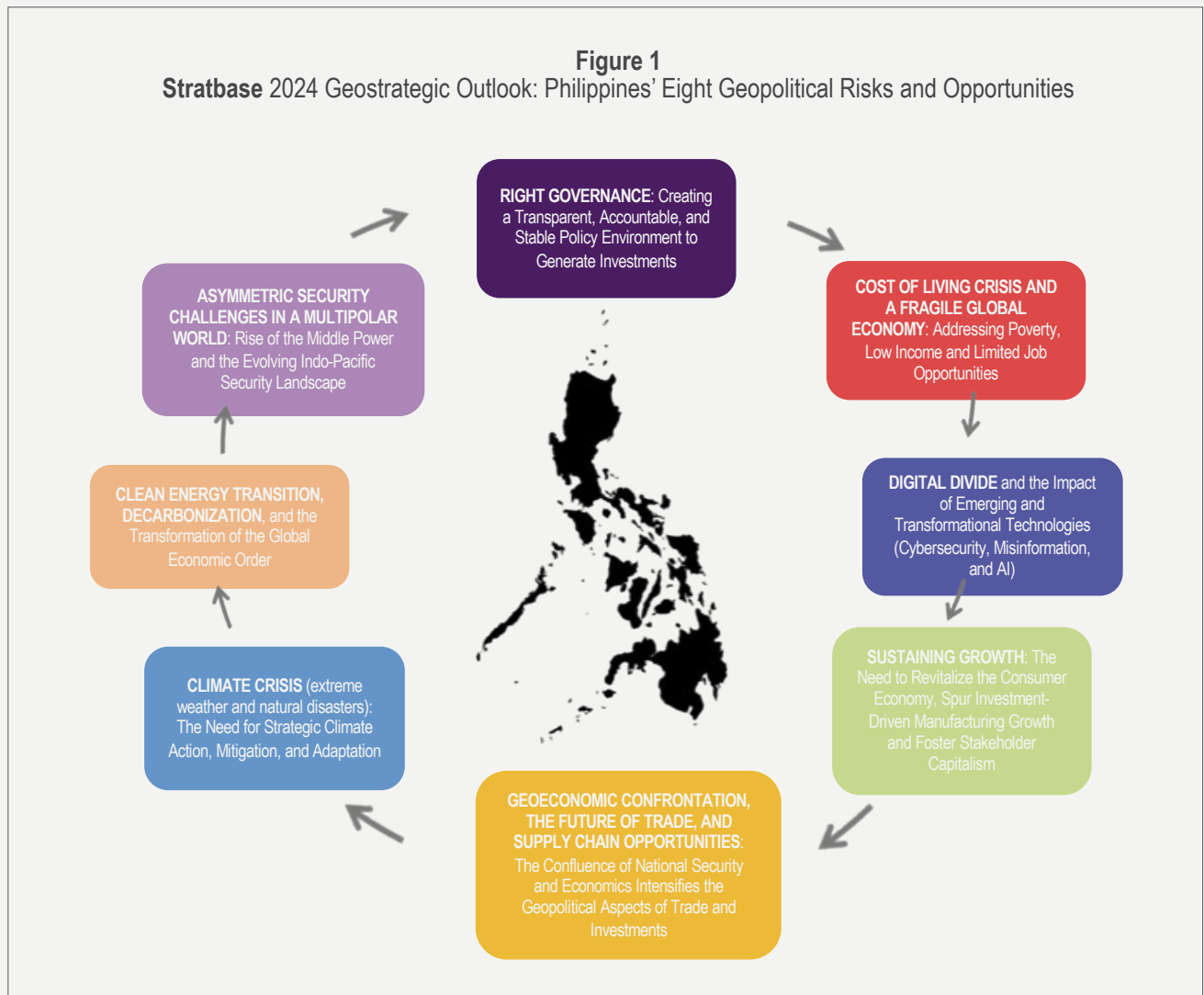
The second section, **Trends and Transformations in Philippine Economic Conditions on the Ground**, discusses the results of the latest surveys conducted by the Social Weather Stations and Pulse Asia Research, Inc. on the Most Urgent National Concerns, Self-rated Poverty and Food Poverty, as well as the Comparative Ratings of Top National Officials and the National Administration.

The third section on **Foreign and Security Policy** is subtitled "Leveraging on the Philippines' Middle Power Status in Confronting Asymmetric Challenges." It provides an update and puts into context the continued tensions in the West Philippine Sea. It also elaborates on the national support for Philippine foreign and security strategies and emphasizes the imperative of adopting a whole-of-Philippine society approach in 2024 to comprehensively foster territorial integrity and economic security in the West Philippine Sea.

Lastly, the **Legislative Updates and Developments** section provides not only the latest status of bills and laws developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress between November 6 and December 15, 2023, but also the general flow of legislation for the year 2023. The Calendar of the Second Regular Session is currently in its adjournment phase (December 16, 2023 up to January 21, 2024) and the Resumption of Session is set to continue on January 22, 2024 until March 22, 2024. The Adjournment of Session is set on March 23 until April 28, 2024.

## STRATEGIC CROSSROADS: UNDERSTANDING THE GEOSTRATEGIC CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES SHAPING THE PHILIPPINES

Nestled in the heart of Southeast Asia, the Philippines finds itself at a convergence of geopolitical challenges and opportunities that intricately shape the nation's future. Surrounded by the vast Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea, the archipelago is a geopolitical hotspot.



One of the most pressing challenges confronting the Philippines is the complex web of territorial disputes in the South China Sea. The Philippines, along with other neighboring countries, faces overlapping claims with China, affecting maritime boundaries, resource access, and regional stability. Navigating these challenges requires diplomatic finesse, international cooperation, and a commitment to upholding the rule of law, as underscored by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Despite the geopolitical tensions, the Philippines also stands at the nexus of economic opportunities. The nation has the potential to leverage regional alliances for economic growth as a key player in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Strengthening ties with neighboring countries, promoting trade agreements, and participating in regional initiatives can position the Philippines as an economic hub in Southeast Asia.

While geopolitical challenges and opportunities converge and arise, the Philippines must tread through these hurdles. This demands a nuanced and adaptive approach, one that prioritizes diplomacy, international cooperation, and a clear vision for national development.

# I. TRENDS AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS ON THE GROUND

As the Philippines continues to traverse the intricate global economic landscape, the nation is witnessing a series of trends and transformations that shape its economic scenario. In 2023, the economy made an impressive comeback, with a strong rebound evident in multiple sectors.

The GDP growth rate, which suffered in the years following the pandemic, has surged to a robust 5.9% by the third quarter of the year—the fastest-growing economy in Southeast Asia. This resurgence is primarily driven by government and private sector initiatives, which have recovered admirably from the pandemic-induced slump with improved COVID-19 management and the reopening of international borders.

However, despite these efforts, certain challenges persist, as shown by the latest surveys of third-party institutions.

## Pulse Asia Research, Inc.

### Most Urgent National Concerns

For the fourth quarter of 2023, Pulse Asia Research, Inc.'s survey between the period of December 3-7 manifested the lasting presence of economic or gut issues as the top-of-mind concerns of Filipinos. Figure 2 shows that Filipinos are mostly concerned with controlling inflation at 72%, which showed a negligible decrease of 2 points compared to the previous quarter's ratings; increasing the pay of workers at 40%, down by 9 points; creating more jobs at 28%, which showed no change; reducing the poverty of many Filipinos at 25%, which remained the same; and fighting graft and corruption in the government at 19%, which decreased by 3 points.



For the year of 2023, the most urgent national concerns of Filipinos on the average primarily pertained to their economic or gut concerns, i.e., Controlling inflation (68), Increasing the pay of workers (44), Creating more jobs (29), and Reducing the poverty of many Filipinos (27). Corollary to these is the top-of-mind concern on Fighting graft and corruption in government (23).

### Comparative Ratings of the National Administration

In the same survey, the National Administration enjoyed majority ratings in addressing the following issues: protecting the welfare of OFWs (78%), responding to the needs of areas affected by calamities (76%), stopping the destruction and abuse of our environment (62%), promoting peace in the country (61%), defending the integrity of Philippine territory against foreigners (61%), fighting criminality (56%), enforcing the law on all, whether influential or ordinary people (51%), and providing assistance to farmers including selling their products (50%).

However, the approval ratings of the National Administration in addressing the most urgent Filipino concerns are far from ideal. Alarming is “controlling inflation” at 9%, further sliding down by 7 points compared to the last quarter; followed by “reducing the poverty of many Filipinos” at 24% (-5 points); “fighting graft and corruption in government” at 30% (-15 points); “increasing the pay of workers” at 34% (-7 points); and “addressing the problem of involuntary hunger” at 41% (-5 points). (See Table 1 below)

**Table 1**  
Comparative Ratings of the National Administration on Selected National Issues: **PHILIPPINES**  
In Percent  
(September and December 2023)



PulseAsia  
RESEARCH INC.

Selected National Issues	Approval		Change*	Undecided		Change*	Disapproval		Change*
	Sep 23 (A)	Dec 23 (B)	Dec23-Sep23 (B-A)	Sep 23 (C)	Dec 23 (D)	Dec23-Sep23 (D-C)	Sep 23 (E)	Dec 23 (F)	Dec23-Sep23 (F-E)
Protecting the welfare of OFWs	74	78	+ 4	23	17	- 6	3	4	+ 1
Responding to the needs of areas affected by calamities	72	76	+ 4	23	20	- 3	6	4	- 2
Stopping the destruction and abuse of our environment	54	62	+ 8	36	26	-10	10	12	+ 2
Promoting peace in the country	63	61	- 2	28	27	- 1	9	12	+ 3
Defending the integrity of Philippine territory against foreigners	59	61	+ 2	31	27	- 4	9	12	+ 3
Fighting criminality	57	56	- 1	30	27	- 3	12	17	+ 5
Enforcing the law on all, whether influential or ordinary people	55	51	- 4	34	37	+ 3	11	13	+ 2
Providing assistance to farmers including selling their products	55	50	- 5	34	35	+ 1	12	15	+ 3
Creating more jobs	43	45	+ 2	39	31	- 8	18	23	+ 5
Addressing the problem of involuntary hunger	46	41	- 5	38	35	- 3	16	24	+ 8
Increasing the pay of workers	41	34	- 7	35	29	- 6	24	36	+12
Fighting graft and corruption in government	45	30	-15	31	37	+ 6	23	33	+10
Reducing the poverty of many Filipinos	29	24	- 5	40	38	- 2	31	39	+ 8
Controlling inflation	16	9	- 7	28	18	-10	56	73	+17

\* Change = Figures of December 2023 minus Figures of September 2023



## Personal Quality of Life

Beyond the geostrategic and economic challenges confronted by Filipinos, their perception on the quality of life for the past year is more positive. Gainers increased by 10 points (from 18 to 28) and the Losers decreased by 19 points (from 49 to 30), showing the Net Gainers a total of +29 points.

As for the expected change in the personal quality of life by next year, Optimism registered a significant increase of +21 points, jumping to 62 from 41. Pessimism decreased from 14 to 8 points. In total, Net Optimism doubled in this last quarter, showing an increase +27 points.

**Table 2**  
Quality of Life Indicators: **PHILIPPINES**  
In Percent  
(September and December 2023)



PulseAsia  
RESEARCH INC.

Quality of Life Indicators	Philippines			NCR			Balance Luzon			Visayas			Mindanao		
	Sep 23	Dec 23	Change * Dec23-Sep23	Sep 23	Dec 23	Change * Dec23-Sep23	Sep 23	Dec 23	Change * Dec23-Sep23	Sep 23	Dec 23	Change * Dec23-Sep23	Sep 23	Dec 23	Change * Dec23-Sep23
<b>PERSONAL QUALITY OF LIFE NOW COMPARED TO LAST YEAR</b>															
Gainers (Better now)	18	28	+10	24	30	+6	20	25	+5	19	30	+11	9	30	+21
Same as last year	33	42	+9	38	47	+9	37	49	+12	26	32	+6	27	35	+8
Losers (Worse now)	49	30	-19	37	24	-13	43	26	-17	55	38	-17	64	35	-29
Net Gainers**	-31	-2	+29	-13	+6	-7	-23	-1	+22	-36	-8	+28	-55	-5	+50
<b>PERSONAL QUALITY OF LIFE LAST YEAR IF QUALITY OF LIFE NOW IS SAME AS THEN</b>															
Very Poor	1	1	0	1	0	-1	0	0	0	0	5	+5	3	2	-1
Poor	38	34	-4	38	29	-9	43	34	-9	19	27	+8	40	46	+6
Comfortable / Neither poor nor well-off	60	63	+3	57	67	+10	57	65	+8	80	69	-11	57	50	-7
Well-off/Wealthy	1	1	0	4	4	0	0	1	+1	0	0	0	0	1	+1
<b>EXPECTED CHANGE IN PERSONAL QUALITY OF LIFE BY NEXT YEAR</b>															
Optimist (Better than now)	41	62	+21	54	59	+5	35	59	+24	55	85	+30	33	50	+17
Same as now	45	31	-14	37	35	-2	53	37	-16	35	12	-23	42	31	-11
Pessimist (Worse than now)	14	8	-6	9	7	-2	12	4	-8	10	3	-7	25	19	-6
Net Optimist***	+27	+54	+27	+45	+52	+7	+23	+55	+32	+45	+82	+37	+8	+31	+23

Notes: (1) \*Change = Figures of December 2023 minus Figures of September 2023 (2) \*\*NET GAINERS = % Gainers minus % Losers.  
(3) \*\*\*NET OPTIMIST = % Optimist minus % Pessimist

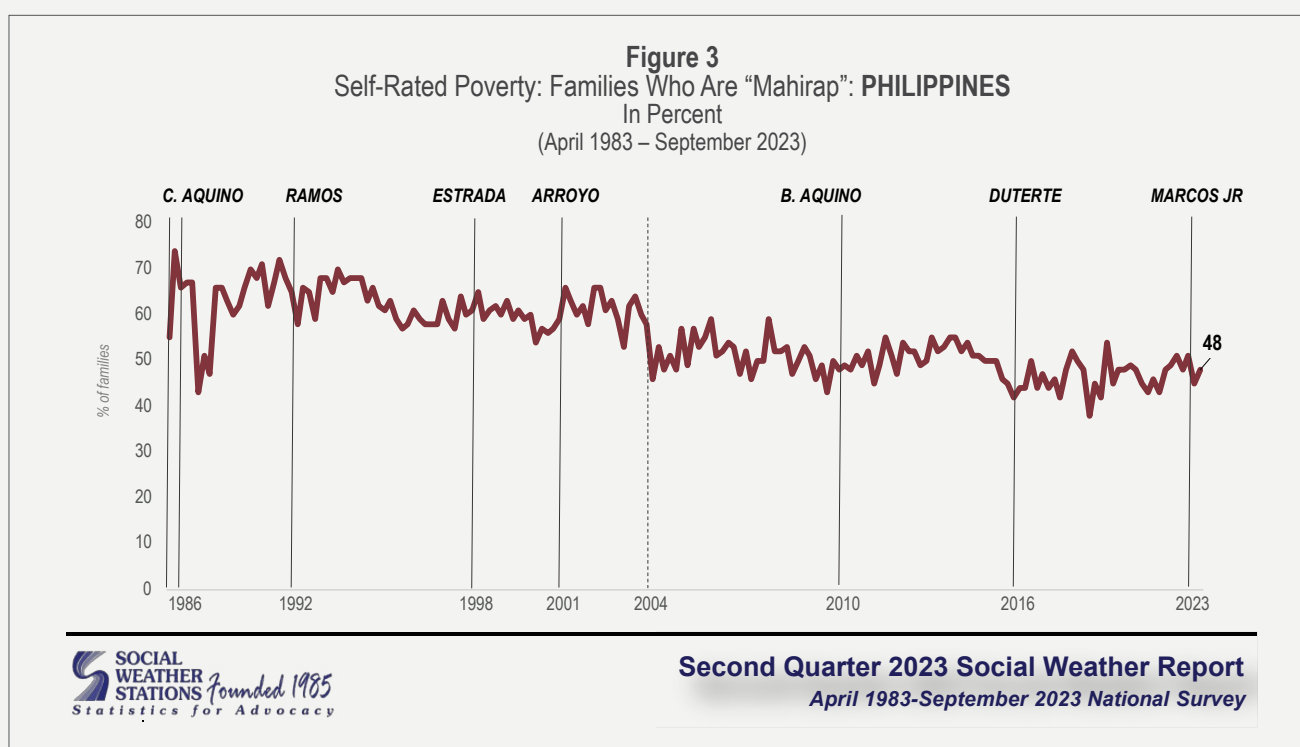
## Social Weather Stations

### Self-Rated Poverty

Poverty in the Philippines is a complex and multifaceted issue with various interconnected factors contributing to its prevalence, such as income distribution being highly skewed; rapid population growth placing a strain on resources and infrastructure; ongoing challenges in securing stable and well-paying employment; and limited access to quality education and healthcare services contribute to this cycle.

The Social Weather Stations (SWS) conducted a National Survey from September 28, 2023, to October 1, 2023, showing that 48% of Filipino households classified themselves as poor (mahirap), and 25% as not poor (hindi mahirap). The percentage of not poor families increased by 3 points from 22%, while the percentage of poor families increased by 3 points from 45%.

In September 2023, there were an estimated 13.2 million self-rated poor families, compared to 12.5 million in June 2023.



### Self-rated Food Poverty

In the same SWS survey, 9.8% of Filipino households reported going without food for at least three months or experiencing involuntary hunger. The September 2023 Hunger estimate was similar to 9.8% from March 2023 but was lower than the 10.4% in June 2023.

Conversely, according to the food habits of their families, 34% of families rated themselves as Food-Poor and 31% as Not Food-Poor.

In June 2023, 34% of households were Food-Poor, 38% were Food-Borderline, and 26% were Not Food-Poor. This is in contrast to the current data. In September 2023 and June 2023, the approximate number of families classified as Self-Rated Food Poor was 9.2 million.

Socioeconomic status is also often closely tied to income levels. A significant portion of the Philippine population may face low income and financial instability while a substantial number of people may work in low-wage or informal sectors. This makes it challenging for them to access sufficient resources and basic necessities.



**Table 3**  
Self-Rated Food Poverty: **PHILIPPINES**  
In Percent  
(Jun 2019 – Sep 2023)



## From Challenges to Solutions: Navigating a Progressive Future for the Philippines

From economic disparities to environmental concerns and governance issues, the Philippines stands at crossroads, presenting obstacles and opportunities. Government initiatives, fiscal policies, and the adaptability of businesses contribute to the nation's ability to weather economic storms. While challenges persist, the focus on building economic resilience positions the Philippines for recovery and sustained growth.

The Philippine economic scenario is complex and dynamic, and effecting solutions requires a concerted effort from all sectors of society. Embracing digitalization, adapting to shifts in the global market, prioritizing sustainable development, investing in infrastructure, and demonstrating resilience in the face of challenges are some of the key themes that will shape the nation's economic landscape.

Two surveys by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) provide insight into economic trends by market actors such as businesses and consumers. The BSP Business Expectations Survey (Fourth Quarter 2023) highlights the presence of two seasonal trends that could be carried on to the succeeding quarters of the next year, i.e., business expansions in the utilities, trade, financial, and hotels and restaurant sub-sectors and the development and launch of new products and services. In terms of the consumer index (CI), the decline in consumer spending after the holiday season and the issues of high inflation and rising interest rates, and the less favorable outlook for the next twelve months, are noteworthy.

As for the BSP Consumer Expectations Survey (Fourth Quarter 2023), greater pessimism is attributed to factors like (1) faster increase in the prices of goods; (2) lower income; (3) fewer available jobs; and (4) concerns over the effectiveness of government policies and programs on inflation management, public transportation, and financial assistance for low-income households. Also, consumer optimism is dampened by expectations of the faster increase in the prices of goods, lower income, and fewer available jobs.

In light of these economic trends, enabling business-friendly policies and the fostering of an environment supportive of trade, investments, and PPPs would be critical in promoting the country's growth and long-term development. Spurring productivity, generating employment, and creating stable livelihoods, which are all anchored on improving the economic security of Filipinos, would be attainable with the effective use and implementation of the approved national budget for 2024.

As the Philippines confronts its challenges, a proactive approach to leveraging opportunities and addressing obstacles, as well as a commitment to innovation, inclusivity, and resilience, will be the driving force propelling the country toward a more prosperous, economically secure future.

## II. FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY: LEVERAGING ON THE PHILIPPINES' MIDDLE POWER STATUS IN CONFRONTING ASYMMETRIC CHALLENGES

The last quarter of 2023 witnessed an uptick in developments in the West Philippine Sea, prompting heightened attention to the Philippine maritime territory. In the backdrop of these events, national public opinion continues to be a critical factor in the country's national and international engagements. This section covers the latest incidents in the West Philippine Sea, which remains the main security concern, particularly as civilians are involved. It will also present the results of the latest national poll on Philippine foreign and security policy and engagements.

### Continued Tensions in the West Philippine Sea

Safeguarding the West Philippine Sea is a consistent feature in the Philippines' foreign and security strategies. With its victory at the Permanent Court of Arbitration, the Philippines enjoys the support of the international community, with the collective goal of defending the international rules-based international order. In the last quarter of the year, China has displayed more aggressive actions in the West Philippine Sea, particularly against civilian vessels carrying out humanitarian missions.

During the regular resupply mission to the *BRP Sierra Madre* in *Ayungin Shoal* last December 10, China once again formed blockades, employed their swarming strategy, and used water cannons against Philippine vessels. This includes two small civilian boats, the Motor Launch (M/L) *Kalayaan* and *Unaiza May 1* (UM1), which were accompanied by Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) vessels *BRP Cabra* and *BRP Sindangan*. M/L *Kalayaan* suffered from serious engine damage due to the water cannon incident, consequently endangering the lives of the crew aboard the vessel.

Despite attempts to discourage Philippine activities in the West Philippine Sea, the vessels successfully brought the supplies to the crew in *BRP Sierra Madre*. This mission was of utmost importance because, for the first time, Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Romeo Brawner Jr joined Vice Admiral Alberto Carlos of the Western Command in leading the resupply activity. They witnessed first-hand the coercive and illegal actions inflicted by China against Philippine vessels.

On a separate occasion on December 9, vessels of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources were at Scarborough Shoal (*Panatag Shoal* or *Bajo de Masinloc*) when they were blocked, harassed, and water-cannoned at least eight times by Chinese ships. These civilian Philippine vessels were *Datu Sanday*, *Datu Bankaw*, and *Datu Tamblot*, which were on a mission to deliver oil subsidies and grocery packs to over 30 Filipino fishing vessels. According to the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea (NTF-WPS), *Datu Tamblot* sustained damage to its communications and navigation gear. Furthermore, the NTF-WPS reported that the Chinese Maritime Militia (CMM) ships used a long-range acoustic device that caused "temporary discomfort and incapacitation to some Filipino crew." The BFAR vessels also encountered Rigid Full Inflatable Boats, which were used to drive away the Philippine ships from their planned course.

According to the 2016 arbitral ruling, *Bajo de Masinloc* is a high-tide feature with a territorial sea, where Filipinos possess traditional fishing rights. Therefore, the NTF-WPS stressed that the Philippines exercises sovereignty and jurisdiction over the shoal and territorial sea based on international law.

In addition to the two missions already mentioned, a civilian-led mission referred to as the "*Atin Ito!*" (This is Ours!) coalition also witnessed the illegal actions of China in the West Philippine Sea. The group, composed of over 200 volunteers, including fisherfolk, journalists, and youth groups, embarked on a Christmas convoy in the West Philippine Sea from December 10 to 12, 2023. The convoy met its first trouble when two Chinese Navy ships, one China Coast Guard (CCG) vessel, and one cargo ship began shadowing them and displaying dangerous maneuvers in Philippine waters. This led them to forego their original plan of going to the *Ayungin Shoal* using their main vessel, *MV Kapitan Felix Oca*. Instead, the Christmas bundles were delivered to *Lawak Island* via a smaller civilian boat.

This inaugural civilian-led mission intensifies the critical role of civilians in protecting the West Philippine Sea. In 2023, the Philippine government used the strategy of publicizing all the events in the area by reporting all harassment, shadowing,

water cannon, collision, and military-grade laser incidents to the Filipino public. This has proven effective in raising the public's awareness of the issues in the West Philippine Sea and inviting their support in defending the maritime territory. Employing assertive transparency reflects the realization that this is not only an issue for defense and foreign policy stakeholders; civilians, too, have a role to play in fighting for national interests. While holding on to its legal victory, the defense of the West Philippine Sea requires a whole-of-Philippine society approach, which the country is already employing.

Aside from gray zone tactics, a narrative war on the topic of the West Philippine Sea is also being fought by China and the Philippines. China has long argued that the whole South China Sea falls under its newly extended ten-dash line mark. Therefore, any actions by the Philippines in the area are a “deliberate infringement of China’s sovereignty.” Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. has defended the Philippine position by pointing out that “only China believes in what they are saying” and that “no country in the world—none—supports unequivocally their claim to the whole of the South China Sea.” He stressed that no state has condemned the actions of the Philippines within its territory. In hindsight, this solidifies the fact that the Philippines is on the right side of history and that the law is in its favor.

## National Support for Philippine Foreign and Security Strategies

In 2023, the Philippines upheld the power of public opinion and the value of prioritizing the national interest in its domestic and international engagements. In its latest national polls in partnership with Pulse Asia Research, Inc., the Stratbase ADR Institute posted a series of questions on the country's foreign and security policy. The survey was run from December 3 to December 7.

Amidst the geopolitical challenges, Filipinos agree that the country should continue to work with like-minded states. Considering the security challenges and economic implications posed by increased tensions in the West Philippine Sea, respondents said that the Marcos Jr administration should work with the United States, Australia, and Japan to foster economic growth while upholding its 2016 arbitral victory.

**Table 4**  
Entities the Marcos Administration should Work with Amidst Continuing Tension  
in the West Philippine Sea: **PHILIPPINES**  
In Percent  
(December 3 – 7, 2023)



PulseAsia  
RESEARCH INC.

Base: Total Interviews, 100%								
In view of the continuing tension in the West Philippine Sea and its implications on the country's security and economy, which country or organization should the Marcos administration work with? You may choose up to three.	RP	LOCATION				CLASS		
		NCR	BL	VIS	MIN	ABC	D	E
United States	79	88	77	72	83	89	78	77
Australia	43	39	41	53	40	44	40	55
Japan	42	50	44	40	34	53	42	34
Canada	34	38	35	31	31	44	33	30
Great Britain / United Kingdom (UK)	22	21	17	30	25	14	23	19
European Union (EU)	17	15	16	17	19	15	17	18
Russia	16	8	15	16	22	10	18	11
South Korea	15	21	13	17	16	17	16	11
China	10	3	11	16	9	11	10	14
India	4	4	5	7	2	0	6	1
<b>UNAIDED</b>								
I don't have enough knowledge to give an opinion	2	0	3	0	3	0	2	7
None of those mentioned	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0



The responses to this question directly encourage the Marcos Jr. administration to bolster its alliance and partnerships with like-minded states. These countries have continued to voice their support for the Philippine position and have condemned Chinese actions against Filipino vessels. Their resounding statements of support boost the confidence of the Philippines in the international community.

In 2023, diplomatic and military milestones have been recorded in the Philippines' state relations. Philippine-Australia relations have been elevated into a strategic partnership. Japan is eyeing a Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) with the Philippines. The United States pushed for four new sites in the Philippines under its Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement. In June, the Philippines, Japan, and the United States held a trilateral Coast Guard maritime exercise. In the same month, these countries, together with Australia, also held a quadrilateral dialogue.

Furthermore, President Marcos Jr. has continued to engage with like-minded states through his attendance at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in San Francisco and the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit in Tokyo. Bilateral defense cooperation between the Philippines and France is set to intensify as an outcome of French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu's visit to Manila in December 2023.

These milestones show the greater geopolitical value of the Philippines in the Indo-Pacific. Hence, in the face of asymmetric security challenges, the Philippines must leverage its relations with states with shared values and with the same commitment to defend the rules-based international order.

As the survey shows, 90% of Filipinos are not in favor of working with China. This is only natural, as the Philippines continues to encounter aggressive and coercive acts in the West Philippine Sea. In addition to diplomatic protests, the Philippines is also using an economic strategy to respond to Beijing by declaring its departure from China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This was evident in the announcement of the Department of Transportation of its decision to pull out from a USD4.9 billion railway project with China. Aside from the Philippines, Italy is also withdrawing from the BRI.

**Table 5**  
Agreement on the Statement:  
"The Marcos administration can fulfill its promise of protecting the West Philippine Sea against the illegal and aggressive actions of other states": **PHILIPPINES**  
In Percent  
(December 3 – 7, 2023)

PulseAsia  
RESEARCH INC.

Base: Total Interviews, 100%								
Do you believe or not believe this statement? Would you say you...	RP	LOCATION				CLASS		
		NCR	BL	VIS	MIN	ABC	D	E
BELIEVE	55	63	57	48	49	53	56	49
Strongly believe	10	15	10	13	6	13	9	14
Somewhat believe	44	48	47	35	43	40	47	34
CANNOT SAY IF BELIEVE OR NOT BELIEVE	35	30	35	40	33	40	33	38
NOT BELIEVE	10	7	7	12	17	7	10	13
Somewhat not believe	8	7	6	10	11	6	7	12
Strongly not believe	2	0	1	2	6	0	3	1
<b>UNAIDED</b>								
I don't have enough knowledge to give an opinion	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1

Certainly, President Marcos Jr. is moving away from the previous administration's appeasement policy. He has made strong statements on the West Philippine Sea wherein he vowed not to give up a square inch of Philippine territory. According to the survey, 55% of Filipinos agree that President Marcos Jr. and his administration can fulfil their promise of protecting the West Philippine Sea against illegal and aggressive actions of other states during his term.

As he witnessed the harassment by Chinese vessels within Philippine waters, President Marcos Jr. is aware that there are gaps to be addressed. He observed that there has been "very little progress" and that diplomatic efforts with China are heading in a "poor direction." With this, he called for a "paradigm shift" in the country's approach. As the Philippines moves on its third year under his administration, the Filipino public will hold him accountable for turning these statements and planned approaches into actual, effective action.

President Marcos Jr. must also recognize and leverage the Philippines' standing as a middle power that can strategically respond to emerging asymmetric challenges, specifically in the West Philippine Sea. For Filipinos, among the effective measures that the Marcos Jr. administration should take to assert its rights in the West Philippine Sea, the respondents said that it should strengthen the external defense capability of the Philippines, especially the Navy, the Air Force, and the Coast Guard through the AFP Modernization Program. The Philippines is now in the third phase of the Revised Armed Forces of the Philippines Modernization Program, which focuses on external defense capabilities. The developments in the West Philippine Sea have certainly pushed defense institutions to recalibrate their strategies and focus on honing capabilities for external security.

**Table 6**  
Measures the Marcos Administration can do to Effectively Assert our Rights in  
the West Philippine Sea: **PHILIPPINES**  
In Percent  
(December 3 – 7, 2023)



PulseAsia  
RESEARCH INC.

In your opinion, which of the following measures can the Marcos administration do to effectively assert our rights in the West Philippine Sea? You can choose up to three.	Base: Total Interviews, 100%							
	RP	LOCATION				CLASS		
		NCR	BL	VIS	MIN	ABC	D	E
Strengthen the external defense capability of the Philippines, especially the Navy, the Air Force, and the Coast Guard through the AFP Modernization Program	67	75	70	71	53	67	68	62
Reinforce our alliances and partnerships with like-minded countries through the conduct of joint patrols and military exercises	56	61	49	72	54	53	58	48
Establish a stronger military presence in the West Philippine Sea by repairing the BRP Sierra Madre and conducting regular resupply missions, as well as ensuring control of the Ayungin Shoal	52	53	52	49	52	56	52	47
Improve inter-agency cooperation among agencies involved in maritime security	52	52	45	57	61	53	50	57
File diplomatic protests and continue to engage China diplomatically	32	36	36	21	32	35	31	38
Keep the public informed on the issues and practice transparency in the government's actions and policies related to the West Philippine Sea	31	21	38	26	27	27	33	25
<b>UNAIDED</b>								
I don't have enough knowledge to give an opinion	1	0	1	0	2	0	1	4


In addition to this, Filipinos are supportive of reinforcing alliances and partnerships with like-minded countries through the conduct of joint patrols and military exercises. This signals support for the continuation of joint military activities such as the *Balikatan* exercises with the United States, Exercise ALON with Australia, and KAMANDAG exercises with the United States, Australia, Japan, and South Korea. In the West Philippine Sea, joint maritime and air patrols were held with the United States in November 2023. Likewise, Australia and the Philippines conducted a maritime cooperative activity in the same area in the same month. These are significant milestones in establishing military interoperability and deepening trust with like-minded states. Defense Secretary Teodoro also announced that it is “very likely” that the Philippines will have more joint patrols in the West Philippine Sea in 2024. Among the countries that have expressed interest in doing so include France, India, Canada, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand.

Another measure that Filipinos support is the establishment of a stronger military presence in the West Philippine Sea by repairing the BRP Sierra Madre and conducting regular resupply missions, as well as ensuring control of the Ayungin Shoal. Although efforts are constantly blocked by China, Filipinos see these activities as a manifestation of the country’s resolve to secure its territory.

While diplomatic and military efforts are on the frontline, respondents also recognize the need to improve inter-agency cooperation among agencies involved in maritime security. This includes promoting a whole-of-Philippine society approach involving the government, private sector, and civil society organizations prioritizing the national interest.

In efforts to boost our external defense capabilities, respondents said that among the reasons to protect the West Philippine Sea include upholding the 2016 arbitral tribunal ruling that affirms our rights to the West Philippine Sea and promotes a rules-based international order. Other reasons are to maintain sovereign and territorial integrity, and to protect marine resources from further destruction, and prevent the abuse of such valuable resources.

**Table 7**  
Measures the Marcos Administration can do to Effectively Assert our Rights in  
the West Philippine Sea: **PHILIPPINES**  
In Percent  
(December 3 – 7, 2023)



PulseAsia  
RESEARCH INC.

In your opinion, what is the most important reason to defend/protect the West Philippine Sea?	Total: Base Interviews, 100%							
	RP	LOCATION				CLASS		
		NCR	BL	VIS	MIN	ABC	D	E
Uphold the 2016 Arbitral Tribunal ruling that affirms our rights to the West Philippine Sea and promotes a rules-based international order	31	42	29	40	23	36	32	25
Maintain our sovereign and territorial integrity	27	23	29	27	25	19	27	35
Protect marine resources from further destruction and prevent the abuse of such valuable resources	23	17	28	15	24	31	24	15
Secure the livelihood of Filipino fisherfolk and the safety of communities in the West Philippine Sea.	12	11	9	11	19	5	12	16
Protect economic interests as well as trade and investment activities	5	4	4	5	6	5	4	7
Hold accountable the states that engage in aggressive actions against Philippine vessels	2	1	2	2	2	5	2	1
<b>UNAIDED</b>								
I don't have enough knowledge to give an opinion	0.3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0



## A Whole-of-Philippine Society Approach in 2024

In 2024, it is certain that more asymmetric security challenges will emerge. With the rise of new technologies, cybersecurity will be at the center of foreign relations and military strategies in the coming months. This is gaining more traction as more people experience cyber risks in their daily internet use. Apart from this, traditional and nontraditional security challenges will remain, such as the issues in the West Philippine Sea. With this geopolitical landscape, the Philippines must continuously strengthen its security initiatives, with the national interest as its primordial guide.

As a middle power, the Philippines should break away from a small-state narrative and leverage its ability to confront security challenges. Its renewed position in the geopolitical arena allows it greater independence from the influence of and competition from other states. As it faces these security challenges, the Philippines must continuously work on intensifying a whole-of-Philippine society approach that recognizes the positive contributions of all sectors. Similarly, it should also pursue cooperation at the bilateral, minilateral, and multilateral levels with states that possess common values and are committed to defending the rules-based international order.

The geopolitical realities of the Indo-Pacific are reflective of the interconnected and interdependent future of states. Efforts to maintain regional peace and stability hinge on fostering collaborative efforts and sustainable partnerships among nations while ensuring that shared goals align with the evolving needs of the Philippine society. As the Philippines navigates geopolitical shifts, the desire for peace and stability will withstand any asymmetric complexities that may arise.

## III. LEGISLATIVE UPDATES AND DEVELOPMENTS

### 2024 General Appropriations Act

On December 20, 2023, the 2024 General Appropriations Act, detailing the government budget for fiscal year 2024, was approved and signed by the President. Worth PhP5.768 trillion, it is 9.49 percent higher than the PhP5.268 trillion 2023 budget.

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) received the highest budget allocation among departments for the second straight year with PhP996.8 billion, an 11.6-percent increase from its PhP893.12 billion in 2023. The Department of Transportation (DOTr) is set to receive PhP73.33 billion, down from PhP121.4 billion in 2023. However, the DOTr usually taps the budget for Unprogrammed Appropriations Support to Foreign Assisted Projects (PhP731.45 billion). A huge percent of their budget will be spent on their Rail Transport Program. Meanwhile, the Department of Health will receive PhP241.6 billion, a 15% increase from their 2023 budget (PhP209.13). DOH Budget priorities include enhancing primary healthcare facilities and medical assistance for indigents program. As a direct result of the Mandanas ruling, PhP34.54 billion has been allotted in the budget for the “special share of Local Government Units in the proceeds of national taxes”.

In his Veto Message, the President referred to the Medium-Term Fiscal Framework (MTFF) as the basis for prioritization in the 2024 budget. The MTFF's eight focus areas of the framework are (1) food security, (2) improved transportation, (3) affordable and clean energy, (4) healthcare, (5) social services, (6) education, (7) bureaucratic efficiency, and (8) sound fiscal management.

### Legislative Movements

Last July 5, 2023, the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) identified 20 bills for passage by end-2023. When Congress adjourned on December 14, 2023, four of the 20 measures have been signed into law, three are pending approval of the President, two are in the conference bicameral committee level, and the rest – all of which have been approved by the House of Representatives -- are pending with the Senate.

For clarity, below are the pending priorities of the LEDAC. Bills that have been signed into law have been removed. The priorities are categorized as follows:

**Table 8**  
Legislative Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) Pending Priorities  
(As of December 28, 2023)

PRIORITIES DEEMED FOR PASSAGE BY END OF 2023	LEDAC PRIORITIES NOT IDENTIFIED FOR YEAR-END PASSAGE	NEW PRIORITIES (LEDAC & NON-LEDAC) (added on Sept 20, 2023)
Salt Industry Development Bill	Regional Specialty Hospitals	New Government Procurement Law
Magna Carta of Seafarers	Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System (PENCAS)	Excise Tax on Single-Use Plastic
Anti-Agricultural Smuggling	Proposed Downstream Natural Gas Industry Enabling law	Cooperative Code Amendment
Package 3 (Real Property Valuation and Assessment Reform Act)	Bureau of Immigration Modernization	Fisheries Code Amendment
Ease of Paying Taxes	Negros Island Region	New Government Auditing Law
Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) and NSTP Act	National Land Use Act	Rationalization of the Mining Fiscal Regime
New Philippine Passport Act	GUIDE Act	Philippine Defense Industry Development Act
Waste-to-Energy Act	Package 4: Passive Income and Financial Intermediary Taxation Act (PIFITA)	Philippine Maritime Zones Act
E-Government Act / E-Governance Act	30- Year National Infrastructure Program Act	Open Access to Data Transmission Act
HEART Act (Medical Reserve Corps)	Amendment to Universal Health Care Act	Amendment to the Right-of-Way Act
Philippine Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC Act)	Department of Water Resources	
Virology Institute of the Philippines	Budget Modernization Bill (PFM)	
The National Government Rightsizing Act	Amendments to the Electric Power Industry Reform Act or EPIRA (Republic Act No. 9136)	
Anti-Financial Account Scamming Act	National Defense Act 2022	
Bank Deposit Secrecy		
The Military and Uniformed Personnel (MUP) Pension Act		

The four bills that were passed into law from the previous quarter were the National Employment Action Plan (Republic Act No. 11952), the Local Government Income Classification Act (Republic Act No. 11964), the PPP Code (Republic Act No. 11966), and the Internet Transactions Act (Republic Act No. 11967). Meanwhile, the Salt Industry Development Bill, the Ease of Paying Taxes, the New Philippine Passport Act, the Magna Carta for Seafarers, and the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act are all either pending the signature of the president or are pending in conference committees.

Below are the five bills pending the signature of the president or are pending in bicameral conference committees:

*Salt Industry Development Bill -- For Approval of the President*

Primarily drafted to create a roadmap to develop, modernize, and commercialize Philippine Salt, SBN2243 has been approved by both Houses and is pending transmittal to the President for his signature and approval. The bill provides support to the salt industry in the form of funding, research, and policy reform.

*Ease of Paying Taxes -- For Approval of the President*

The Ease of Paying Taxes Act has been created to streamline payment processes, especially for small to medium enterprises. This includes an invoice system to be able to process VAT refunds much faster, the creation of an online platform for faster and smoother tax transactions, and the creation of a special Bureau for medium to small enterprise transactions. The bill is pending transmittal to the President for his signature since November 28, 2023.

*New Philippine Passport Act -- For Approval of the President*

The bill was created to ensure that Philippine passports would be on par with international standards. It also ensures that passport application processes would be faster and more efficient while continuing to be secure. Special lanes will be provided for senior citizens and persons with disabilities (PWDs), and the establishment of an Electronic One-Stop Shop on the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) website are a few of the bill's objectives. The bill also establishes a passport database that holds the information of passport holders as well as a record of denials, cancellations, and lost passports. The bill is pending transmittal to the President for his signature since December 6.

*Magna Carta for Seafarers -- Conference Committee Approved by the Senate*

This bill establishes the rights and duties of seafarers and will address deficiencies in current domestic laws that might lead to the endangerment of Filipino seafarers. This bill sets up standards for healthcare, accommodation and recreation, welfare and employment, and others. This bill further defines the role of government agencies in the protection and security of Filipino seafarers by including a reintegration program, grievance systems, as well as other benefits. This bill has also been certified by the President as urgent. The bill has been approved by the Senate since December 13.

*Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act -- Pending Bicameral Conference Committee*

To recognize and prevent the overarching damage to the economy by agricultural smuggling and hoarding of, and profiteering from, agricultural products, a special law was drafted to define and penalize the same. The bill also created the Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Council to formulate a national plan to address and counter the agricultural economic sabotage crimes defined in the bill, among others.

The second regular session is regarded as the busiest session, and from the first half of the second regular session (July to December 2023), a total of seven (7) priority bills were passed into law. Apart from the four mentioned above, other bills passed in the second session included the institutionalization of the One Town, One Philippines (OTOP) Program (Republic Act No. 11960), the Establishment of Specialty Centers in Hospitals ( Republic Act No. 11959), and the Standardization and Upgrading of Benefits for Military Veterans (Republic Act No. 11958).

Sixteen priorities remain to be passed from the priority bills identified for passage by 2023. Below is the status of these LEDAC priority bills:



**Table 9**  
Legislative Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) Priorities  
Twenty Bills for Passage by the End of 2023  
(As of December 28, 2023)

BILL TITLE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES		SENATE	
	Bill No.	STATUS	Bill No.	STATUS
National Employment Action Plan	8400	Signed into Law Republic Act 11952 (September 28, 2023)	2035	Signed into Law Republic Act 11952 (September 28, 2023)
Local Government Unit Income Classification	7006	Approved by the House on March 14, 2023	2165	Signed into Law Republic Act 11964 (November 6, 2023)
PPP Act	6527	Approved by the House on December 12, 2022	2233	Signed into Law Republic Act 11966 (December 6, 2023)
Internet Transactions Act	4	Approved by the House on December 12, 2022	1846	Signed into Law Republic Act 11967 (December 6, 2023)
Salt Industry Development Bill	8278	Approved by the House on May 9, 2023	2243	Approved by both Houses. For transmittal to the President for his signature and approval (December 11, 2023)
Ease of Paying Taxes	4125	Approved by the House on September 26, 2022	2224	Approved by both Houses. For transmittal to the President for his signature and approval (November 28, 2023)
New Philippine Passport Act	6510	Approved by the House on December 12, 2022	2001	Approved by both Houses. For transmittal to the President for his signature and approval (December 6, 2023)
Magna Carta of Seafarers	7325	Approved by the House on March 6, 2023	2221	Conference Committee Approved by the Senate (December 13, 2023)
Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act	3917	Approved by the House on December 12, 2022	2432	Pending Bicameral Conference Committee (December 12, 2023)
Package 3 (Real Property Valuation and Assessment Reform Act)	6558	Approved by the House on December 15, 2022	2386	Undergoing Interpellation – Senators dela Rosa (September 12, 2023) and Hontiveros (September 13, 2023) Sen. Pimentel (December 6 and 13, 2023)

BILL TITLE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES		SENATE	
	Bill No.	STATUS	Bill No.	STATUS
E-Government Act / E-Governance Act	7327	Approved by the House on May 7, 2023	334, 455, 974, 982, 1867, 1978	Conducted Committee Meetings/Hearings (May 22, June 7, Oct. 25, and Nov 16 and 29, 2023)
The Military and Uniformed Personnel (MUP) Pension Act	8969	Approved by the House (September 26, 2023)	2501	Calendared for Special order (December 4, 2023) Substituted SBNs 59, 284, 910, 1421 November 29, 2023)
Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) and NSTP Act	6687	Approved by the House on December 15, 2022	2034	Undergoing Interpellation - Senator Padilla (August 7, 2023) Escudero (August 9, 2023) Gatchalian, Legarda, Tolentino (September 25, 2023)
Waste Treatment Technology Act	6444	Approved by the House on December 12, 2022	2267	Substituted SBNs 151 and 177 (July 25, 2023)
HEART Act (Medical Reserve Corps)	6518	Approved by the House on December 12, 2022	88, 255, 892, 1017, 1120, 1131, 1180, 1423, 1475, 1647, 1915	Referred to the Committees on Health and Demography; Local Government and Finance (February 27 2023) Conducted TWG on December 6, 2022 and February 23, 2023 Conducted Meeting/Hearing on November 24, 2022
Philippine Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC Act)	6522	Approved by the House on December 12, 2022	1869	Certified by the President of the Philippines for its IMMEDIATE enactment on March 14, 2023 Pending Second Reading (February 13, 2023)
Virology Institute of the Philippines	6452	Approved by the House on December 5, 2022	196, 281, 489, 599, 941, 981, 1130, 1161, 1322, 1363, 1818, 1890, 1928	Referred to the Sub-Committee on Center for Disease Control and Prevention (March 6 2023)
The National Government Rightsizing Act	7240	Approved by the House on March 14, 2022	890, 1474, 1779, 2126	Referred to the Committees on Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation and Finance (May 10, 2023)

BILL TITLE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES		SENATE	
	Bill No.	STATUS	Bill No.	STATUS
Bank Deposit Secrecy	7446	Approved by the House on May 8, 2023 Referred to the Senate Committee on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies (May 15, 2023)	596, 1068, 1839	Referred to the Committee on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies (February 7, 2023)
Anti-Financial Account Scamming Act	7393	Approved by the House on May 8, 2023 Referred to the Senate Committee on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies, and Justice and Human Rights (May 15, 2023)	2407	Referred to the Senate Committee on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies and Justice and Human Rights (August 22, 2023)

**Table 10**  
New LEDAC Priorities Added on September 20, 2023  
(As of September 21, 2023)

BILL TITLE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES		SENATE	
	Bill No.	STATUS	Bill No.	STATUS
Excise Tax on Single-Use Plastic	4102	Approved by the House on November 14, 2022, and sent to the Senate on November 15, 2022 Referred to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means (November 12, 2022)	246, 1844	Referred to the Committees on Environment; Natural Resources and Climate Change; Trade, Commerce, and Entrepreneurship; Ways and Means; and Finance (August 3, 2022)
Rationalization of the Mining Fiscal Regime	8937	Approved by the House (September 26, 2023)	-	-
New Government Procurement Law	-	-	-	-
New Government Auditing Law	-	-	-	-
Philippine Defense Industry Development Act	1616, 3393, 6622, 6667, 8373	Referred to the Committee on National Defense (August 2, 2022)	315, 505	Conducted Joint Committee Hearings/Meetings (August 7, 2023) Referred to the Committee on National Defense and Security, Peace, Unification and Reconciliation (August 8, 2022)
Open Access to Data Transmission Act	6	Approved by the House on December 12, 2022, and sent	815, 1213, 1876, 2146	Conducted Joint Committee Hearings/Meetings



BILL TITLE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES		SENATE	
	Bill No.	STATUS	Bill No.	STATUS
		to the Senate on December 14, 2022		(May 22, 2023) Referred to the Committees on Science and Technology and Public Services (May 15, 2023)
Philippine Maritime Zones Act	2467	Approved by the House on May 29, 2023, and sent to the Senate on May 30, 2023	852, 1089, 1353, 1649, 2294, 2394, 2411, 2437	Referred to the Special Committee on Philippine Maritime and Admiralty Zones (August 9, 2023)
Amendment to the Right-of-Way Act	1837	Approved by the House on February 6, 2023, and sent to the Senate on February 7, 2023	1537	Referred to the Committees on Public Works, Justice and Human Rights, and Ways and Means (November 28, 2022)
Cooperative Code Amendment	1333, 9159	Pending with the Committee on Cooperative Development (August 1, 2023)	418, 2378	Conducted TWG (February 23, 2023) Referred to the Committees on Cooperatives and Ways and Means (August 7, 2023)
Fisheries Code Amendment	-	-	-	-

**Table 11**  
Other LEDAC Priorities  
(As of September 20, 2023)

BILL TITLE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES		SENATE	
	Bill No.	STATUS	Bill No.	STATUS
Regional Specialty Hospitals	7751	Signed into law as Republic Act No. 11959 (August 24, 2023)	2212	Signed into law as Republic Act No. 11959 (August 24, 2023)
Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System (PENCAS)	8443	Approved by the House on August 2, 2023 and Sent to the Senate on August 3, 2023	2439	Period for Interpellation Closed (September 26, 2023)
Proposed Downstream Natural Gas Industry Enabling Law	8456	Approved by the House on August 2, 2023 and Sent to the Senate on August 3, 2023	152, 1944, 1991, 2247	Referred to the Committees on Energy; Ways and Means and Finance (May 29, 2023) Conducted Joint Committee Hearing (August 10, 2023)
Bureau of Immigration Modernization	8203	Approved by the House on May 29, 2023	410, 1085, 1185	Referred to the Committees on Justice and Human

BILL TITLE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES		SENATE	
	Bill No.	STATUS	Bill No.	STATUS
		Referred to the Senate Committees on Justice and Human Rights, Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation, and Finance (July 25, 2023)		Rights; Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation and Finance (September 7, 2022)
Negros Island Region	7355	Approved by the House on March 6, 2023	89, 812, 1236, 1422, 1469	Conducted Joint Committee Meetings/Hearings (Dec. 5, 2022 and Feb. 7, 2023)
National Land Use Act	8162	Approved by the House on May 22, 2023		Referred to the Committees on Environment, Natural Resources And Climate Change; Urban Planning, Housing And Resettlement And Finance (May 24, 2023)
GUIDE Act	1	Approved by the House on December 15, 2022	411, 506, 674, 1129, 1182, 1640	Referred to the Committees on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies; Government Corporations and Public Enterprises; Ways and Means and Finance (January 23, 2023)
Package 4: Passive Income and Financial Intermediary Taxation Act (PIFITA)	4339	Approved by the House on November 14, 2022	900, 1347, 1364, 1848	Referred to the Committee on Ways and Means (February 7, 2023)
30- Year National Infrastructure Program Act	8078	Approved by the House on May 22, 2023 Referred to the Senate Committees on Public Works, Sustainable Development Goals, Innovation and Futures Thinking, and Finance (May 24, 2023)	158, 1563	Referred to the Senate Committees on Public Works, Sustainable Development Goals, Innovation and Futures Thinking, and Finance (December 2022) Conducted Joint Committee Hearing (March 20, 2023) and TWG (August 10 and 17, 2023)
Amendment to Universal Health Care Act	6772	Approved by the House on March 21, 2023 Referred to the Senate Committees on Health and Demography and Finance (May 9, 2023)	335, 644, 723, 1791	Referred to the Senate Committees on Health and Demography, and Finance (February 9, 2023)
Department of Water Resources	21, 55, 144, 482, 858, 1014, 2298, 2523, 2538, 2690, 2818, 2880,	Pending in Committee (Government Reorganization), May 12, 2023	2013, 1395, 1244, 1021, 185, 268, 102, 87	Referred to the Committees on Public Services; Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation and

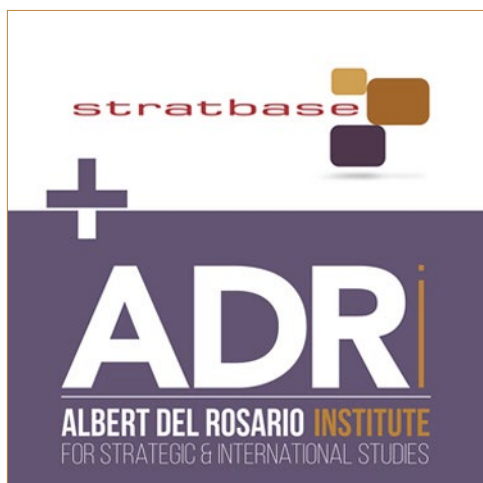
BILL TITLE	HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES		SENATE	
	Bill No.	STATUS	Bill No.	STATUS
	3082, 3226, 3237, 3302, 3435, 3610, 3677, 3727, 3886, 4057, 4326, 4535, 4536, 4865, 5177, 5205, 5810, 5877, 6266, 6306, 6311, 6360, and 6463			Finance (March 20, 2023)
Budget Modernization Bill (PFM)	19, 418, 6384, 3419, 4114, 4260 4650, 5266, 5809, 7749, 8087	Referred to the Committee on Appropriations (May 17, 2023)	1020, 2045	Referred to the Committee on Finance (September 5, 2022) Conducted Committee Meeting/Hearing (July 6, 2023)
Amendments to the Electric Power Industry Reform Act or EPIRA (Republic Act No. 9136)	3430, 3432, 4263, 8151	Pending in Committee (Energy), May 17, 2022	486, 1612, 1975	Referred to the Committees on Government Corporations and Public Enterprises and Energy (March 8, 2023)
National Defense Act	11, 869, 1656, 2976, 4082, 4096, 4640, 6376, 6054, 6400, 6619, 7701	Referred to the Committee on National Defense and Security (March 22, 2023)	980, 1390, 1747, 1946, 2046	Referred to the Committee(s) on National Defense and Security, Peace, Unification and Reconciliation; Ways and Means and Finance (May 8, 2023) Conducted Joint Committee Meeting/Hearing (March 7, 2023)

The Calendar of the Second Regular Session is currently in its adjournment phase (December 16, 2023 up to January 21, 2024) and the Resumption of Session is set on January 22, 2024 until March 22, 2024. The Adjournment of Session is set on March 23 until April 28, 2024.



# POLÍTICA

CRITICAL ISSUES OF PHILIPPINE POLITY



## STRATBASE ADR INSTITUTE

is an independent international and strategic research organization with the principal goal of addressing the issues affecting the Philippines and East Asia

The Financial Tower  
6794 Ayala Avenue, Makati City  
Philippines 1226

V (632) 88921751  
F (632) 88921754

[www.stratbase.ph](http://www.stratbase.ph)

Copyright © 2023 Stratbase ADR Institute  
All rights reserved.