

# **7<sup>th</sup> Katipunan Conference**

## **Philippine Strategic Outlook 2025: National Security and Economic Resilience in a Changing Global Order**

### Concept Note

Observers of international affairs like to point to a defining moment or a strategic shock to identify the end of one era and the beginning of another. As expected, the novel coronavirus pandemic has already created much speculation that the world will undergo profound changes, even that contemporary history will forever be divided between what happened before coronavirus and after coronavirus. However, historical eras—and certainly international orders—rarely hinge on singular events. For this reason, it is more precise to identify transitional periods that span the rise and fall of international orders. During these periods, elements of the old order are still evident while features of the new order are clearly emerging and playing a more influential role (Stares, et al., 2020, p. 1).

The world is currently experiencing a transitional period today. While the international order largely constructed by the United States of America (USA) is still very much at play, the global distribution of power is inescapably shifting with the rise of new powers as well as influential nonstate actors. The USA is also growing more reluctant to bear the costs of world leadership, especially when it comes to using military force. China and Russia, along with lesser regional powers, have taken advantage of this hesitation in recent years to assert their own interests and to undermine the international standing and power of the USA (Stares, et al., 2020, p. 1).

For small powers like the Philippines, the strengthening national security and economic development are critical to navigating the changing global order. The country is strategically situated in Asia where it is vulnerable to potential armed conflict between China and Taiwan to its North; confronted with several territorial disputes to its West, and locked in continuing peace-building challenges in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the South. The Philippine Rise (previously Benham Rise) which contains the promise of natural gas and other critical resources is a challenge to defend and harness strategically.

The Philippines' location is adjacent to sea lanes for international trade, amounting to well over USD 3.3 trillion per year, as well as containing overlapping territory with the Coral Triangle—the richest biodiversity hotspot in the world, containing one-third of the world's coral reefs. In this sense, the Philippines plays a key role in preserving marine ecosystems that likely underpin part of the almost USD 50 billion in fisheries output of the Southeast Asian Region (accounting for almost a quarter of the world's total fisheries output).

The Katipunan Conference brings together scholars and practitioners of national security and development policy, featuring the sharpest strategic minds discussing the most pressing strategic issues. It builds on recent efforts to integrate national security and economic development more effectively and follows the tradition of the Katipunan Conference, which brings together scholars and practitioners in national security.

The current geopolitical shifts involve significant economic risks and opportunities – placing a premium on policymakers' ability to absorb the latest data and analysis on the nexus of national security and global economic trends. The Katipunan Conference responds to this, as it envisions to be the annual gathering of scholars and practitioners of national defense and economic development that leverages the country's top thinkers in these fields to support greater coherence and effectiveness through systematically integrated defense and development strategies.