

The Katipunan Conference: Fostering Intellectual Exchange Towards a Strategic Approach to National Security

The Katipunan Conference has been engaging scholars in matters of global, regional, and national security since 2015. It began as a project under the UP CIDS—Strategic/China Studies Program, with the **Asian Politics and Policy Conference** as its precursor. The event has developed into an essential intellectual hub for scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers to critique, analyze, and propose pathways or frameworks for discussion of critical security concerns.

The Katipunan Conference has demonstrated its sensitivity to the evolving policy landscape while remaining attuned to the dynamic shifts and trends at both regional and global levels. This adaptability and responsiveness have positioned it as a crucial platform for fostering strategic insights and shaping informed perspectives on contemporary geopolitical developments.

Over the years, the participants have problematized how the Philippines can better position itself within the increasingly competitive geopolitical environment. Through the publication of proceedings and monograph papers, the discussions have led to tangible outcomes in both academic and policy spheres.

Milestones in Strategic Discourse: From “Pivot” to Pandemic, to Potentialities and Pathways

The Second Katipunan Conference, held in October 2016, was themed: **“Philippine Strategic Environment: New Directions, New Challenges”**. Organized in collaboration with the Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea (IMLOS), the conference examined the evolving geopolitical landscape, with a focus on the bilateral relations of the Philippines and China, in the context of former President Duterte’s foreign policy “pivot” from the U.S. to China.

By the **Third Katipunan Conference** in 2018, the event cemented its role as a key venue for strategic discourse. Themed **“The Philippine Strategic Outlook: 2018-2019”** the conference was headlined by a keynote address by National Security Adviser Secretary Hermogenes Esperon Jr., who shared Duterte’s hedging strategy in foreign relations. This so-called “hedging strategy” would explain new partnerships fostered with China, Russia, and India while maintaining its long-standing strategic alliance with the United States.

Attended by over 200 participants, the conference featured several panels that approached the question of national security from a multidisciplinary and multidimensional perspective. These panels included discussions on information and communications technology (ICT), climate change, regional security architecture, economic sustainability, and maritime security. The concluding panel synthesized compelling discussions from previous panels and discussions toward forecasting the tactical and strategic prospects of the Philippines’ strategic environment.

In August 2019, the UP CIDS conducted the Fourth Katipunan Conference with the theme: **“The Philippine Strategic Outlook 2020: Strategic Transformations and Responses in the Asia Pacific”**.

The keynote speech by Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary Delfin Lorenzana highlighted three major issues: 1.) Geostrategic rivalry in the South China Sea, 2.) Chinese militarization in the disputed seas and building of artificial islands, and 3.) Internal security concerns such as terrorism and financial surveillance.

The speech set the stage for seven panels that explicated diverse yet critical areas of domestic national security and its relationship with the broader regional strategic landscape. The topics included issues and

prospects of maritime security, defense and defense industries, science and technology, internal and regional conflicts, and the political-economic development in the region.

The two-day conference brought together approximately 260 scholars and practitioners and resulted in the publication of the conference proceedings. Additionally, selected papers presented at the conference were published in a separate volume titled: "Towards an Enhanced Strategic Policy in the Philippines," published with the support of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Philippines Office.

The Fifth Katipunan Conference in 2020 explored how the COVID-19 pandemic reshaped security dynamics and economic landscapes across the Asia-Pacific. The conference **"COVID-19 and the Strategic Environment: Change and Continuity"** examined how the crisis inevitably accelerated geopolitical competition and tensions while emphasizing ASEAN's role in promoting regional stability.

The pandemic created a unique opportunity for scholars to connect globally and continue intellectual exchanges through the availability of new technologies that allowed for virtual conferences and conversations. The conference ultimately became a platform for experts and attendees alike to explore the post-coronavirus situation, acknowledging how the pandemic exposed deficiencies in existing frameworks while simultaneously providing an opportunity to identify areas where cooperation can be pursued and strengthened. The conference proceedings of the Fifth Katipunan Conference can be accessed [here](#).

Expanding the Horizons of Strategic Studies with the Sixth Katipunan Conference:

Last year, the Sixth Katipunan Conference was themed: **“Philippine Strategic Outlook 2024 Onwards: National Security and Economic Resilience”**. This iteration is distinguished by the collaboration of three of the country’s top universities– **the University of the Philippines through the UP CIDS – Strategic Studies Program, Ateneo de Manila University through the Ateneo Policy Center of the Ateneo School of Governance, and Miriam College**. The partnership and collaboration between these three institutions is an important milestone in sustaining and scaling up interdisciplinary dialogue and shaping practical strategies for the country’s national security and economic resilience.

Supported by prestigious partners such as WR Advisory Group, the Harvard Kennedy School Alumni Association, and Stratbase ADR Institute (ADRI), the conference provided a diverse range of expertise, ensuring that discussions are locally grounded but cognizant of global developments. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Philippines Office, a long-time partner, continues to lend its support in recognition of the importance of international cooperation on security and strategic studies.

Keynote speeches from Department of National Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro and Secretary Teodoro Go highlighted the conference. Their speeches centered on the country's security policies and economic directions, setting the tone for discussions on intelligence, human security, foreign influence operations, and maritime security in the West Philippine Sea. The conference served as a platform for 29 papers authored by different scholars across the country, representing various academic and government institutions. Select papers and proceedings from the Conference will be published this year by the UP CIDS.

Looking Ahead: Ten years and beyond

In its seventh iteration over nearly a decade, the **Katipunan Conference** has established itself as a leading platform for fostering collaboration between academia and policy. With institutional partners such as Miriam College and the Ateneo School of Government through the Ateneo Policy Center, as well as strategic partners like the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung - Philippines, the conference will continue to make meaningful contributions to the growing interest in studying geopolitics through the lens of strategic foresight. It serves as a unique and essential platform where theory meets practice.

It will continue to foster an inclusive intellectual space that bridges academic inquiry and field-based insights, drawing together seasoned experts and promising emerging scholars to co-produce knowledge on pressing regional and global developments. The conference will continue to shape a forward-looking policy ecosystem grounded in evidence, strategic thinking, and national interest by encouraging interdisciplinary dialogue and multi-sectoral collaboration toward a shared vision for national security and economic resilience, reinforcing the imperative to integrate academic rigor with actionable foresight in navigating the Philippines' complex geopolitical environment.###

Contact:

Email: 7thkatipunanconference@gmail.com