

POLÍTIKA

CRITICAL ISSUES OF PHILIPPINE POLITY

3RD QUARTER



The 2025 Philippine Midterm Elections

The midterm electoral issues include corruption, job creation, investment-led growth, urgent national concerns, and the public's rejection of a pro-China candidate

Foreign and Security Policy

Recent partnerships and alliance-nurturing efforts echo and promote the usefulness of collaborative diplomacy in addressing burning geopolitical issues

Legislative Updates and Developments

All but two of the 28 LEDAC priorities identified on July 25, 2024 have been passed. Congress will resume on November 4 until December 20

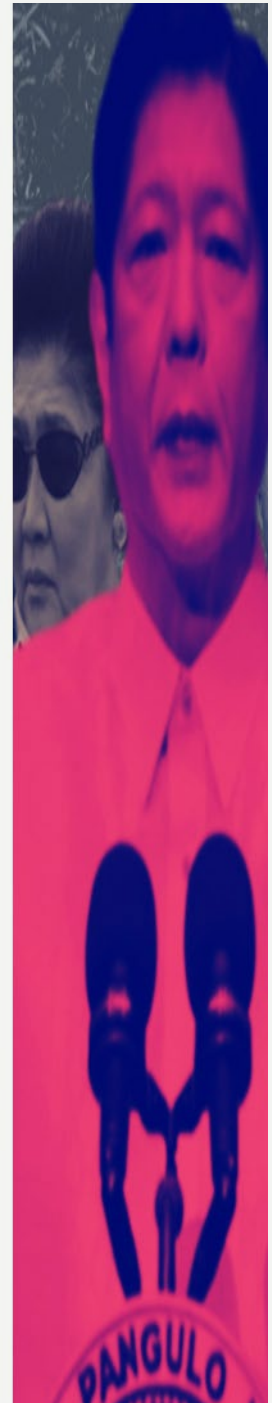
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OVERVIEW

The third quarter issue of POLITIKA 2024 contemplates the 2025 Philippine Midterm Elections, which coincides with the Marcos Jr.'s administration's halfway term.

Concerns, issues, and processes surrounding the electoral contest include a snapshot of the current political dynamics and its possible impact on President Marcos Jr.'s legacy and continuity. It also reflects the public's sentiments on the most important national issues, corruption, and the administration's ratings.

Meanwhile, national electoral issues pertain to fighting corruption, job creation, financial literacy, quality education, and peace and order. Particular to corruption, Filipinos overwhelmingly demand from government to hold corrupt officials accountable, emphasizing the importance of controlling corruption in building trust in government and economic growth.

Among the electoral issues and concerns, it is also noteworthy that a significant majority of the Filipino electorate aired that they would not support a pro-China candidate.

On the Foreign Security and Policy section, the continuing collaborative diplomacy being practiced by the Marcos Jr. presidency is discussed, emphasizing key developments in Philippines' partnerships and cooperation with like-minded states.

Congress will resume on November 4, 2024; lawmakers will be in session until December 20, 2024. They will adjourn from December 21, 2024 to January 12, 2025.

I. THE 2025 PHILIPPINE MIDTERM ELECTIONS

Beyond the political bickering, which has traditionally characterized electoral dynamics in the Philippines, midterm elections are perceived as part and parcel of the evolving dynamics of democracy in our society.

On the Midterm Electoral Contest

Midterm elections in the Philippines are a gauge of public satisfaction with the incumbent administration. At the district and national levels, the electoral contest is vital to configuring the composition of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Consequently, the outcomes of midterm elections significantly foretell the capacity of the president to govern effectively, with a supportive or opposition legislative body aiding or complicating the implementation of the Executive's agenda.

The contest also offers a snapshot of voter sentiment that in turn provides insights into the prevailing public opinion and the potential trends leading up to the next presidential election, in this case, in 2028.

Fourth, midterm elections are a crucial time where powerful political families or dynasties do everything to secure their influence. In another context, this is also a period for new political aspirants to challenge the dominance of the prominent families, potentially paving the way for fresh faces in politics, or reinforcing existing political dynasties.

On President Marcos Jr.'s Legacy and Continuity

Success in the midterms could be vital to President Marcos' legacy as it would ensure that his legislative agenda is pushed throughout the remainder of his term. This will only happen if majority of the candidates he endorsed will win in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Having his endorsed candidates win would provide President Marcos with enough clout to support and anoint a successor for the 2028 presidential elections.

The midterms, moreover, serve as a crucial opportunity for President Marcos to consolidate power, groom a successor, strengthen his influence by endorsing candidates who align with his agenda, and secure their victories in the legislative bodies.

The significance of President Marcos' success in the midterms lies in several key aspects.

1. **Legislative Agenda:** Success in the midterms ensures that President Marcos' legislative agenda will progress smoothly. If the majority of the candidates he endorses win in the Senate and the House, it secures the passage of his proposed laws and policies.
2. **Clout for Future Elections:** A strong showing in the midterms provides President Marcos with the influence and support needed to endorse and back a successor in the 2028 presidential elections. This success can shape the political landscape for future elections.
3. **Consolidation of Power:** Winning in the midterms allows President Marcos to consolidate his power base and potentially groom a successor. It solidifies his position within the government and strengthens his ability to implement policies and initiatives.
4. **Influence in the Senate:** Securing victories for his endorsed candidates in the Senate gives President Marcos a significant presence and influence in the high-profile chamber. This influence can help shape legislation, investigations, and government decisions.
5. **Legacy Building:** The success in the midterms is crucial to President Marcos' legacy. It can determine how his presidency is remembered and how his policies leave an impact on the country's future.

Table 1
Most Important Issues That Candidates For Senator in the May 2025 Elections Should Carry
as their Platforms: **PHILIPPINES**
In Percent / Multiple Response, Up to 3
(September 6 – 13, 2024 / Philippines / PR1)



PulseAsia
RESEARCH INC.

Base: Those who are registered voters in their city/municipality, 91%								
What do you think are the most important issues that candidates for senator in the May 2025 elections should carry as their platforms? You may choose up to three. You may mention others not in the list.	RP	LOCATION				CLASS		
		NCR	BL	VIS	MIN	ABC	D	E
Job creation, livelihood generation, and financial literacy	57	70	57	60	47	60	56	61
Investment-led economic growth	44	41	47	50	32	46	45	33
Fighting corruption	41	41	37	42	46	43	39	47
Quality healthcare	33	36	30	36	33	31	31	40
Quality education	29	25	30	31	27	28	30	22
Peace and order	24	27	20	28	26	20	24	22
Wider internet access or connectivity	19	9	29	11	11	12	19	20
Building various renewable energy sources	18	17	23	10	15	19	17	20
Reliable mass transportation	17	11	20	13	18	15	18	9
Illegal drugs	15	14	5	14	34	15	14	21
I don't have enough knowledge to give an opinion	0.4	1	0	0	1	3	0	0
<u>UNAIDED</u>								
None	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The Most Important National Electoral Issues

In another commissioned survey conducted by Pulse Asia Research, Inc., the important issues that candidates for senator in the May 2025 elections should carry as their platforms pertain to job creation, livelihood generation, and financial literacy (57%), investment-led economic growth (44%), fighting corruption (41%), quality healthcare (29%), and peace and order (24%).

Anti-Corruption Survey

As corruption obviously represents an important common concern or issue in the 2025 midterm elections, the second anti-corruption survey was also commissioned by the Stratbase ADR Institute to Pulse Asia, Inc.

In its September 6-13 survey on corruption, Pulse Asia found that the overwhelming belief of demanding accountability for corruption is prevalent among Filipinos across demographics and class categories. Equally important are the perception that controlling corruption offers very important benefits to the nation. Not being able to control corrupt practices in the country has the most affective and debilitating impact.

The findings of the commissioned anti-corruption Pulse Asia survey revealed that nine out of 10 Filipinos or 91% agreed that "Government officials involved in corruption must be held accountable," with 54% strongly agreeing and 38% saying they somewhat agree. Ambivalence or the state of being not able to say they agree or disagree is only 9%, while disagreement is nil.

Table 2
AGREEMENT/ DISAGREEMENT WITH TEST STATEMENT:
"Government officials involved in corruption must be held accountable.": PHILIPPINES
 In Percent
 (September 6 – 13, 2024 / Philippines / PR1)



PulseAsia
RESEARCH INC.

Base: Total Interviews, 100%								
How much do you agree or disagree with this statement? Would you say you... [SHOWCARD]?	RP	LOCATION				CLASS		
		NCR	BL	VIS	MIN	ABC	D	E
AGREE	98	98	86	95	94	96	91	92
Strongly Agree	54	65	40	72	61	57	53	60
Somewhat Agree	38	33	47	23	33	39	38	33
CANNOT SAY IF AGREE OR DISAGREE	9	2	13	5	6	4	9	7
DISAGREE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somewhat Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
I don't have enough knowledge to give an opinion	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Second, the survey further showed that the most beneficial impact of controlling corruption, or the benefits which can be derived from it, refers to having an "Increased trust of citizens in gov-ernment," which garnered 61%. This was followed by "Improving the lives of ordinary citizens" at 58%, "Economic growth" at 52%, "Achieving good governance" at 45%, "Effective delivery of services" at 40%, and "The efficient utilization of government funds and resources" at 35%.

Table 3
Beneficial Impact Of Controlling Corruption: **PHILIPPINES**
In Percent / Multiple Response, Up to
(September 6 – 13, 2024 / Philippines / PR1)



PulseAsia
RESEARCH INC.

Base: Total Interviews, 100%								
Of the following which benefits might be derived from controlling corruption in government? You may choose up to three. You may mention others not in the list	RP	LOCATION				CLASS		
		NCR	BL	VIS	MIN	ABC	D	E
Increased trust of citizens in government	61	70	59	68	55	58	62	60
Improving the lives of ordinary citizens	58	47	71	54	44	61	59	53
Economic growth	52	66	40	69	53	59	50	59
Achieving good governance	45	42	48	31	50	38	46	38
Effective delivery of public services	40	39	39	39	45	34	39	50
The efficient utilization of government funds and resources	35	32	32	37	40	36	35	31
I don't have enough knowledge to give an opinion	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	3

PR1, Q46. Sa mga sumusunod, alin ang maaaring maging benepisyo ng pagkontrola ng katiwalian sa pamahalaan? Maaari kayong pumili ng hanggang tatlo. Maaari kayong magbanggit ng iba pang wala sa listahan.

Third, as to the debilitating effect of corruption on the public, two in three Filipinos or 65% say that the most affective impact of corruption pertains to the “Loss of trust in government services and public officials.” This is followed by a plurality of Filipinos referring to “Worsening poverty” (51%), “Inefficient service delivery” (45%), “Abuse and intimidation by members of the government” (43%), “Being desensitized to corrupt practices in government / attitude towards corrupt practices” (41%), and “Significant loss of funds that could have been devoted to addressing social issues such as poverty, healthcare, and employment” (39%). Further, 11% referred to having a “Non-competitive economy” as the other impact of corruption.

Table 4
Effects Of Corruption That Affect Them The Most: **PHILIPPINES**
In Percent/ Multiple Response, Up To 3 Allowed
(September 6 – 13, 2024 / Philippines / PR1)



PulseAsia
RESEARCH INC.

Base: Total Interviews, 100%								
Which of the following effects of corruption affect you the most? You may choose up to three. You may mention others not in the list	RP	LOCATION				CLASS		
		NCR	BL	VIS	MIN	ABC	D	E
Loss of trust in government and public officials	65	76	65	58	64	63	65	64
Worsening poverty	51	60	50	47	51	58	50	56
Inefficient service delivery	45	43	40	52	49	33	48	31
Abuse and intimidation by members of the government of those who require permission or government services, such as the continuous prevalence of bribery	43	35	45	54	35	41	44	41
Being desensitized to corrupt practices in government / attitude towards corrupt practices	41	28	51	37	29	39	41	39
Significant loss of funds that could have been devoted to addressing social issues such as poverty, healthcare, and employment	39	49	34	35	47	49	37	46
Non-competitive economy	11	6	10	13	13	11	11	11
I don't have enough knowledge to give an opinion	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
UNAIDED								
None	0.04	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

In a nutshell, the survey results on corruption demonstrate the importance of controlling corruption for the economic and political well-being of the population and institutions. The survey also highlights the importance of controlling corruption in regaining public trust in government and for government to heed to the demand of making its officials accountable for corrupt practices.


The Anti-China Sentiment

Contextualized by the persistent aggression perpetrated by China in the West Philippine Sea and its penetration of various domains of Philippine society, sentiments on supporting a pro-China candidate in the May 2025 national elections are minimal. At the national level, only 5% of Filipinos say they "will support" a pro-China candidate, while 73% or a little more than seven out of 10 Filipinos say they "will not support" such candidate.

Across demographics and classes, support is nil, and the only noticeable support that can be seen is in Mindanao (10%) and among class ABC (10%).

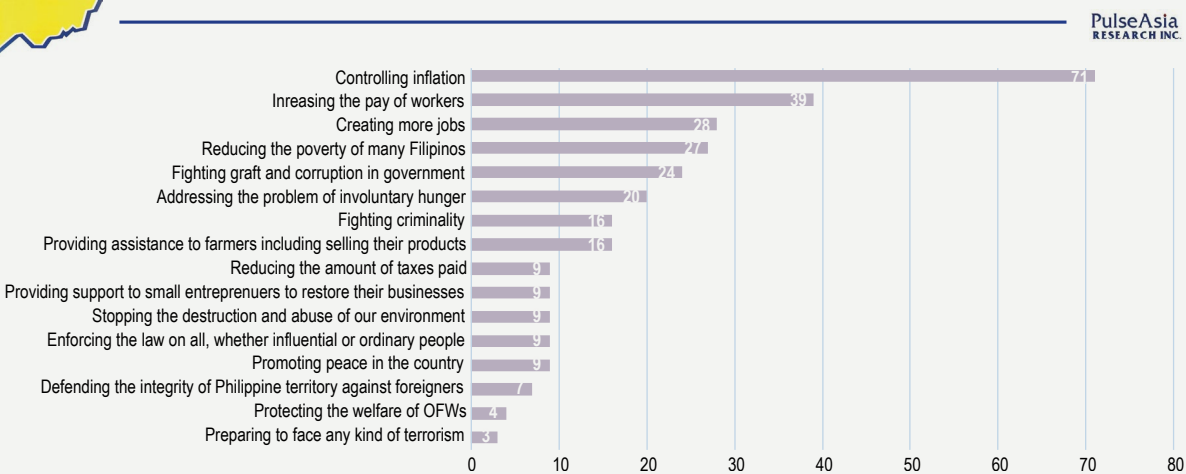
While rejection of support is unanimously more than the majority population across demographics and class categories, from 72% to 85%, ambivalence (23% at the national level) is noticeable in Balance Luzon (32%) and among class D (23%) and class E (24%).

Table 5
Whether Or Not They Are Going To Support A Pro-China Candidate In The May 2025 National Elections
: PHILIPPINES
In Percent
(September 6 – 13, 2024 / Philippines / PR1)



Base: Those who are registered voters in their city/municipality, 91%								
Are you going to support a candidate in the May 2025 national elections who is PRO-CHINA at present or in the past?	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

Figure 1
Most Urgent National Concerns: PHILIPPINES
In Percent / Multiple Response, Up to
(September 6 – 13, 2024 / Philippines / PR1)



*Change = Figures of September 2024 minus Figures of June 2024

Most Urgent National Concerns

For the third quarter of 2024, seven out of 10 Filipinos or 71% are still greatly concerned about controlling inflation, posting a 1-percentage-point decrease compared to the second quarter, according to the Pulse Asia survey for the period September 6-13, 2024. This is followed by the concern on increasing the pay of workers (39%), creating more jobs (28%), and reducing the poverty of many Filipinos (27%). Beyond these gut issues, moreover, there is also the concern about fighting graft and corruption, which is a top-of-mind concern for 24% of Filipinos.

Comparative Ratings of the National Administration

With regard to selected national issues, the national administration's current performance garnered majority ratings in addressing the following: Protecting the welfare of OFWs (65%, from 70% last quarter) and Responding to the needs of areas affected by calamities (59%, from 64% last quarter). A larger plurality of Filipinos accorded the administration the following ratings: Defending the integrity of Philippine territory against foreigners (47%), Promoting peace in the country (47%), Fighting criminality (42%), Stopping the destruction and abuse of our environment (40%), Enforcing the law on all, whether influential or ordinary people (39%), and Providing assistance to farmers including selling their products (36%).

But when it comes to addressing the most urgent national concerns, the administration continued to have lower or very low ratings in terms of Creating more jobs (28%), Increasing the pay of workers (21%), Fighting graft and corruption in government (18%), Reducing the poverty of many Filipinos (14%), and Controlling inflation (2%).

Table 6
Comparative Performance Ratings Of The National Administration On Selected National Issues:
PHILIPPINES
In Percent
(June and September 2024)



PulseAsia
RESEARCH INC.

Selected National Issues	Approval		Change*	Undecided		Change*	Disapproval		Change*
	Jun 24 (A)	Sep 24 (B)		Jun 24 (C)	Sep 24 (D)		Jun 24 (E)	PR182 Sep 24 (F)	
Protecting the welfare of OFWs	70	65	-5	24	24	0	6	10	+4
Responding to the needs of areas affected by calamities	64	59	-5	29	32	+3	7	9	+2
Defending the integrity of Philippine territory against foreigners	48	47	-1	34	34	0	18	18	0
Promoting peace in the country	47	47	0	36	36	0	17	17	0
Fighting criminality	47	42	-5	32	37	+5	21	21	0
Stopping the destruction and abu: of our environment	46	40	-6	35	41	+6	19	19	0
Enforcing the law on all, whether influential or ordinary people	43	39	-4	38	45	+7	19	17	-2
Providing assistance to farmers including selling their products	46	36	-10	35	41	+6	19	23	+4
Creating more jobs	32	28	-4	38	40	+2	30	31	+1
Addressing the problem of involuntary hunger	26	21	-5	39	42	+3	35	37	+2
Increasing the pay of workers	24	21	-3	36	41	+5	39	38	-1
Fighting graft and corruption in government	24	18	-6	37	38	+1	39	44	+5
Reducing the poverty of many Filipinos	17	14	-3	32	39	+7	51	47	-4
Controlling inflation	5	2	-3	19	17	-2	76	81	+5

II. FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY – CONTINUING COLLABORATIVE DIPLOMACY

Viewing the international relations landscape and rising geopolitical tensions in a multipolar lens offers a more comprehensive approach than a unilinear perspective. Cases in point are the most recent partnerships and alliance-nurturing efforts of Philippine President Marcos Jr.

The Japan-Philippines 2+2 Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting

On July 8, 2024, the signing of the Philippines-Japan Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) during the Japan-Philippines 2+2 Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting highlighted enhanced security cooperation and regional partnerships. The agreement is a significant milestone that enhances military cooperation by allowing easier entry of foreign personnel and equipment for visiting forces, setting the stage for expanded regional security cooperation through multi-layered partnerships.

The RAA reflects a shared commitment to regional security and stability and to the rules-based international order. Through the RAA, the two countries shall establish a framework for cooperative activities which encompass access and movement of members, vessels, aircrafts, and other official vehicles of the visiting forces.

The 4th Philippines-US Foreign and Defense Ministerial Dialogue (2+2 Dialogue)

The 4th Philippines-US Foreign and Defense Ministerial Dialogue (2+2 Dialogue) was held in Manila on July 30, 2024, covering discussions on security, economic cooperation, and people-to-people ties between the two nations.

An allocation of USD500 million in foreign military financing was granted to the Philippines to support the modernization of the Armed Forces and Coast Guard. This mirrors a significant investment in defense capabilities and a strengthening of the U.S.-Philippines alliance.

Moreover, the Philippines-Security Sector Assistance Roadmap (P-SSAR) was finalized. This will guide shared defense modernization planning and investments over the next five to 10 years, aligning the joint priorities of the Philippines and the United States. It will also inform the delivery of priority for the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine Coast Guard.

Multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity (MMCA)

Australia, Canada, the Philippines, and the United States conducted the first Multilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity (MMCA) in the West Philippine Sea to enhance interoperability and cooperation among their armed forces. The MMCA involved various events such as communication exercises, anti-submarine warfare exercises, and replenishment at sea, showcasing naval and air assets from the participating countries.

The exercise aimed to strengthen regional security, foster cooperation with like-minded partners, and maintain stability in the Indo-Pacific region, in line with the 2016 Arbitral Tribunal ruling, and a free and open Indo-Pacific.

In essence, the Philippines started to practice collaborative diplomacy during the unravelling and demise of the pro-China stance of the Duterte administration, which was formally encouraged and strengthened by the strong and emphatic announcements and press releases of President Marcos Jr. on the legitimate rights of Filipinos on the West Philippine Sea.

Nurturing Partnerships with Like-minded Partners

The Philippines continues its pursuit of robust relationships with like-minded partners. In the Stratbase ADR Institute-

Table 7
Most Trusted Partners In National Development: **PHILIPPINES**
In Percent/ Multiple Response, Up To 3 Allowed
(September 6 – 13, 2024 / Philippines / PR1)



PulseAsia
RESEARCH INC.

Base: Total Interviews, 100%								
Among the following, who are the most trusted partners in national development of the Philippines? You may choose up to three	RP	LOCATION				CLASS		
		NCR	BL	VIS	MIN	ABC	D	E
UNITED STATES	79	79	81	88	69	64	82	74
JAPAN	50	61	54	41	41	47	50	47
CANADA	43	32	46	49	37	50	43	37
AUSTRALIA	42	43	33	44	61	42	43	40
GREAT BRITAIN / UNITED KINGDOM (UK)	18	14	15	20	25	15	16	30
EUROPEAN UNION OR EU	15	12	14	21	15	16	16	11
SOUTH KOREA	13	11	14	12	14	15	14	11
RUSSIA	7	7	5	5	11	12	6	5
INDIA	2	4	0	3	4	1	1	5
CHINA	1	1	0	2	1	0	1	0
<u>UNAIDED</u>								
Cannot say / Refused / None	6	7	8	3	2	10	5	7
Refused	0.4	1	0	2	0	6	0	0
None	2	4	3	1	2	4	2	5

Table 8
Most Beneficial Economic Partners: **PHILIPPINES**
In Percent/ Multiple Response, Up To 3 Allowed
(September 6 – 13, 2024 / Philippines / PR1)



PulseAsia
RESEARCH INC.

Base: Total Interviews, 100%								
Among the following, who are the most beneficial economic partners of the Philippines? You may choose up to three	RP	LOCATION				CLASS		
		NCR	BL	VIS	MIN	ABC	D	E
UNITED STATES	66	74	75	63	46	59	66	67
JAPAN	43	58	52	37	21	44	43	42
AUSTRALIA	32	36	32	27	32	26	34	24
CANADA	31	23	33	27	36	28	31	30
GREAT BRITAIN / UNITED KINGDOM (UK)	16	9	17	22	11	15	16	14
SOUTH KOREA	15	13	15	12	20	13	15	16
EUROPEAN UNION OR EU	12	11	8	12	22	17	12	12
RUSSIA	11	7	4	19	20	13	11	9
INDIA	8	3	1	19	14	4	8	10
CHINA	7	4	0	14	18	13	7	5
<u>UNAIDED</u>								
Cannot say / Refused / None	7	9	10	3	2	8	6	12
Cannot say	3	3	4	0	1	0	3	4
Refused	0.4	1	0	2	0	6	0	0
None	4	5	6	1	1	2	3	9

commissioned survey conducted by Pulse Asia Research Inc. from September 6 to 13, 2024, the United States remains the most trusted partner of Filipinos for national development at 79%. This is followed by Japan (50%), Canada (43%), and Australia (42%). It is also worth noting that 99% of Filipinos do not trust China.

These numbers are relevant as the Philippines remains confronted with asymmetric security challenges in the maritime, aerial, and cyber domains.

The same survey revealed that the United States is also the most beneficial economic partner of the Philippines with 66%. Other beneficial economic partners are Japan (43%), Australia (32%), and Canada (31%).

III. LEGISLATIVE UPDATES AND DEVELOPMENTS

Congress adjourned on September 25, 2024 and will resume on November 4, 2024. House of Representatives Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez has again touted the accomplishments of the House of Representatives (HRep), having passed all but two of the 28 Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) priorities identified on July 25, 2024. Amendments to the Agrarian Reform and Foreign Investors' Long-Term Lease Acts are still pending in both houses.

In addition, Congress has passed, and the President has signed, three of the stated priority bills, namely, the Amendments to the Government Procurement Reform Act, Anti-Financial Accounts Scamming Act, and Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act)

Both chambers have sent three bills to the President for his approval (Self-Reliant Defense Posture Revitalization Act, the VAT on Digital Services, and Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning Act), approved four bicameral conference committee reports (Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act, Philippine Maritime Zones Act, Enterprise-Based Education and Training Framework Act, and CREATE MORE Act), and delegated conferees to two bicameral conference committees (Amendments to the Rice Tariffication Law, and Blue Economy Act). Amendments to the Universal Health Care Act have been sent by the Senate to the Lower House for concurrence. Finally, thirteen priority bills passed by the HRep remain pending at the Senate (Department of Water Resources, Open Access in Data Transmission Act, Rationalization of the Mining Fiscal Regime, E-Government Act / E-Governance Act, Amendments to the Right-of-Way Act, Excise Tax on Single-Use Plastics, Amendments to the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA), New Government Auditing Code, Waste-to-Energy Bill, Mandatory Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), Unified System of Separation, Retirement and Pension of Military and Uniformed Personnel, Philippine Immigration Act, and Reforms to Philippine Capital Markets).

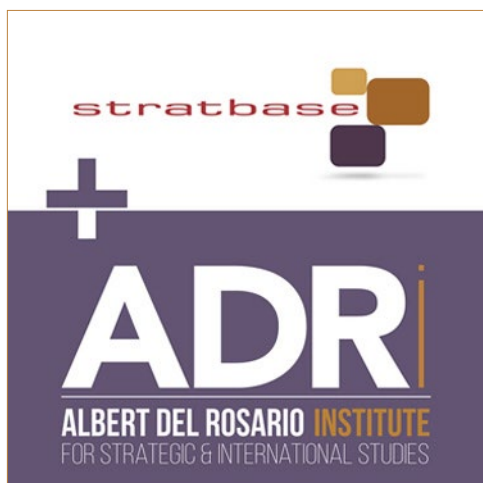
Congress is adjourned until November 3, 2024. When it resumes, it shall focus on passing the 2025 budget before it takes its holiday break on December 21, 2024. Congress is expected to pass the Amendments to Electric Power Industry Reform Act, Universal Health Care Act, and Agrarian Reform Law as well as Department of Water and Foreign Investors Lease Acts by end-2024. Apart from this, it is likely that the Mining Fiscal Regime bill would also be approved before year-end. The Department of Water also said that the legislature is currently waiting for a reconciled version of the bill from the Executive Department. Meanwhile, the Philippine Natural Gas Industry Development Act is not part of the LEDAC but it is already in the advanced stages of approval, enjoying significant support.

Congress will resume on November 4, 2024; lawmakers will be in session until December 20, 2024. They will adjourn from December 21, 2024 to January 12, 2025.



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

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