

# The Katipunan Dialogue Podcast

Episodes 7 to 17

# **The Katipunan Dialogue Podcast**

**Episodes 7 to 17**

## UP CIDS | PROCEEDINGS

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# FOREWORD

We proudly present the proceedings of the Katipunan Dialogue Podcast 2022 Series, marking the second installment of this impactful initiative, featuring eleven new episodes. Building on the foundation laid by the annual Katipunan Conference, the podcast serves as a platform for experts and practitioners to delve into emerging issues in the international and regional landscape, exploring their implications for the Philippines' security posture, strategic interests, and foreign policy.

The 2022 podcast series delves into a myriad of new and emerging challenges in the regional security landscape, shedding light on their direct and indirect impacts on our national security and strategic interests. From enduring issues in domestic politics to international dynamics such as migration, cybersecurity, territorial disputes, and China's assertiveness, the podcast remains relevant by addressing pivotal events like the Russia-Ukraine war, which significantly shapes the global security outlook. These discussions underscore the complex interplay between international developments and Philippine domestic politics, reinforcing the notion that strategic studies extend beyond traditional military concerns.

Organized annually by the Strategic Studies Program (SSP) of the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS), the Katipunan Dialogue Podcast Series has benefited greatly from the generous support of the Philippine Office of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) over the past two years. Their unwavering commitment has been instrumental in the success of this endeavor. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to KAS Philippines and UP CIDS for their continued support.

We also express our appreciation to the moderators and guest speakers whose invaluable contributions have enriched the series. Their expertise and insights have been pivotal in shaping the discourse and in fostering a deeper understanding of strategic issues. Moving forward, SSP remains dedicated to building a robust network of scholars and practitioners and to fostering productive engagement with policymakers and stakeholders in enhancing the country's strategic capacities and its overall security and development.





## Episode 7

# Return of Geopolitics

## Do Sanctions Work?

- **Host | Herman Joseph S. Kraft**  
*Professor, Department of Political Science  
University of the Philippines Diliman*
- **Guest | Tina S. Clemente, Ph.D.**  
*Professor, Asian Center  
University of the Philippines Diliman*
- **Guest | Henelito Sevilla, Jr., Ph.D.**  
*Dean, Asian Center  
University of the Philippines Diliman*

This episode discussed sanctions and their increasing prevalence in the way contemporary issues of international relations are viewed and approached. The ongoing war in Ukraine, which began in February 2022, saw countries implementing a wide-range of sanctions to devastate the Russian economy, targeting individuals, banks, businesses, monetary exchanges, bank transfers, exports, and imports. While the goal of these international sanctions has been clear from the get-go, their effects, both direct and indirect ones, have revived discussions surrounding the effectiveness of sanctions to serve their purpose. This episode attempts to contribute to this debate. It features a discussion of the

history of smart and comprehensive sanctions and whether or not they work, using the case of Iran and the Ukraine crisis as illustrative examples.

The first part of the discussion was on how smart or targeted sanctions came to be a dominant idea and practice in the foreign policy community, and whether their use has indeed led to better outcomes when dealing with erring countries, vis-a-vis comprehensive sanctions. Clemente, starting up the conversation, explained that comprehensive sanctions had “grave socio-economic outcomes on sanction receivers,” and in order to mitigate these impacts, particularly to avoid harming vulnerable sectors, smart sanctions became the new practice. Clemente, however, noted that with regard to impact on coercibility of receivers to change behavior, “the evidence is spotty.”

Sevilla concurred with this idea. Recalling the experience of Iran, which had been a target of international sanctions for around forty years now. Sevilla explained that while sanctions forced the Iranian Islamic Government to conclude the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with the United States and other Western countries, thereby dismantling its nuclear program, there was still collateral damage in the form of humanitarian impacts on the Iranian population. The same challenge happened with the comprehensive economic sanctions which the UN security council imposed on Iraq. As Sevilla said:

Instead of disciplining and seeing the government of Saddam Hussein to change its behavior, along with what has been expected under the international law and the protocol and agreement, the Iraqi government did not change. That resulted in the so-called collateral damage or damages, wherein almost half a million Iraqi children died from the sanctions.

When asked if enforcing smart sanctions would have yielded better outcomes, both in terms of managing collateral damages and directing the behavior of the sanction receivers, Clemente and Sevilla noted that further studies were needed. For instance, one can explore and assess compliance and coercibility beyond the actual imposition of sanctions, particularly other coercive actions that come before the actual sanctioning. In terms of collateral damages on human populations, Clemente argued that impacts of smart and comprehensive sanctions may still vary for every case:

It's not straightforward because how the pain will be borne really depends on many things. It depends on the political economy within the target country and the sanction receiver; or it could also be influenced by domestic politics of both sender and receiver.

The speakers also noted that the world is more interconnected today than it had ever been. Interests are diverse but also interlinked. Power is more diffused. Power no longer rests on only two major superpowers that define global politics. Thus, in the case of the Ukraine crisis, while many have rallied against Russia, and instruments in targeted sanctioning are updated and varied, the Eurasian country is not critically isolated. It also goes both ways. Precisely because Russia is active in world politics and economy, certain sanctions were imposed quicker, such as SWIFT cutting off services to Russia within days. According to Sevilla, this was not the case in Iran, whose services from SWIFT were only cut off after two months.

The sanctions in Iran were also effective that they led to specific economic challenges. This includes a decline in GDP sometime in 2010-2011 and the devaluation of the Iranian rial. However, inflation and unemployment have also worsened, negatively impacting the Iranian people. Clemente then classified that interconnectedness "is a double-edged sword" because, on one hand, getting allies nowadays would mean sharing pains; while on the other hand, being relatively isolated could be beneficial for the receiver since it could avoid negative implications, such as those caused by severed economic ties.

The guests were also asked if smart sanctions can still be deemed effective, considering that sanction receivers can nowadays preempt targets and insulate certain groups or institutions from the impacts of the sanctions through safety nets, much like what is happening in Russia. Clemente explained that in so far as effectiveness in coercing actions is concerned, it is not all hopeless. It is just that "the batting average is not high." However, one could also look at it from the perspective of achieving outcomes beyond or other than what is expected.

If I'm the sanction sender, I'm not so concerned about the actual outcome, because what if my goal is actually to just project a moral statement, or to project credibility, or to signal the others that if they do the same thing, then I would come down hard [on them] ... Like in many cases, for

example, the US' main goal is to project a moral statement, to project ethos or values, this is where we stand.

Clemente also added that the big picture, goals, and expectations about impacts and costs may at times not align with the sanction senders and the rest of the international community, as well as between senders and receivers. This means that strategic cost calculations may differ on both sides. For instance, Russia has received sanctions left and right, and yet the war is still ongoing, and its behavior has not changed. Clemente added, "If a sender is going to assess, is this going to be effective, is it going to fail? I think one thing to assess or examine is how receivers calculate and perceive it."

Sevilla added by emphasizing how cost-calculations may differ between parties with different perceptions:

Even if you have 100 series of sanctions, whether it is done unilaterally or through a multilateral platform, the sanction would not have such [an] impact if the recipient of that sanction does not share a similar perspective of what the impact of that sanction [would be]. What about if the sanctioned state is an authoritarian state and does not regard human rights issues [much], and do not share the democratic values and principles with the sanctioning states?

The discussion also covered insecurities that emerge from sanctions. Sevilla explained how the economic sanctions imposed on Iran has yielded financial as well as psychological insecurities to its people:

The fact that Iran suffered so much economically because Iran, due to these sanctions, was unable, and even today is unable to use its asset abroad, which ranges from 100 to 120 billion dollars for medical purposes. [This] could mean that the people are actually denied from these kinds of opportunity, to access medical and other socio services that the government can provide from the asset that they have.

Insecurities can likewise come from the spillover effects of sanctions, which are usually felt by other groups or sectors of society. In the case of private companies

in certain industries for instance, the burden may be passed on to consumers. This makes imposing sanctions even more complicated. There is no guarantee that impacts would be solely felt by the targeted institutions and that there would be no externalities. Using the case of Venezuela, Clemente noted:

If you don't impose sanctions, bad behavior continues and there are other people or other countries [that] even may be affected, [like] especially when drugs are involved. But if you do impose sanctions, then it can exacerbate the very bad socioeconomic conditions that's already there.

Such situations only strengthen the imperative to conduct further studies on sanctions and coercive actions. Sevilla reminded that sanctions continue to exist as a practice, because it is a more rational approach to conflict and war. These studies, of course, should be in the interest of finding genuine approaches to mitigating damage to populations rather than forwarding a political agenda. For Clemente, there is a need to approach sanctions with the long-term in mind:

Because socio-economic effects can be intergenerational. It's not just like you impose a sanction right now, and the GDP gets affected, the economy folds, and then we have maybe the next two years to think about. But it's not usually that way, the payment, it takes generations. I hope [that] as we think of sanctions, we're thinking really of how to make the world more peaceful.



## Episode 8

# The Russian-Ukrainian War on Southeast Asia and ASEAN Centrality

- **Host | Herman Joseph S. Kraft**  
*Professor, Department of Political Science  
University of the Philippines Diliman*
- **Guest | Charmaine Misalucha-Willoughby, Ph.D.**  
*Associate Professor, International Studies Department  
De La Salle University*
- **Guest | Sol Dorotea Iglesias, Ph.D.**  
*Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science  
University of the Philippines Diliman*

The episode centered on the implications of the ongoing Ukraine-Russian War on Southeast Asia and ASEAN centrality in the region. While the Southeast Asian region is geographically removed from the conflict per se, it is undeniable



that the war's implications have gone beyond the borders of the two nations, and even beyond the borders of Europe. The involvement of Western countries is inevitable, especially that of the US, but many other countries have also responded to the developments of the conflict. Some have rallied behind Ukraine to condemn Russia's aggression, or at the very least, called for de-escalation and exercise of restraint. However, the trend observed in ASEAN member states and ASEAN as a group was that their responses, with the exception of Singapore, were mute and lukewarm.

Dr. Charmaine Misalucha-Willoughby began the discussion by noting how there was no mention of Russia and its aggression in the statements of ASEAN and its members at the initial stages of the conflict. Vietnam called for diplomacy to manage the tensions. Thailand and Cambodia signed the UNGA resolution. While the Philippines and Indonesia condemned the invasion. No party was explicitly blamed. When asked why there are divergences in the respective responses of these countries, Misalucha-Willoughby explained that economic relations and arms trade with Russia was a contributing factor. Meanwhile, the collective response issued by ASEAN was to be expected. As Misalucha-Willoughby said, "It's also kind of understandable because the initial instinct is really to remain neutral. This is an issue between the great powers, not necessarily something that would affect the region."

Meanwhile, Dr. Sol Doroteo Iglesias described the Philippine's position, relative to a spectrum, as moderate but also leaning more towards the direction of Singapore. Not only did the Philippines vote for the UNGA resolution condemning Russia, it also signed the resolution suspending the country from the UN Human Rights Council. For Iglesias, these actions demonstrate a shift in the country's foreign policy, a "slight pivot back to the West, or perhaps a better rebalancing with its sort of hedging against China, as well as hedging against the West."

Given the differences in the positions taken by ASEAN member states, attention has also been drawn to how this may have affected the response of the ASEAN as a bloc. It has been described and even criticized to be lacking compared to what is expected from the group in dealing with high-profile international issues. For Misalucha-Willoughby, there was not much to be surprised about, even in response from ASEAN as a bloc:

But in terms of looking at the organization as a whole, I don't think we can really expect any more than the kinds of statements that ASEAN has already released. This is the best that ASEAN can do, in other words. This is largely because of the foundational norm that ASEAN has set for itself since 1967. If we all recall, the organization stands by its norms and its values of non-interference, pacific settlement disputes, consultation, and so on.

When asked if ASEAN should be doing more in terms of responding and taking positions in international issues like the Ukraine crisis, rather than espousing its foundational norms of non-interference, Misalucha-Willoughby pointed to prevailing arguments about ASEAN's failure to reflect the dynamics of the international landscape today. She noted:

As such, it's really up to ASEAN, or to member states of ASEAN, to try to push the organization to evolve with the times. [This is] to ensure that it is also confronting the realities of today. So that means maybe loosening its hold on centrality, on how the organization can align itself with all the other regional arrangements happening out there.

Iglesias also added that the ASEAN way is "one that is deliberately mild." For instance, the statements that ASEAN released did not even mention the word *invasion*, in a way avoiding outright vilifying anyone.

The conversation then moved on to the question of ASEAN centrality and efficacy, particularly in terms of the regional bloc's role and position in regional security. In recent years, other organizations and groupings have begun to emerge in the Indo-Pacific region, such as the AUKUS (between Australia, the UK, and the US) and the Quad (between Australia, India, Japan, and the US). Concerns about these security pacts possibly weakening and overtaking ASEAN's position as a driver in regional security dialogues and integration, have gained momentum. For Misalucha-Willoughby, there needs to be a review on the part of ASEAN in identifying what exactly it intends to be in the center of—on regional politics, global politics, or great power politics—and communicate it properly. She also noted that:

The emergence of all of these arrangements is symptomatic of ASEAN's inability to insist on its centrality, and also in terms of dealing with contemporary issues. So, in this sense, ASEAN really does need to do something to coordinate with these other regional arrangements as to how better it can serve member states in the region. Insisting on centrality is one thing, but coordinating actions and ensuring that common objectives are met is another thing altogether.

Meanwhile, Iglesias noted that, as far as the war in Ukraine is concerned, ASEAN's actions in the crisis is enough for now.

I think that the statements that it has already released in the early days and weeks of Russia's invasion of Ukraine are good to simply, at least, remind the world that ASEAN holds to certain values, for better or worse. But at least the fundamental values of sovereignty, of protecting civilians, of trying to find peaceful resolutions. That is enough for now, because we really don't expect much more from ASEAN as a regional group. But it is still important and vital to underline these sort[s] of common values that we all share as states, but also as members of humanity.

The Ukraine crisis has also led to questions about ASEAN's own diplomatic relations with Russia, particularly the latter's membership and participation in ASEAN-led summits such as the East Asian Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Could ASEAN's relationship with Russia be used to position the group in the region's strategic situation? For Iglesias, what ASEAN has done so far is to offer the facilitation of peaceful dialogues between Ukraine and Russia. She added:

It's actually quite unclear what ASEAN meant when it said that— but it's possible. But it is also a little difficult to see ASEAN claim any kind of active role, even if small, towards peaceful dialogue, if it can't even do much [on] its own neighborhood. For example, with regard to [the] civil war and the coup in Myanmar.

Echoing her earlier point on upholding values, Iglesias also noted that whatever ASEAN does next regarding the crisis, it must be accompanied by insistence to respect international law:

Because if we think about how this conflict in Europe has parallels in Southeast Asia, one of the obvious parallels is, of course, with the dispute over the South China Sea and our own sort of regional hegemony/emerging global power, China, and its attitude towards ASEAN and different claimants. So, I think that if ASEAN or ASEAN member states advance ideas that remind everyone to respect international law and serenity, that is a good contribution.

Meanwhile, Misalucha-Willoughby underlined the potential of bilateral cooperation in dealing with conflict-ridden issues between smaller countries like ASEAN member states, particularly with international relations seemingly driven by great power politics once again. Instead of continuously reinforcing the hub and spokes architecture, bilateral relationships between and among ASEAN countries, as well as their rich repository of dialogue partners, can be leveraged to connect the spokes and strengthen relationships between small states. In this respect, Misalucha-Willoughby recommended conducting not just confidence building measures, but also joint military exercises under the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM) framework.

Concluding the session, Prof. Herman Joseph S. Kraft echoed the ideas of the guests and emphasized the need for ASEAN to build more confidence and capacity to assert its role and position as a major player in the region, particularly in terms of security:

It seems like this is something that needs to be settled first internally among the ASEAN member states and their ability to actually deal with one another, settle questions of what kinds of regional norms need to be emphasized, and eventually be able to leverage the strengthening of this relationship in terms of the relationship with other players within the region.



## Episode 9

# The Return of Geopolitics

## Spill Over of the Russian-Ukrainian War

- **Host | Marvin Hamor Bernardo**  
*Junior Research Analyst  
UP CIDS Strategic Studies Program*
- **Guest | Julio Amador III**  
*Director, Foundation for National Interest (FNI)*
- **Guest | Herman Joseph S. Kraft**  
*Professor, Department of Political Science  
University of the Philippines Diliman*

The session discussed the spillover effects of the on-going Russia-Ukraine war to the global system, including issues of food security and a looming energy crisis. The food crisis is arguably one of the most pressing challenges that stemmed from the war in Ukraine. It has spread in different regions across the globe. Global prices of basic commodities, including food, have risen exponentially, leading countries to experience food insecurity. For some nations, the ramifications have yet to be felt significantly. Yet, countries like Syria, parts of northern Africa, and

the Sahara region, which have been battling food crises long before the Ukraine crisis, are placed in even worse situations. The same is happening in the Middle East, such as Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen. These countries, which are either poor or conflicted, or both, are sure to suffer the impacts of the war far more than other nations.

Mr. Julio Amador III noted that the problem of food security is not new. Challenges surrounding the global supply chain have been present for a long time. It was worsened by the global pandemic, which has yet to end and was even further exacerbated by the war in Ukraine. He noted that this supply chain issue does not exist in a vacuum either, and may instigate more problems in many parts of the world:

I think, in fact, Ukraine's problem is not so much as this being able to supply but really the logistics of getting it out there. So yes, that's going to exacerbate, that's going to add to these problems. I think it's not going to be limited to the Middle East. It expands outward, affecting even us here in Southeast Asia.

Echoing Amador's idea, Professor Herman Joseph S. Kraft underlined the role of Russia and Ukraine in the global market as major suppliers, and how it could potentially impact food security in the Southeast Asia region in the long term. He reminded that Southeast Asia is a rice eating region. While some countries are self-sufficient in terms of food production, there are also areas that depend on the products from the two countries at war, such as wheat. These nuances will have impacts, in one way or another, on food security in many parts of the globe. In turn, this could lead to other forms of crises and dysfunctions. One example that Kraft provided is militancy, particularly in the case of the Middle East, where food has been utilized as a weapon for war:

Poverty and lack of access to resources make people desperate and groups or personalities that promise, and actually, to a certain extent, are able to get into or access these kinds of feelings are going to be in a position to mobilize people, right, against established authorities, for instance. And I think to a large extent, if we're going to see a continuation of an increase of this food crisis, then I think you're going to see the Middle East as one

region, right, where we're going to find more and more militancy actually taking place.

Amador also added that, alongside the challenge of extremism, the threat of food security could also instigate other forms of violence. In some situations, it is not just the extremists that are incentivized or motivated to move, but also minority groups that are becoming increasingly fragile. He expounded:

You're looking at those areas where authoritarian governments can be challenged if they cannot supply the basic needs of the people. So, it's not just a matter of worrying about potential extremism in the form of ISIS, or what have you, but also about exacerbating existing social, political cleavages in those countries that could lead to other forms of violence, or seeking attempts to overthrow existing governments.

The capabilities of governments to respond to a food crisis is also a challenge for many countries in the Middle East and South Asia, especially those with pre-existing social, economic, and political cleavages, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, to name a few. In Sri Lanka, for instance, the government is failing to govern. Meanwhile, Pakistan is in the middle of a political turmoil. "So, how would these governments handle multiple crises at once, especially if they're not even working anymore?" Amador explained.

Meanwhile, Kraft touched on fragility of political will when providing assistance to other countries during conflict and crisis. Providing aid is a common practice across the globe. Several European countries have been steadfast to provide aid to Ukraine. However, Kraft explained that this does not guarantee Europe's support for other countries affected by the war. Describing Ukraine as a unique case, Kraft explained:

The problem right now is that Europe is itself now looking at Ukraine and the war in Ukraine. So, in other words, you might talk about the idea of being distracted. But Western European governments are actually focused on what's going on in their doorstep for them to think about what's going on in countries, in other regions, right. So, if you talk about South Asia, yes, Sri Lanka is a problem. Yes, Afghanistan is an issue. But at the same



time, is there going to be political will, for instance, on the part of the Europeans?

Moving on to another spill-over effect, the episode tackled the impact of the war on global energy security. Efforts to de-dollarize the energy trade were observed, as countries like India and China seem to be taking advantage of cheaper prices offered by Russia. For Kraft, however, replacing the global trade system primarily fed by dollar reserves would be a difficult feat:

Does that exchange between China and Russia and India, and probably other countries that are actually part of this going to affect now and therefore create pressures on the dollar? The way I see it, it's a small part. Unless the dollar system is unsustainable, precisely because of the magnitude of resources that Russia can bring into the market, which I don't think is the case at this point in time, it's not going to be that simple to just de-dollarize the system.

Amador also added that some economists have noted that, regardless of what happens in the US, the dollar is still predicted to become stronger. Thus, its disappearance as a global currency is highly unlikely:

I don't think this can happen just because you have some efforts in one rogue country and other. Like-minded friends will want to de-dollarize the global economy or the energy market. I don't think this is going to happen anytime soon, because it's not just about the dollars. It's about the banks and the financial system that accepts trade. You cannot barter at such a global scale.

The discussion also tackled the environmental impacts of the war in Ukraine. There are reports that certain European countries might go nuclear, reopen mines, and power plants, at least until the war subsides and issues in energy trade are much more manageable. Kraft noted that such ideas and actions certainly go against Europe's commitment to lower their carbon footprints. He also pointed out that a new debate has to be instigated in this regard. Clearly, there is public consensus to achieve a green environment. Considering coal as an alternative

will certainly not be eagerly welcomed. For Amador, the Philippines should be critical in viewing proposals about green economies. He added:

This is the reason why when I talk about the green economy, I think we also have to consider what are our interests here that could or will be affected, given the fact that we are still very reliant on some say dirty source of polluting sources of energy, right. What are the trade-offs that we are willing to sacrifice? I don't think we have the proper discussion on that.

The episode also covered the potential impacts of the war on the conflict hotspots in the Asia Pacific region. For instance, there have been debates on whether the Ukraine crisis could be compared to the Taiwan issue. Some fear that China could possibly utilize Russia as a blueprint for its own approach to the cross-strait relations. For Kraft, if China is studying Russia's actions, it might also be observing the kinds of challenges and roadblocks that Russia is facing. Consequently, China might be second guessing itself, and its timetable. If there was one, in terms of deciding over the Taiwan issue, it might have been moved due to the developments of the war. Kraft also pointed out that if China moves forward with its actions against Taiwan, how would the US and European countries react, especially when they are focused on the Ukraine crisis?

This places us directly in a very awkward position when talking about the Philippines. Taiwan is pretty much just next door to us, right? Anything that goes on there is going to spill-over into the Philippines. So, there's just that kind of set of issues. I think that we have to actually take [it] into consideration. I don't think that we're preparing any contingencies as far as this particular issue is concerned.

For Amador, the Ukraine and Taiwan issue also have significant differences. Ukraine has proved that it can still put up a good fight despite Russia's military and its nuclear capabilities. Indeed, the smaller nation was able to stand up for itself and even inflicted damage on Russia. It is also stretching the war longer than what Russia was probably expecting. These feats were achieved even without NATO interfering. On the contrary, Amador explained why Taiwan is unique:

I think what makes Taiwan different, I would argue, is that even if there are questions about its status, it has a special relationship with the US, which Ukraine does not have. Even with NATO. So, would an attack on Taiwan be the same as an attack on Ukraine in the sense that the US come for Taiwan's assistance? I think the US would do that, and countries like Japan would actually come and help the US in such an event.

Russia's diplomatic relations with Southeast Asian nations was also discussed in the episode. Kraft and Amador noted that impacts are more indirect rather than direct, at least as of the current situation. Kraft described Russia's engagement in the region as having a "very low benchmark." Meanwhile, Amador called diplomatic relations "subpar." Even in terms of arms trade, which have been present before, it is not likely that any country will be concerned about Russia's engagement dwindling, much less be motivated to buy equipment. Meanwhile, although there is no explicit suspension of Russia in ASEAN-led dialogues and forums, the question remains: Should ASEAN extend invitations to Russia, especially when countries like the US, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand are present in the same room?

On a global scale, the sanctions against Russia are predicted to affect a certain level of disruption on arms export. In this regard, there are also questions about what the Eurasian country's absence in the global arms trade could mean for newer actors like India. For Amador, while India can attempt to be an alternative supplier and consequently grow its influence in the Indo-Pacific region, there are still doubts on how it can pursue such goals. Amador noted that countries need to be more critical in assessing these situations created out of the war:

We look at the weaponry, are they [India] getting also parts of it from Russia? And if so, definitely, we cannot buy those weapons because there's a way that sanctions will start hitting us if we do. So, we also have to be careful about this because it doesn't mean that, because Russia is now out of the picture.

Kraft also agreed that it might still be difficult to assess if India could assume a greater role and influence in the Indo-Pacific region, and even more so in Southeast Asia. Both guests noted that India may still need to settle its sense of self, pointing out how the nation tends to look east but doesn't act east.

Kraft explained that in terms of developing and selling weaponry, as well as participating in multilateral arrangements like those led by ASEAN, India has a long way to go.

To end the session, both speakers made suggestions on what the Philippines should make of all these developments across the globe that were, directly or indirectly, influenced by the War in Ukraine. For Kraft, the conflict has shown how a war happening all the way across the globe have ramifications beyond its immediate vicinity and even cut across different other issues. He argued that the Philippines “cannot be just a spectator.” Instead, it must be aware of the kind of outcomes it hopes to achieve and how to pursue them. Meanwhile, Amador explained that the world is currently in an “age of disruption,” and in this context, separating complex issues, from traditional to non-traditional security concerns, and not acknowledging their interconnectedness, hinders the country, the state, from understanding which issues are urgent.



## Episode 10

# Security Implications of Global Migration Patterns

- **Host | Jean Encinas-Franco**

*Associate Professor, Department of Political Science  
University of the Philippines Diliman*

- **Guest | Froilan Malit, Jr.**

*Ph.D. Candidate, University of Glasgow*

The session centered on the interplay of labor migration and foreign policy, as well as the various security implications of global migration patterns. It particularly focused on the case of the Asia-Gulf migration corridor, which hosts one of the biggest numbers of immigrants to date. The Middle East is arguably one of the most noteworthy geographical regions in the world, not only because of the massive labor migration flows and numerous patterns it hosts, but also due to the controversial migration policy landscape that has emerged from its intent to manage inflows of migrants to the region.

The discussion began with an overview of the history of labor migration in the Gulf, and how it developed into the massive industry it is today. Mr. Froilan Malit discussed the factors that contributed to the region's emergence as one of the biggest host regions for labor migrants globally. Before the oil boom in the 1970s, migration to Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) was largely informal and mainly occupied by slaves. Malit noted that this culture has, to a significant extent, contributed to the implementation of the Kafala system, the GCC states' migration policy system. Fast forward to the 1973 oil boom, the Middle East found itself amidst an unprecedented transformation. Oil prices soared to new heights, accounting for a significant amount of government revenue. Alongside driving economic growth in GCC states, Malit explained how it also propelled the entry of labor from overseas:

Now, if you look at the drivers in the 70s and over time, first is the massive shortage of local populations across the Gulf. You know at that time, they didn't really have the necessary manpower to build these public and private infrastructure, including roads, lands, and buildings that were necessary and key, actually, to their developmental process.

GCC states, with the exception of Iraq, implemented the Kafala sponsorship system to manage the influx of migrants and regulate relationships between employers and migrant employees. Malit explained that employers had specific preferences for certain groups of laborers based on country of origin. Trends in these preferences would change throughout the decades. Employers and state governments initially preferred workers from South Asia because laborers from the subregion demanded low wages and were quite docile. Arabs, mainly Palestinians, Yemenis, and Egyptians, were also favored because of their shared religion and culture. However, Arabs began to pressure GCC states to provide workers with more political rights, such as the right to citizenship, leading to a massive exile during the Iraq-Kuwait war.

A similar situation unfolded when Asian migrants, including Southeast Asians, began to replace Arabs as the dominant group of laborers in the region. Initially docile, these groups began to assert for social and political rights in the late 90s, demanding the Kafala system to follow international labor standards. Preferences then shifted to Africans. Malit concluded his point by noting, "the shortage of local population, plus the migration pressure, due to weak economic conditions

in origin countries at the time actually, really created this fascinating migration dynamics in the GCC countries that you see today.”

A significant cohort in the Southeast Asian group in the Middle East comes from the Philippines. Malit recalled that labor migration of Filipinos to the Gulf began in the early 70s. Philippines sent around 150,000 to 200,000 workers to join the booming construction industry. This pilot initiative showed that the labor export system was an effective source of foreign currency reserves, which the country needed at the time. Effectively, this motivated the government to pay more attention to overseas labor administration, which led to the creation of the Labor Code in 1974. This policy facilitated a more permanent migration pattern from the country to the Gulf. According to Malit, Filipino workers continue to dominate certain industries in the Middle East, including construction, nursing, engineering, hospitality, and even education, albeit mostly as assistants. Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) are also still widely employed as domestic workers.

Alongside dollar reserves for sending countries, labor migration has several other positive impacts:

I think what Filipinos actually would prefer, and perhaps the primary reason why they chose to go to the Gulf and other, destination countries is, partly having that sort of stable income. Because in the Philippines, you have this contractualization that doesn't allow you to have full time employment. But at least in the Gulf, if you look at a two-year temporary contract, assuming that you finish it, that would at least stabilize your income over time.

Benefits also extend to sending countries in the form of remittances. According to the World Bank, the Philippines, receives around 31 billion dollars annually from remittances. Malit explained that remittances contribute to economic stability, even in times of crisis. The 2008 Asian financial crisis serves as an example. As Malit noted, diplomacy is also another factor:

Countries, like the Philippines, are able to access other foreign policy interests that they have—for example investments, bilateral trade investments, even humanitarian aid. We've seen this during COVID.



Gulf countries played a role in terms of providing vaccines to sending countries. So, it's vaccine diplomacy.

Meanwhile, host countries needed laborers to fill in their manpower in several key industries, among other economic benefits. As Malit added:

We've actually helped these GCC countries not only build their countries, but also help them globalize their day to day functioning, because we provided that necessary labor. In some cases too actually, these GCC countries, especially for skilled workers, become a transit. They function as transit states for our skilled workers, and for Western countries.

In terms of issues and challenges associated with the Gulf's labor environment, the most prevalent cases concern the Kafala system, which governs the mobility, stay, and the rights of workers in the region, whether they are low-skilled, medium-skilled, or highly-skilled workers. Malit explained that the media and literature often painted the system negatively because of how low-skilled workers are treated, especially domestic workers who tend to be excluded from most labor laws. This has been an immense concern for the Philippine government for a long time. Even in the cases of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, which have developed separate laws for domestic workers, implementation also remains an issue. Malit added:

The system still doesn't treat them [domestic workers] as formal workers. That becomes a problem because, as a result, they tend not to access dispute resolution, and other forms of opportunities—including for example, gratuity, or even wage scales. So I think these become very, very important diplomatic issues that the Philippine government is still trying to resolve even to this day.

As Malit explained, the issue of workers' mobility is another concern. GCC nationals, who primarily own the firms, are adamant about controlling mobility at all costs. It provides some form of guarantee that their investment during recruitment, which is highly expensive and tedious, would not go to waste. The stability of manpower for employers is also important. However, cases of human rights violations continue to surround mobility, prompting countries to demand

reform and even push for the abolition of the Kafala system. When asked if this is a wise strategy for the Philippines, Malit noted:

Yes, I think the Philippines, just like any other sending country, must continue to demand reforms. The World Bank has tried for many decades to ease internal mobility concerns, because they argued that some mobility is good—because it helps the market. Employers and employees sort of find a better match in the market. But Gulf countries again, continue to resist, because they don't think that's politically popular here.

Other migrant sending countries continue to lobby for changes in the Gulf, and even work together, with ambassadors and diplomats. However, these discussions are mostly informal, and thus have never led to formal actions. Malit noted that going against policymakers in Gulf states has consequences, which may discourage such actions from diplomats. Malit continued:

In the case of Nepal in 2010, one ambassador, well, she demanded a lot, and even called Qatar an open jail. As a result, she was declared *persona non grata*, just like our ambassador in Kuwait in 2018.

The Kafala system also remains protected and preserved because of its utility to national security of GCC states. Large migration inflows have been associated with demographic shifts, which may have corresponding security, military, political, societal, economic, and even environmental impacts. Given the current population structure in the Gulf, with migrants outnumbering the locals, the Kafala system plays protects nationals and the state from any possible domestic political chaos that migrants can instigate or participate in. Domestic political chaos include strikes and protests which Arab workers have formed in the past. Malit added:

Placing this Kafala enables the state to create this sense of temporariness. So you can make these migrants deportable; so you can eliminate domestic threats. And it's been happening, I think that's why you see [a] certain type of migrant populations that are quite fearful of police [of the state], partly because their livelihood is directly linked to their residency rights in the country.

The discussion also covered the impacts of the Ukraine crisis on migrant workers in the Gulf region. Malit first pointed out the impact of rising prices of certain commodities and services, such as food and transportation. The standard of living is affected as wages for most low-skilled migrants do not adjust to these prices. Moreover, even for new migrants and rehires, processing of documents has become more expensive. However, migrants are still pouring in, creating a growing trend of skills mismatch in GCC states. Malit then argued that there is lack of effort on key stakeholders to address this issue.

Governments that have tried to rectify, sort of, the skills mismatch issues that they have—like Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines—they still haven't been able to perfect. Instead of address, GCC countries, especially at the regional consultative level, such as the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, are not even discussing these particular issues; not even the Kafala. Even though certain rights groups are actually present in these consultative dialogue processes, I don't think they [have] pushed enough [to actually] to address these issues.

On a positive note, Malit noted that there have been developments in the domestic migration management in Gulf countries in recent decades, such as wage protection systems, the use of ICT in dispute resolution, and centralizing the processing of migration documents, among others. However, issues in the implementation of these policies persist. For instance, in dispute resolutions, laborers who file complaints are left with no jobs while waiting for verdicts that usually take months to arrive. Financial support for these workers is needed, but even the Philippine government has limited institutional and financial resources to provide sufficient assistance. High political cases—such as protection of human rights, illegal and irregular migration, mutual skills recognition—as well as low politics issues—such as repatriation of deceased workers—continue because, according to Malit, “we haven't been able to sort of bilaterally align our policies [with Gulf countries].”

To conclude the discussion, Malit emphasized the imperative for sending countries like the Philippines to continuously forge and strengthen bilateral agreements with GCC states. Moreover, he said that there was a need to directly engage with the private sector, the primary employers of OFWs.

## Episode 11

# Security Implications of Global Migration Patterns

- **Host | Herman Joseph S. Kraft**  
*Professor, Department of Political Science  
University of the Philippines Diliman*
- **Guest | Aileen A. Espiritu, Ph.D.**  
*Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education  
The Arctic University of Norway*
- **Guest | Marc Lanteigne, Ph.D.**  
*Associate Professor of Political Science  
The Arctic University of Norway*

The podcast episode discussed territorial disputes among asymmetrical powers. The forty-year-long maritime dispute between Norway and Russia in the Barents Sea was used as an illustrative case. The discussion aimed to determine the extent to which power dynamics influence and shape processes and outcomes of dispute negotiations, thereby challenging the assumption that

power, through the possession of economic and military sources, ultimately defines winners in disputes.

In 2010, Norway and the Russian Federation concluded the Treaty Concerning Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea, otherwise known as the Barents Sea Treaty. This treaty defined the boundary between the two countries' continental shelves and their 200-mile zones. Dr. Aileen Espiritu recalled that the process had been long, spanning about forty years, from 1970 to 2010. Throughout those four decades, significant developments in Russia's image and position in the international community had occurred, beginning with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Espiritu described the Barents Sea Treaty as "amenable to both [parties]" and as an "equitable solution down the line." She noted that it not only served as a guide for delimiting territories but also fostered cooperation regarding fisheries and exploitation of resources in the Barents Sea. She highlighted a salient feature of the agreement:

It also established a unitization agreement between Russia and Norway. If hydrocarbon deposits, which would be found in the vicinity of the delimitation line, and one party believes that it encroaches [on] their territory—let's say under the sea—[that] they would cooperate in exploiting and sharing those resources through a joint operating agreement.

The final delimitation showed an almost equal division between Russian and Norwegian territories, representing a combined and modified version of the original proposals of both parties: Norway with their median line proposal and Russia with their sector theory claim. However, negotiation developments were mostly kept private to those who were directly involved in the process. Espiritu, though, has noted that several factors could be said to have influenced the outcome, particularly Russia's willingness to compromise. Timing was a recurring factor. At the time, the Eurasian country was observably resolving many of its border disputes with other nations, despite the costly process. Scholars have also pointed out that Russia "wanted to be seen as an international actor that could behave." The Soviets would not have had the same inclinations and strategies, but leadership had changed, with Dimitry Medvedev as the President and Vladimir Putin pulling strings in the

background. More importantly, there was people-to-people cooperation in the borders, particularly during the final stages of the negotiations in 2010.

Nevertheless, negotiations always yield gains and losses. In the case of Russia, the final agreement showed that the country heavily compromised from its original position. When asked about the motivations of Russia for doing so, despite the things it had to give up in the process, Dr. Marc Lanteigne explained that certain interests of the two countries diverged, one being the importance of maintaining the Law of the Seas in the Arctic. Lanteigne likewise echoed Espiritu's argument on Russia's goal to cultivate a positive image internationally.

Russia wanted to be seen as certainly an Arctic player, but also, one with which to cooperate and which to, really demonstrate, take part in a multilateral dialogue about how the Arctic should be governed. So, this is quite a good opportunity for Moscow to demonstrate that interest.

Many were certainly stunned with the outcome of the proposal as well as the timing of its announcement, which was mostly kept secret until the last minute. For Lanteigne, Russia was aware of the benefits of its actions. It was set on taking a more serious position in Arctic politics. The negotiation process served as a window of opportunity. As Lanteigne put it:

The timing was very good, like Russia was really, at the time, really starting to rethink its Arctic policy, really starting to rethink the idea that, okay, we're dealing with a very fluid situation. Climate change was becoming very apparent everywhere you looked. That it simply wasn't going to be in Moscow's interest to take a revisionist or assertive line at that time.

Indeed, the situation and developments in the Arctic region have not only maintained and strengthened the interests of traditional players in the Arctic—such as Russia, Norway, and other members of the Arctic Circle—but also of new players, even those which are geographically removed from the region. Lanteigne explained that alongside shifts in the governance situation and the security landscape, it can also be observed that “the Arctic is becoming much more internationalized.” He highlighted several non-Arctic countries which have in recent years declared their interests to possibly enter the Arctic politics

and become Arctic stakeholders such as Germany, Britain, Japan, Korea, India, and China. Out of all these states, China had gained the most attention, and even apprehension, because, as Lanteigne described, “it has the ability to affect Arctic politics considerably.” It is seen as a possible “gatecrasher.” China, for its part, has expressed that it need not be treated with cynicism, and only aims to be a development partner. Nonetheless, it would still be a hard bargain. As of current, the Arctic Council only provides a formal observer status to non-Arctic states. Likewise, US-China relations have not been harmonious lately.

For Espiritu, the entry of new players in the Arctic region may be “messy,” especially considering the developments in the Russian-Ukrainian war. While the war is not in the Arctic, it has significant implications for the security architecture of the region, precisely because of the polarizing effect of the war. Russia claims that Ukraine’s potential bid to join NATO was one of the reasons for its invasion. Russia is also banking on its good relations with China to cushion negative impacts of sanctions it has been receiving. Meanwhile, Sweden and Finland are also joining NATO. For Espiritu, what is needed is to rally countries to uphold the UNCLOS in the protection of the Arctic, and to give voices to the people on the ground. She underlined, “The Arctic Ocean is surrounded by all of these Arctic states with people living in them. They should have primary say as to what happens in their own neighborhood.”

Additionally, the war is affecting the relations between Russia and Norway. A few months into the war, Russia threatened to scrap the delimitation treaty. If this pushes through it will have defining consequences as far as stability in the Arctic is concerned. Espiritu noted that while Russia, or at least the parliament, is getting more assertive, the fisheries agreement between the two countries, settled long before the 2010 treaty, still stands. Russia is still able to send ships and is being serviced by Norwegian authorities, largely owing to the people-to-people connection in the areas surrounding the border. The Svalbard Treaty, she added, is also not affected by the war. However, Espiritu noted that other critical forms of relations have stopped or have been temporarily suspended, such as the operations of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat located in Kirkenes, and more importantly, the Arctic Council.

Bringing the conversation closer to home, the question and issue of the South China Sea (SCS) was also brought to light. Media and literature have called the Barents Agreement as a model for other agreements in the Arctic, such as

the dispute between Denmark and Canada over the Hans Island. Meanwhile sentiments regarding the Barents experience, including the power dynamics between the negotiating parties, as a model for resolving disputes in SCS are also gaining momentum. For Lanteigne, the idea must be approached more cautiously and critically. While similarities exist in the two situations in terms of the applicability of international law and regimes, many of the other factors are vastly different. Lanteigne asserted that:

To take for example, the Barents agreement, and apply it to the South China Sea is a complicated affair because you have the question of historical waters, you have Beijing's assertion that the features of the South China Sea, and the waters themselves have been Chinese possession since antiquity—something which is obviously very difficult to demonstrate. You don't have the same economic, demographic, and historical situations that we see in the Arctic today.

Lanteigne also noted the differences in the willingness of players to come to an agreement and the manner in which to do it. In the South China Sea issue, China's willingness only goes as far as engaging in bilateral cooperation, and is "not being open to the idea of internationalizing this particular dispute." Moreover, specific legal guidelines facilitate negotiations and surveying of territories. An example of this is the case of the Lomonosov Ridge, for which Russia, Canada, Denmark, and Greenland are claimants. Lanteigne argued that "there is no question of sovereignty. There is no question of which actors have a right to be there and which don't. We simply don't have that in the South China Sea under current political conditions."

Espiritu added there should also be some consideration to the kind of asymmetrical power dynamics that exists between the parties involved. She noted that while Norway is a smaller country in size, it has ample financial and economic resources, enough to singularly fund the Barents project. Furthermore, there is people-to-people cooperation, good relations at the community-level, which underlines the role of non-government and non-state actors. In the case of the country's dispute with China, Espiritu emphasized that the situation is highly asymmetrical. Thus, transplanting the Barents case will be difficult. As a recommendation, she reiterated her point on timing:



That eventually there will be a window of opportunity when China will be able to, or might negotiate. One of the things that fell apart in the 2016 Hague decision for the Philippines, in terms of delimitation for rights to the sea, is that Duterte, as you know, just let it fall apart...But the thing was he had this weapon in his pocket, essentially, with this arbitral decision by the Hague.

Meanwhile, Lanteigne suggested exploring “opportunities for confidence-building, as well as areas of cooperation—both in the Arctic and in the South China Sea.” It was a long-standing tradition in Arctic conferences and summits to prioritize climate change as an agenda item, and set aside any other issues, especially those that those that may compromise mutual understanding. Applying this to the South China Sea, Lanteigne suggested that “There needs to be ways of bringing the temperature down to look at areas of mutual concern and cooperation, including areas like the environment, like development.”

## Episode 12

# Health Migration of OFWs after COVID-19

- **Host | Jean Encinas-Franco, Ph.D.**  
*Associate Professor, Department of Political Science  
University of the Philippines Diliman*
- **Guest | Renzo R. Guinto, MD DrPH**  
*Chief Planetary Health Scientist  
Sunway Center for Planetary Health*

The episode examined the complex relationship between global migration and health, with a particular focus on the experiences of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) during the pandemic. It covered the different impacts of the global crisis on the health and welfare of OFWs as well as prospects of opportunities and challenges regarding the health migration of OFWs after COVID-19.

The pandemic was an unprecedented crisis in many forms, impacting the world of work and, significantly, international labor migration. Global remittances declined to alarming levels. Mobility across the world was significantly disrupted, all of which had significant impacts in economic stability at national and regional levels. Beyond these tribulations, individual labor migrants, including millions of OFWs, were exposed to various health risks.

As Dr. Renzo Guinto explained, while the virus can practically affect anyone during the height of the pandemic, labor migrants were more vulnerable because of the enduring disparities and inequities to which they were subjected to. These disparities are multidimensional and have long been in place prior to the global crisis, leading many OFWs to suffer much more disproportionate impacts of the pandemic. Guinto pointed first to the differences between how locals in host countries and labor migrants access certain services from the government, including healthcare. Certainly, states prioritize their citizens over non-citizens. Another disparity, according to Guinto, is seen in the working conditions between certain sectors in the labor market. Healthcare workers, for instance, are the most exposed to the virus as they are the frontliners during the pandemic. Meanwhile, construction workers and seafarers often stay in cramped accommodations and sleeping quarters and share bathroom facilities. Related to the foregoing, OFWs may also be stationed in areas far from the capital city, where basic commodities, such as masks and sanitizers, are far less accessible. Social networks and information are also not readily available.

Race and ethnicity have likewise influenced the experiences of OFWs and the kind of treatment they receive. In the UK, for example, Filipino workers were once lumped under the category of the black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME). One implication of this, Guinto noted, is that Filipinos become invisible, and consequently, their access to certain welfare and healthcare services become compromised. Moreover, during the height of the pandemic, health systems in the UK and the US relied heavily on Filipino manpower, deploying more migrants than nationals to work in emergency rooms, which caused the death of many OFW health workers. For Guinto, these unfortunate cases have continued because of existing policies and procedures, both in the Philippines and in host nations, which he believed have “put our Filipino health workers at a great disadvantage.”

A related issue to the adverse situation of OFW health workers is the pandemic policy of the Philippine government. It regulates the deployment of health workers to maintain domestic supply and to support the country’s health sector. Guinto described the situation as highly tricky:

We can’t just keep on announcing, “You [health workers] can’t leave the country,” while subjecting them to very, you know, harsh working conditions. Because that will also somehow, you know, endanger or affect their human rights, their right to mobility, their right to go anywhere

they want to, you know, to be able to work. But at the same time, we also need to make sure our health system does not collapse, because of the, not just brain drain, but brain hemorrhage of health workers.

To this end, Guinto underscored the need for the government to focus on how it will manage health workforce migration in the future, especially when borders open again and mobility becomes easier. Fortunately for the country, its long history as a major sending hub has allowed it to achieve considerable growth in overseas labor administration. Guinto noted that the country has a “much mature migration management system than many other source countries.” It was also able to implement interventions in response to specific needs of OFWs during the pandemic, such as the massive repatriation program it facilitated for returning Filipino workers.

The discussion also tackled the 2010 framework developed by the International Organization on Migration (IOM) which outlines four priority areas in approaching migration and health. These areas include research and information dissemination, advocacy for policy development, health service delivery and capacity building, as well as inter-country coordination and partnership. The framework, according to Guinto, is a vital source of information for developing sound and effective migrant health programs and policies, especially for the Philippines, which is a major sending country. To illustrate, Guinto recalled how the framework guided his work with the Philippines Department of Health (DOH) back in 2013, when the Philippine Migrant Health Program in the DOH was established.

When asked which of the priority areas the country is the strongest and weakest in, respectively, Guinto shared that the Philippines’ strongest feat is on policy development:

I would say that the policy and legal aspects are something that the Philippines can be very proud of. Unfortunately, many other sending countries in the world still have to create their pro-migrant health policies, but the Philippines already has.

To name a few, the country has its own Migrant Workers Act of 1995 (RA 8042), administrative orders in the DOH are in place to cater to migrant health such as

regulating pre-employment check-ups and administering orientation on health risks such as HIV/AIDS. In terms of improvements, Guinto suggested working more on the provision of healthcare services not only to migrants but also to their families and dependents:

How can we make sure that when disaster strikes or when the migrant or her or his family members get hospitalized, what kind of support can we provide in terms of healthcare access, so that the income that they generate from overseas, doesn't just go to hospitalization? It defeats the purpose of labor migration, of being abroad, to raise money to send their children back home to school, and to give them a better life.

Non-government and non-state actors, such as the private sector and civil society, also played a crucial role in supporting migrant workers during the pandemic. Guinto highlighted a case in New York, where a Filipino-owned restaurant provided free meals to healthcare professionals who were serving at the frontlines of the city's hospitals. Back home, the same spirit of *bayanihan* is also observed:

You have migrant organizations, the Center for Migrant Advocacy and many others that were really advocating for migrant welfare, well-being during this pandemic, and are pushing the government to not just provide emergency evacuation, but also make sure that return to the Philippines is seamless, and support them from the time they arrive, and they receive testing all the way to eventual reintegration.

As the country slowly eases towards a post-pandemic recovery stage, discussions and debates as to how the country should move forward in managing migration will gain momentum. For Guinto, this must be anchored on the goal to push migrant workers and overall migrant health at the epicenter of migration discourse and migration policies in the country. In this light, he provided several prospects to be considered. First is the new Department of Migrant Workers:

That's an opportunity to really highlight the importance of health and not just looking at our migrant workers as sources of money, as exports, as human exports, but really as people—as Filipino citizens with health rights that need to be protected and provided.

Guinto suggested embedding a health program in the new department and coordinate its efforts with other relevant units like the POEA, OWWA, and National Reintegration Center. According to Guinto, DOH as well “has a small yet robust migrant health program, along with the Philippine Migration and Health Network,” which the DMW can tap in developing a more centralized and focused program for OFWs.

Migration diplomacy is also another course to investigate, particularly the kinds of bilateral agreements (BLA) that the country has and intends to enter into, concerning the migration of OFWs. For Guinto, a review of existing BLAs is necessary to ensure the inclusion of health and healthcare access to OFWs.

It means we need our migration diplomacy to also have elements of health diplomacy. It would be great if our, let’s say, the Department of Foreign Affairs, DOLE, and maybe now the Department of Migrant Workers, when they negotiate labor agreements with other countries. It would be great if they can also bring DOH to the table, so that we can also assert for the inclusion of migrant workers, Filipino migrant workers into the healthcare systems of their country of destination.

Alongside DOH, the inclusion of other actors in the review and the advocacy process, such as migrant workers groups in destination countries, embassies, and consulates, is crucial to understanding the environment of the host country, especially in terms of its health system. Guinto noted that this would allow OFWs to be “knowledgeable and equipped on how to navigate these complex national health systems.” Consequently, such information could also guide policymakers in crafting the next generation of BLAs, which are anchored on the protection and welfare not just of migrant health workers but also all other groups of OFWs, such as construction workers, domestic helpers, and caregivers. Guinto added:

No migrant should be left behind in the next generation of bilateral labor agreements that we will negotiate in our activities and responses to future pandemics. We can’t just prioritize one group and forget about the other. I think positioning health and well-being at the center of migration governance will really push us to adopt a more, I guess, universal and equity focused approach to migration policy.



## Episode 13

# “Debt-Trap” Diplomacy

## Fact or Myth?

- **Host | Herman Joseph S. Kraft**  
*Professor, Department of Political Science  
University of the Philippines Diliman*

- **Guest | Alvin Camba, Ph.D.**  
*Assistant Professor, Josef Korbel School of  
International Studies, University of Denver*

*Faculty Affiliate, The Fletcher School's Climate  
Policy Lab, Tufts University*

This podcast episode featured a discussion on China's so-called “debt-trap diplomacy.” It covered surrounding issues and debates on Chinese loaning practices and made sense of the myths and the facts. The most prevailing of such contentious narratives is that China attracts poor countries to make successive loans to fund big-ticket infrastructure projects that are too expensive to pay back and will yield little economic turnaround. As a result, countries that fail to pay would be vulnerable to Chinese demands, such as control over their assets



and, in some cases, over its domestic and foreign policy. Critics thus conclude that China is using its loans as a geopolitical instrument.

To start the session, Alvin Camba began with an important note: available data on Chinese loans shows that of about 13,000 Chinese projects across the world, from 1990s up to 2019, analysts have found no support for a debt-trap case except for what happened in Sri Lanka's Hambantota port. However, he added, the Sri Lanka case, with careful analysis, is also not illustrative of a loan-trap. The Hambantota port project was signed in 2007 at an interest rate of around 6.2 to 6.3 percent. While this rate is relatively higher than competition, the bidding and negotiations happened before the 2008 financial crisis. At the time, countries in the Global South could not avail concessionary loans, which are relatively more generous with their fixed interest rate. China offered a better alternative:

So, interest rates at that time for development projects were something called a *variable interest rate*. That means it could go up in the future indefinitely. So, countries had no resort but to talk to, I would say, a lender like China [now] who was willing to lend an interest rate that was higher than usual. Yet at the same time, it was a fixed interest rate.

By 2010, when Sri Lanka was negotiating the second tranche for the projects' funding, interest rates were back to the normal 2 percent. Camba asserted that this was proof that China was not gearing towards any trap. Secondly, studies show that "there is a quantitative relationship between economic growth and Chinese projects." This suggests that Chinese loans do not aim to weigh down countries economically. Instead, Chinese loans push countries into surrendering assets, which was alleged to be the case in the Hambantota port.

Another popular narrative surrounding Chinese loans is that it strategically targets nations that have less capacity and resources to pay off successive loans, which make them more vulnerable to a loan-trap. These countries may be facing existing social, political, governance, and economic challenges which China exploits in its calculations when negotiating loan terms. This argument is compounded with observations that most of China's debtors include developing countries such as in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. As a response to these allegations, Camba offered another perspective to the issue. He noted that, it is precisely because of these dilemmas that such countries turn to China, instead

of other countries in the market who tend to be more stringent and critical as creditors. More so, other creditor countries since the 1990s have moved away from providing concessionary loans to big infrastructure projects while China was more willing. Camba explained:

So as a result, these countries have little choice but to, let's say, work with the Chinese, so they can actually fund these infrastructure projects. So it's less about "does the Chinese target these countries?" It's more about, these countries end up targeting China, so they could end up acquiring loans, so they could build these infrastructure projects.

Chinese loans are likewise known to have no sectoral limit as far as types of projects are concerned. Camba recalled that the Duterte administration's drug rehabilitation centers in Mindanao were funded by Chinese loans. The Asian power also funded a wrestling match project in Nepal. Meanwhile, China also does not move away from funding massive projects. For Camba, this particular feature is highly attractive for country leaders:

Chinese loans are basically used to enhance a leader's political survival because you end up assigning loans to particular political actors. You end up using economic actors within your country to participate in the project. You end up expanding your political coalition and your power in the host country. So, as a result, a lot of the projects tend to be bigger projects that Western financial institutions usually refuse to fund.

Thus, to a certain extent, these countries and their leaders prefer to borrow from China—the country being the "financer of first resort" to many local politicians. Camba also added that China has the "natural affinity to fund these projects because of the Chinese political economy [and] the domestic political economy of host countries." Overcapacity has been an issue for China in the last decade. Providing loans allows the country to solve this problem. As Camba mentions:

They end up in the form of Chinese loans given to the Global South, to basically facilitate the construction of these projects, the absorption of these activities, the internationalization of Chinese companies, and, sort of, the work of Chinese workers.

In terms of the nature of Chinese loans and their terms, similarities and differences with other institutions in the market also exist. Camba described Chinese loans to be more mercantilist, which is more of a practice among Western investment banks offering commercial loans, rather than OECD countries, who provide concessionary loans to countries in need in pursuit of encouraging development projects. Moreover, most Western countries do not fund mega projects in infrastructure and focus more on bureaucracy training and the likes. Camba noted that Chinese loans lie in between:

It's a mixture of concessionary loans, which follow the western standard, but most of it is actually what people call commercial loans. So they're more like 2 to 3 percent. They're cheaper than Western commercial loans, but they're more expensive than Western concessionary loans.

Camba added that Chinese interest rates are indeed generally higher but not as it was with the early stages of the Hambantota port. This is because China is also critical of commercial returns from re-exporting construction and excess capacity of the country.

Another criticism that has been prominent is the lack of transparency in China's loaning practices, particularly the imposition of a non-disclosure agreement, wherein the host country cannot reveal the contents of the contracts, effectively hampering the ability of the debtor to negotiate terms. Most lending countries practice disclosure through membership in the Paris Club, but China is not a member. For Camba, this assumption must be studied more thoroughly. First, non-disclosure is not unheard of, especially in the practices of Western investment banks. Second, contracts show that non-disclosure agreements can be challenged when a national concern arises, such as in the case of the Kaliwa Dam when widespread local opposition led the government to disclose the contract terms. Third, and finally, non-disclosure agreements usually have a one-year expiration.

Besides the Sri Lanka port, Camba noted that there is no other case, even after thorough probing, that points to China's debt-trap diplomacy. It is highly disputable that the actions of numerous Chinese companies and firms across the globe are connected to the Chinese government; that they are part of the states' larger geopolitical strategy to increase global influence and stature. There is no

question that China has geopolitical goals, but for Camba, geopolitics is “just an externality...rather than an intention,” because the Chinese government also utilizes its economic growth and internationalization as means to strengthen their legitimacy.

Camba further noted that there is a certain distinctiveness in the way that China works, as far as lending practices are concerned. Instead of interpreting China’s action as geopolitical in nature, some narratives point to China as a relatively newcomer in the international finance market. Therefore, its actions are simply that of learning, probing, and experimental, much like what other lenders like the US, Japan, Germany, and Korea did before. For Camba, while it is true that China is learning, it cannot be concluded that China’s practices will also evolve in the way that other lenders have. As Camba put it:

I think that institutions are distinctive, and countries have their own specific norms, social values, and practices that are embedded in specific national institutions and histories. So, I don’t think a convergence will take place. Nonetheless, there will be adjustment, but I don’t think it’s going to be similar to how the West does things.

Moving towards the end of the session, Camba shared his projections on what could possibly be in the future of China under Xi Jinping, particularly regarding loans and China’s external engagements. He noted that the current political and policy landscape features infighting among bureaucrats—a divide between practicality-minded people, especially in dealing with the West, and politically minded loyalists. The latter tend to be favored for government positions due to the increasing centralization of power in the CCP, which could be seen as a means for realizing personal gains. However, Camba, believed that this would not bar the Chinese government and the CCP from pursuing economic growth because, at the end of the day, it assures their legitimacy.

For his final point, Camba shared that a new Global Development Initiative (GDI) is reportedly replacing China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), focusing more on “soft-power building rather than exporting economic capacity.” This includes training officials and building political parties. For Camba, the future may see China managing both thrusts concerning its loans, because the government’s legitimacy is still highly built on economic gains from exporting capacity.



## Episode 14

# Cyber Strategy in the Philippines

- **Host | Marvin Bernardo**  
*Junior Research Analyst*  
*UP CIDS Strategic Studies Program*
- **Guest | Francis Domingo Ph.D.**  
*Associate Professor of International Studies*  
*De La Salle University*

The episode centered on cyber security and cyber strategy in the Philippines. It explored the potential and emerging threats and risks associated with digitization and identified its implications for individual and state security, as well as towards overall development in the country. The episode also tackled various means of building safeguards and implementing a national cyber strategy that will effectively balance opportunities and vulnerabilities stemming from digital integration.

The growth of the digital ecosystem has accelerated even more in recent years, influencing the way people lead their daily lives, communicate with each other, consume information, and transact business, amongst other things. While such developments offer efficiency, convenience, and other benefits, the issue of cyber security looms large both at the individual and societal level. In defining cyber security, Dr. Francis Domingo described a trend in literature that tends to

take on a more technical approach. Additionally, a context which has yet to be significantly explored and is more social than technical is the context of strategy. In this respect, Domingo defined cyber security as “securing social technical interests of a nation state.”

Cyber security, from this perspective, has two critical elements namely technology and policy. Domingo referred to technology as capabilities and described policy as the interests of the individual, the nation-state, or the global actor. He also added that there exists a gap between these two components that needs to be bridged:

You have technical people, technical experts, not really well-versed in policy. Then you have policy or people or analysts or decision makers right at the very top, not really well versed in the technical aspects of securing computer networks, for example. So, these two elements on the interface would be crucial in strengthening the overall cyber defense posture or securing national interest in cyberspace.

In the Philippines, cyber security has been identified as a strategic challenge for the country’s development in both the 2008 National Security Strategy (NSS) and the National Security Policy (NSP) of 2017–2022. These official documents guided the development and release of the National Cybersecurity Plan (NCSP) 2022 in 2017 under the Duterte administration. It is supposedly the first government document that focused solely on cyber security. The NCSP was publicly announced and coordinated with international organizations like the United Nations and the International Telecommunications Union. For Domingo, these policies reflect a good foundation for a comprehensive security strategy for the country. However, the challenge is to create a follow-up on these initiatives under the new administration.

Asked on how the new NSP could be approached by the new administration, Domingo suggested incorporating three new critical elements. First is the clear and explicit mention and management of state-sponsored cyber operations. Domingo noted that “the most sophisticated cases of cyber operations would still belong to nation-states, particularly their intelligence agencies or military organizations.” Thus, a more detailed indication of this in the next NSS is necessary. Next is the inclusion of international affairs in the framework of

the NCSP. Alongside the Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), and the Department of National Defense (DND), the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) must also be present. Especially in the context of state-sponsored operations, DFA will have a crucial role in responding to cyber threats and managing cyber operations. Additionally, as a third recommendation, Domingo added that the next NSS must maximize the country's relationships with its international and regional strategic allies, such as US, Australia, and Japan, to strengthen the country's cyber defense posture. As Domingo noted, the existing strategy needs to build on what it has and improve accordingly:

Because if you look at the original document, the 2017, in terms of the technical aspects, they've got it, tented, they've got it laid out there—capacity building, critical infrastructure, protecting critical infrastructure. It's already there. You need to build on what we have now, the 2022 one, the one that's about to end and perhaps upgrade, is it an upgrade or modify, adding the three elements so that you can have a more, I would say more progressive [strategy].

Domingo also discussed the challenges and opportunities in Philippine policy-making. He noted that laws and policies are in place, such as the Cybercrime Law and Data Privacy law. However, implementation remains an issue, as are institutions and mechanisms involved, and budget. He observed that the proposed budget for the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) is “quite lean,” and that, as other senators have noticed, there were no intelligence funds, which are supposedly important in the operations of DICT in terms of monitoring and managing threats.

The discussion also covered the role of the private sector as a partner and supporter of the government's strategy in strengthening the country's security posture. Domingo noted that even from before, the private sector has been ahead in the area of cyber security strategy. They have been enhancing their capabilities in the field. This is because they are common targets of cyber intrusion, making it imperative for their protection. Additionally, certain private sector companies provide cyber security as a form of service to other companies and even state governments. With these developments, certain opportunities and challenges arise. In terms of individual companies, a culture of conscious



reporting is being strengthened in the private sector, especially in critical industries like finance and insurance. As they themselves are common targets, reporting cyber-attacks to the government is practiced not only for monitoring purposes but also to identify any state-sponsored attacks. On another note, Domingo shared that in recent years, the government has been working with cybersecurity companies—the Philippine Air Force with PLDT, the Philippine Navy with Synetcom Philippines, and the Philippine Army with Secuna—for certain services such as operating domains and websites. However, he noted that with the level of secrecy in these transactions, it is unclear if these companies outsource their facilities, which may have implications for national security, among other considerations.

Echoing his earlier point on the lack of an international angle on the country's cyber strategy, Domingo also explained how cyber issues at the domestic level are given more attention. The issue of the 2016 COMELEC hack gained much traction in the media. The government was able to track and file cases against the perpetrators, Anonymous Philippines. Meanwhile, a 2017 case, which was linked to actors from Vietnam, involved the release of sensitive documents to the public. These included transcripts of a telephone call between President Duterte and President Donald Trump, a call between Duterte and Xi Jin Ping, and the minutes of an ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting. The latter incident stayed in the news for only two weeks and did not garner much attention in the Senate and Congress.

The foregoing point to questions of the country's capabilities both in terms of educating Filipinos about cybersecurity and enhancing the Philippines' own expertise and capacities. Domingo noted that the country is making progress on that end:

We have done some level. There's some level of progress in terms of, for example, undergraduate programs in cybersecurity. So, this is another initiative that is part of the cybersecurity plan. But whether it's sufficient for an entire population, because there's the ratio that the UN for example, prescribes. I don't think it's sufficient at the moment.

Nevertheless, the country has been offering more programs and degrees in a number of institutions. The University of the Philippines offers professional

courses. Meanwhile, the National Defense College of the Philippines is gearing to offer a program on cyber strategy and policy that is catered towards defense and military officials. For Domingo, however, the challenge lies in promoting cybersecurity to the general population:

That's been the struggle, awareness. So that's been what DITC is trying to really develop—awareness. Basic. So, something like cyber hygiene, which you've probably heard about. Update your programs, two factor, multi-factor authentication. These basic, what we think are basic measures, are actually the measures prescribed by Interpol, prescribed by the United Nations.

Promoting awareness to more Filipinos is therefore imperative for the government. An improvement that could be made in this regard is to not limit discourses and public statements to cybercrime alone, but to also address possible threats in cyberspace as they relate to national security. Domingo noted, “Why not go full force in, the entire, the range of threats in cyberspace, rather than just specifying it as a crime? Because the most sophisticated ones are state-sponsored. National security, not necessarily just individual crime.”

To conclude the session, Domingo provided three recommendations on how to strengthen the country's cyber strategy. First, he recommended that the government assesses the significance of cyber security in the country's security and development vis-a-vis other domestic and international factors. This is the first step to determine if cyber security is a policy priority. In Domingo's observation, the situation is not that positive. Second, the country must find ways to bridge the technology-policy divide. As Domingo reiterated:

This means looking at cyber operations or cybersecurity from different lenses, particularly from international affairs, for instance, because that is how the globe, the international community, is engaging with cyber security or cyber operations. We really have cyber norms to really confirm that international law is applicable in cyberspace. The question is how to enforce it, of course.

There must also be an initiative to move beyond cyber security as it is understood in the fields of IT and ICT, which tends to be highly technical. Domingo explained

that “ICT is integral, we don’t have computers, we don’t have software, hardware. There’s no cyber. But if you look at cyber from a very narrow perspective, you cannot develop strategies, you cannot develop a clear policy.”

The third and last recommendation is to be more explicit in responding to issues of cyberspace, instead of being strategically ambiguous, especially in situations where state-sponsored attacks may be present. Countries engage in naming and shaming strategies, mostly in the West, but diplomatic protests are also a possible response. Moreover, the government can leverage its strategic alliance with international partners and allies to improve our knowledge and capabilities. The US is an option. Countries like Australia and Canada are also open to work with the Philippines. Domingo noted, however, that before all these, the country should know where it currently stands and where it wants to go. As Domingo remarked:

A lot of countries are trying to extend the capacity, you know, and try to want to contribute to the capacity building of the Philippines. But we need to know what we want first, and the best way to do that is well, perhaps to release a strategy, right? That should take the direction.

## Episode 15

# Unshackling Japan?

## Consequence of Russian-Ukrainian War on Japan's Pacifism

■ **Host | Herman Joseph S. Kraft**  
*Professor, Department of Political Science*  
*University of the Philippines Diliman*

■ **Guest | Maria Thaemar Tana Ph.D.**  
*Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science*  
*University of the Philippines Diliman*

The episode continued the discussion on the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and focused on how the crisis is affecting the conflict surrounding Japan's security posture and strategic options. Japan's pacifism has always been a subject of debate because of its *abnormality*. Through Article IX of the Japanese Constitution, the country has perpetually renounced war and only maintains an armed force for self-defense. The Japanese people are also highly against remilitarization. Despite these social and legal restrictions, Japan's security and foreign policy have experienced significant developments in recent decades, many of which have been prompted by external factors, including new imperatives in the regional and international environment. The war in Ukraine is assumed to be one of those factors as well, despite the conflict being geographically removed from the Asian region.

Dr. Maria Thaemar Tana shed light on why the foregoing idea could indeed be a founded concern. For one, she explained how the actions of Russia against Ukraine reflects a lack of respect for international rule of law and an intention to widen influence in Europe at the expense of smaller and weaker states. She explained how this could be a possible model for other revisionist powers in the Indo-Pacific region, specifically China:

The real threat to Japan's security is neither Russia nor the Ukraine war, but actually, China's assertiveness and possible actions over the Taiwan Strait, and Russia's war in Ukraine has set alarm bells ringing in the Asia-Pacific Region about a potential for a copycat Chinese invasion in Taiwan.

Beyond the Taiwan issue, China's assertiveness in pursuing its maritime interests in the Indo-Pacific is also a concern for Japan. Not only do China's island reclamation initiatives contribute to its growth as a regional power, but it also signals threats to stability in the region, where several other countries have respective interests. This, including the possibility of war, could effectively alter the strategic balance in the region and challenge Japan's interest.

Japan is therefore adamant in protecting the balance for a long-time, as Tana noted. It is especially critical in engaging Russia so as to prevent a possible Russia-China alliance. Japan has even acknowledged Russia as a strategic partner rather than a challenge in its security documents. However, the Ukraine crisis has turned things around, as Japan realized that the Russia-China axis has only gained momentum because of the war. As a result, it has taken more of a hardline position against Russia as the war progressed and bolstered its alliance with the US. However, Tana warned of the implications of such actions in Japan's energy resource—Russia being one of its alternative sources from the Middle East suppliers.

The changes in Japan's strategic calculations are not only observed in the conduct of its external relations with Russia. Many other developments are being discussed within Japanese lawmakers and the public, which have been nascent long before the war in Ukraine. Tana noted that the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has been pushing for a "more robust defense policy" for a while now. The LDP agenda, realized through former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, led to several policies. These include the adoption of a National Security Council and

National Security Strategy in 2013, the relaxation on arms export in 2014, and the passing of two controversial bills: the International Peace Support Bill and the Peace and Security Legislation Consolidation Bill. Under the new Prime Minister Fumiya Kishida, the acquisition of strike capabilities has also become a matter of policy debate. Tana noted how supporters of the remilitarization agendum are taking advantage of the worsening situation in Ukraine:

Japanese politicians have used the invasion of Ukraine to step up military rhetoric further. Because, on the one hand, Japan seeks to justify its military development which is restricted or constrained by the current pacifist constitution. On the other hand, Japan seeks strong financial support for military expansion. The LDP recently proposed to revive the NSS, the NDPG, and the midterm defense programs.

A few decades ago, the possibility of nuclear sharing, relaxing arms export, acquisition of strike capabilities, and increasing the defense budget would have been met with widespread protests in Japan. Today, they are occupying more debates. Japanese policy makers are also exploring them. For Tana, however, this does not guarantee that such developments will push through, especially with regard to nuclear sharing and acquiring capabilities to attack enemy bases:

Prime Minister Kishida himself has noted that nuclear-sharing would violate Japan's 1967 three Non-Nuclear Principles, according to which Japan will not possess, not produce, and not permit the introduction of nuclear weapons into the country. Nuclear sharing is also likely to be opposed by Japanese citizens, given that such missions could, in the future, carry US nuclear warheads.

Increasing the defense budget is a more feasible direction, according to Tana. The LDP is also a staunch supporter of this policy, proposing to increase Japan's military spending from 1 percent to 2 percent or more. This is so to be at par with its NATO counterparts. In 2021, Japan was the ninth biggest defense spender globally, but China is still miles ahead on this end. Nevertheless, Tana noted that Japan is breaking traditions. This is a "clear indication that Japan is growing more anxious about the region's security environment and of Russia's war in Ukraine."

Furthermore, Japan is seen to be exploring opportunities from its partnerships and alliances, regionally and internationally, while also ensuring it possesses the necessary capabilities to defend itself. Tana explained how Japan is striking this balance with the recent rearmament efforts, bolstering its alliance with its traditional ally, the US, and forging new allies:

Aside from the US, Japan is also establishing and deepening bilateral strategic relations with other like-minded states in the region and beyond, and in particular, with EU member states and its Group of Seven partners. In Southeast Asia, Japan also continues to engage with regional ASEAN-led multilateral institutions to enhance its credibility.

Public perception also takes up a significant role in Japan's policy-making. Many Japanese citizens related to the plights of Ukrainians were even in favor of sanctions that the Kishida administration imposed and supported against Russia. The support was observably more intense than it had been in 2014 during Russia's annexation of Crimea. As Tana noted:

The Ukraine Crisis, on the other hand, reminded the Japanese public that Japan is on the front line of regional conflicts, because it is close not just to Russia, but to China as well, and also to North Korea. But really, it's China which has been making aggressive moves in the East China Sea, the South China Sea, and the Taiwan Strait.

Consequently, recent polls in Japan have revealed that public support for its security policies, such as increasing defense spending and reinforcing self-defense capabilities, have been getting stronger:

It's not probably not impact[ful], but a favorable public opinion would make it easier for the conservatives in the government to frame their policies in a more acceptable manner and to sell the idea that it is high time to reconsider or revise Japan's foreign and security policies in response to increased external threats and uncertainties.

Tana argued that beyond public opinion, politics at the level of policy-makers, specifically exchanges between and positions of LDPs allies and rivals, is equally,

if not more, influential in policy making and implementation. Observably, one major debate that has gained even greater momentum during the Ukraine crisis is the possible amendment of the peace clause of the constitution. Kishida, Abe, and the ruling LDP are proponents of the amendment, and other parties that have supported the idea in the past have won majority seats in the Diet during the last general election.

Could this possibly be enough to instigate constitutional reform? For Tana, it is difficult to quickly come up with a definite yes or no. Factors at the international and domestic level will prove to be consequential in the foreign policy landscape of Japan. One is the role of the Foreign Policy Executive (FPE), which is essentially “the state’s unified decision-maker, who sits at the intersection of [the] domestic and international political system.” The decisions of the FPE, including how they assess threats and view opportunities, are guided by their own values and beliefs. Additionally, a state’s strategic calculation of its position vis-a-vis other states and actors also factors in policy-making. From these considerations, foreign policy choices become a matter of consensus between the FPE and other actors in foreign policy, including political parties like the LDP, and societal actors such as civil society and the Japanese public at large. Tana thus underscored a tedious position for the FPE:

Leaders, then, almost always face a two-level game in devising and implementing strategies. So, on the one hand, they must respond to the external environment, but on the other hand, they must exact and mobilize resources from domestic society. What’s important is there must be consensus among policymaking elites. So, there must be the shared degree of perception about some facts in the world being a problem versus not of a particular nature, versus some other nature requiring certain remedies versus others.

State-society relations likewise bear a significant weight in the process. Consensus must also be reached between the Japanese government and the public, specifically on understanding threats and identifying policy responses to be undertaken. On this end, Tana noted that trust is key:



If the relationship between the foreign policy executive and societal actors is good—that is, if there are high levels of trust and respect for the government—leaders will be relatively free to carry out policies that they believe would maximize the national interest. And conversely, if society is suspicious of the state, it will be difficult to implement foreign policy decisions.

Meanwhile, concern over Japan's rearmament is not limited at the domestic level. Several of Japan's neighbors, such as China and North Korea, and even some members of ASEAN, have been critical over Japan's normalization. When asked if this has any bearing on Japan's assessment over pushing for constitutional amendment, Tana posited that it should not be a roadblock, and would have less impact compared to the perception of the FPE and domestic public. She also added that even the presence of domestic norms and strategic culture, while having the potential to restrain militarism, can only do so much:

My views on this are, well, quite critical. Because I think Japan will be expected to enhance its military power and expand its military roles only when its allies are unable to respond to the threats. And placing too much emphasis on norms, chiefly antimilitarism, exaggerates the constraints they imposed on domestic leaders. Because I think antimilitarist norms, despite being widely accepted, will not really prevent Japan from remilitarizing in the face of imminent threats.

## Episode 16

# Regional Security in the Indo-Pacific

- **Host | Marvin Bernardo**  
*Ph.D. Candidate, National Chengchi University*
- **Guest | David Arase Ph.D.**  
*Resident Professor of International Politics  
Hopkins-Nanjing Center  
Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced  
International Studies*

This episode centered on the question of security in the Indo-Pacific region. It discussed the varying trends and transformations in the global and regional environment, how these factors impact the security architecture, and what it all means for the region's security outlook.

To begin the session, Dr. David Arase was asked to weigh in on the debates surrounding the US commitment and presence in the Indo-Pacific region, specifically in terms of reinforcing and maintaining the rules-based order and promoting sovereignty in the international system. Concerns have been rising due to recent trends in US actions, such as disengagement in the Middle East and its response to the War in Ukraine, which is evidently diverting resources for deterrence away from the Indo-Pacific. For Arase, however, US is well-aware of the situation:

They're working to remedy the latest bill. [The] Congress is very much aware of the need to re industrialize America and restore a lot of its production. So the US is, I think, slowly pivoting its actual military deployments, military weapons, and also these new integrated deterrence-type strategies and deployments to the region.

Arase also predicted that US commitment and its presence will likely increase in the next five years. The major power has already made significant developments in forming alliances in the region to manage threats. However, the complex relationships between and among countries in the region poses limits to the kinds of alliances and set-ups the US can explore. For instance, NATO cannot be replicated in the Indo-Pacific region. Instead, the hub-and-spokes model takes precedence. A unified command structure is simply not feasible, Arase remarked:

So instead, what the US is doing is pursuing a partnership strategy, where, you know, these aren't tight sort of collective defense treaty agreements, but they're agreements to discuss common security interests and concerns, and to institutionalize cooperation to address issues of mutual interest.

In terms of maintaining the resilience of the region to security threats, for example, the US has been building and strengthening relationships with its allies in the Quad and AUKUS. Additionally, it has been engaging in joint military exercises and augmenting capacities for interoperability. Could these arrangements possibly affect the rivalry between the US and China? They are certainly not welcomed by the latter, Arase noted:

China's very concerned about this, because the last thing China wants to do is to see the smaller countries on China's periphery, start cooperating with each other, to come up with a common position against Chinese revisionist demands or fascism. You know, ASEAN knows this very well already. As the ASEAN members are told that they cannot discuss amongst themselves code of conduct issues, they can only discuss code of conduct issues with China and China's presence.

The implications of these arrangements on ASEAN Centrality have also been a subject of various debates. For Arase, however, instead of undermining ASEAN's

role in the region, minilateral set-ups like that of AUKUS, Quad, and even other countries in Europe support and reinforce ASEAN centrality. Operating as a diplomatic community, ASEAN has certain limitations. It has to make decisions by consensus, and it does not provide public goods like security or enforcement of rules at sea. Given these considerations, the presence of other organizations in the region that could offer the same and have the will to do so, preserves ASEAN centrality. Arase explained, “It’s not a zero-sum game. The QUAD and ASEAN both want to maintain freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea. They’re working toward the same goal, as you know, and all the pockets want the same thing.”

Additionally, ASEAN is also limited because of the composition of its members, half being part of Indochina and the rest being coastal states, which prevents ASEAN from assuming solidarity on certain maritime issues. This basically denotes that “half of the ASEAN members aren’t really interested in sacrificing much to help those other ASEAN members who are in dispute with China in the South China Sea.” As Arase explained, what happens instead is that countries like Japan and Australia, who are members of the Quad, engage in various maritime security operations, such as Freedom of Navigation Operation or FONOP exercises, with the US and other individual states in the region. This demonstrates freedom of navigation and maintains it as a norm. In effect, it reinforces rules-based order in the region. For Arase, these types of exercises cannot be instigated nor led by ASEAN, and thus the presence of other countries serve as a “layered complementarity to create a resilient security [environment]” from which ASEAN can benefit in maintaining its position and centrality in the region.

When asked if there is a possibility for the region to become crowded with the simultaneous presence of other countries, especially in the South China Sea, Arase clarified that traffic rules exist for a reason. Moreover, traffic is not primarily a matter of warships but also of open trade. China may have its own perspective on the matter because they have argued that transit in the South China Sea is not allowed without their knowledge and permission; nevertheless, this points to the value of promoting and demonstrating that “international law and the rights given by international law are still respected.”

On the topic of divisions, ASEAN is also unable to collectively manage and respond to certain water disputes with China, such as the South China Sea issue

and Mekong River issue, opting instead to separate efforts and approaches. Arase noted that establishing a concerted effort would be, first, interpreted by China as a form of meddling. This is because archipelagic states do not have interests in the Mekong River issue in the same way that Indochina states do not have stakes in the South China Sea disputes, despite all of these countries belong to ASEAN. Moreover, it is not in the respective national interests of ASEAN countries themselves to be involved in localized disputes, especially those with connections to China.

It's very difficult for ASEAN to manage, because ASEAN is not really the EU. The countries don't believe in pooled sovereignty. They believe in non-interference [and] strong state sovereignty. Decisions are made at the speed of the slowest moving member [and] there's no sort of majoritarian rule. Everybody has a veto.

All such considerations reinforce curiosity over China's actions in the near future, especially since President Xi Jinping has been recently reaffirmed for a third term, and the major powers' growth is also recovering from the economic implications of its zero-COVID policy. Arase explained that China's security outlook is likely to anchor on its recently launched counter-narrative called Global Security Initiative, which compliments the earlier launched Global Development Initiative. Leveraging on the economic and political relationships it secured through the BRI, China intends to have its partners sign this security narrative that counters US strategic presence in the region. Through the initiative, China would dispatch police, naval vessels and other facilities to supposedly safeguard maritime security and overall development of its partners. This initiative was presented in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Uzbekistan and the BRICS, but so far, it has not received enough support. Nevertheless, for Arase, it is clear that "China does have a response to this US partnership strategy, this US partnership and this integrated deterrence approach in the region."

Seen this way, the security initiative is similar to what the Solomon Islands recently signed with China, which has also spurred tension in that particular area in the South Pacific. This can be observed in the ways of both the Americans and Australians to enhance their own security arrangements with other Pacific islands. The Solomon Islands location in the Pacific is strategic, both for economic and security purposes. China's presence in the area has been a concern for the

US and Australia, further complicating relations between these countries. Even with the new government being relatively “friendlier and more pro-cooperation with China” according to Arase, public opinion in Australia against China is not doing good. And so, a more cordial relation between these two nations is not highly likely.

The discussion also covered the growing role of India in the Indo-Pacific. For Arase, India has been demonstrating a practice of multi-alignment:

Well, India is not nonaligned. No longer, I mean, that’s really a relic of the Cold War, non-alignment. India today practices multi-alignment, not non-alignment. Multi-alignment means that on certain issues, it aligns with Russia, and other issues that aligns with the Quad, and other issues that could align with China or not. So India is on India’s side. India’s pursuing its own interests. India doesn’t feel like it needs to accommodate the demands, particularly if they’re unreasonable demands of other countries.

Arase added that India’s approach works well with the US approach in the region, which anchors more on strategic partnerships and cooperation on specific issues and goals. For instance, maritime security, military technology, and interoperability are some domains where India benefits from its cooperation with the Quad. Meanwhile, India also benefits from its relations with China on matters of vaccines, supply chain, and semiconductor development, among others.

The session also focused on the tensions between Taiwan and China and its impact in the Asia-Pacific, more specifically, Southeast Asia. Arase enumerated several critical ramifications of further escalation of tensions and the possibility of a conflict. First is the relationships between ASEAN member states. Arase noted that China’s continuous promotion of the One China Principle might become more assertive in the coming years and possibly reach ultimatums. This could divide ASEAN and put everyone who have signed the BRI agreement in a difficult position. Second, conflict between China and Taiwan will have serious economic implications at the regional and global levels, inevitably affecting maritime trade and global supply chains. Finally, it will impact stability in the region. Arase added:

The war would have a big effect on Southeast Asia in terms of, first of all, just peace and stability in the South China Sea. But then after that, you know, the governance regime there and the economy. And because, depending on who comes out on top and that conflict, you will or will not see freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

To bring the episode to a close, Arase provided a run-down of other possible primary security challenges that are emerging or may emerge in the Indo-Pacific in the next few years. One critical concern is the Korean Peninsula issue involving nuclear proliferation and the responses it could elicit from neighbors and rivals, such as South Korea and Japan. Non-traditional issues of security are also gaining momentum, including climate change, food insecurity, pollution, and energy transition.

## Episode 17

# Regional Security in the Indo-Pacific

- **Host | Marvin Bernardo**  
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- **Guest | Herman Joseph S. Kraft**  
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Concluding the twelve-episode series, episode 17 talked about transformations in regional strategic environment over the past year. It also explored the possible transformations, challenges, and prospects facing the Philippines and the region in the near future.

The discussion began with a general overview of the significant events in the region's geopolitical situation that have had a significant impact on the country's strategic posture. Professor Herman Joseph S. Kraft observed that while much of the literature and dominant discourses have focused on China's rise and its relationship with the United States, attention towards other actors in the region is also warranted. Middle powers, for instance, such as Japan, Australia, India, and external players, such as the European Union (EU), EU member states, and Germany, all have policies and interests in the Indo-Pacific. Kraft noted:



These are policies that are not dependent on how that relationship between the US and China actually proceeds. Meaning to say, they have their own policies, their own objectives, which I think becomes important to the region at large, and to the Philippines more specifically.

Centering on the role of external players, such as the EU, Kraft was asked about the level of presence and involvement one can expect from the grouping, its individual member states, and the United Kingdom, given the ongoing war in Ukraine. Kraft explained that several EU countries, as well as the UK, have adopted their own Indo-Pacific strategies, indicating their interests in the region. However, Kraft distinguished the kinds of involvement these countries would be undertaking, considering their previous actions and the current developments in Ukraine. He noted that commitment and presence would be more likely diplomatic than military. As Kraft put it:

Meaning to say that there is going to be more pressure coming from them in terms of the kinds of behavior they expect from countries like China, for instance, to maintain. Because to a large extent, much of what they're talking about focuses on China's actions and activities, particularly in the West Philippine Sea. So, to that extent, we might see them being actually much more active than before, but I don't foresee a constant presence in terms of military forces in the region.

ASEAN's role and influence in the region was also discussed. In November last year, ASEAN reportedly affirmed that it would admit Timor Leste as the eleventh member of the regional bloc. The country recently gained independence, only in 2002, and has about 1.4 million residents. When asked about this possible expansion, Kraft clarified that Timor Leste's membership to ASEAN has been a long-standing issue. Debates on whether the country will be a productive member of the grouping or will end up being a burden, given its economic and political situation, have also been prominent. The question is a crucial consideration because ASEAN itself has been discussing how it would be able to "fill up economic gaps" within the economic bloc.

The recent suspension of Myanmar from ASEAN adds fuel to surrounding debates on ASEAN's role in the region, and talks of an expansion with Timor Leste. For Kraft, a reflection is in order. This could begin with ASEAN's promised review of

its Charter, which was supposed to happen on a regular basis, around five or ten years. Kraft reflected:

I think the Myanmar crisis already points to the importance of doing that review, and a serious look at the provisions on decision making, for instance, and the question of binding resolutions as far as ASEAN is actually concerned. These were issues that were already raised when the Charter was first brought up; that the Charter actually is silent on questions of compliance with the kinds of agreements that the ASEAN states have actually entered into.

Beyond raising such questions and discussions about a review of its Charter, is ASEAN also capable of solving the Myanmar issue? Kraft argued that it is precisely because of ASEAN's Charter and its principles of non-interference in domestic politics that the grouping is not able to fully address what is happening in Myanmar. In terms of the direction and developments that it might take, Kraft noted:

Arguably speaking, I think there are enough voices within the current members of ASEAN that have pointed to the need for ASEAN to be much more, I won't say intrusive, but to be less persuasive and more coercive. In other words, ASEAN has to put in more teeth to the kinds of agreements that it actually has, especially when we are talking about issues that create tension within ASEAN itself.

Nevertheless, Kraft argued that a divide still exists. Older members of ASEAN tend to be more open to the idea of the group being more active in influencing the behavior of its members. Meanwhile, the more recent ones are seemingly more reticent.

Bringing the conversation back home, Kraft also discussed the outlook of Philippine foreign policy under the Marcos administration. Starting with the country's relations with its longtime ally, the US. He noted that while the actions of the government seem to be diverging away from the trend during the Duterte administration, the friendlier approach is actually more traditional and familiar, considering the history of the country's foreign policy. He added:

You can see the priorities here, fix them or at least make sure that the relationship with the US is stable, but at the same time reaching out to the others. Right? So in that sense, the point about friends to all, being a friend to all is actually being emphasized as well.

To conclude the session, various security considerations for the country in the next five years were discussed. Kraft began with a recollection of Professor Brendan Taylor's *hotspots*, which covers transformations in the geopolitical situation in the Korean Peninsula, the West Philippine Sea, the relationship between Japan and China, and Taiwan. In addition to that, the impact of the Ukraine war is also an increasingly mounting concern. It certainly has been impacting global energy security and, in effect, the global economy. The Indo-Pacific region in recent decades has been growing as an "engine of economic growth." But for Kraft, the serious economic ramifications of the Ukraine war and the way it is occupying the attention of European countries should be carefully considered by countries in the Indo-Pacific, moving forward. Environmental issues are also likely to arise in the next few years, which are normally beyond the control of governments. To this end, Kraft recommended that multilateral set-ups be explored and reinforced.

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