



PROCEEDINGS 2026-17

Special Projects

A Roundtable Discussion (RTD) on Self-Reliant Defense Posture (SRDP) Revitalization

30 June 2025

University Hotel, University of the Philippines - Diliman

Allan Benedict C. Solacito



UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
CENTER FOR
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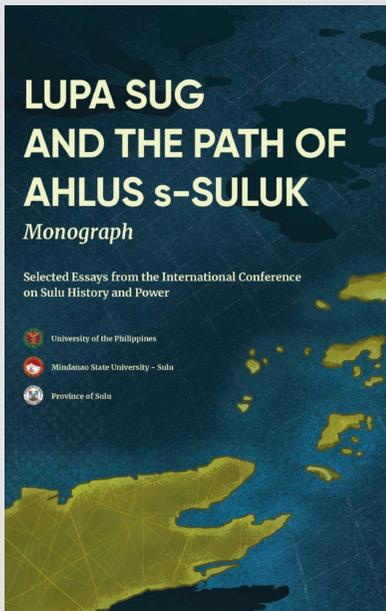
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About the Roundtable Discussion

The Roundtable Discussion (RTD) on Self-Reliant Defense Posture (SRDP) Revitalization was held last June 30, 2025 at the University Hotel, UP Diliman. This is an initiative led by the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) in collaboration with the UP Vanguard, Inc. and the Armed Forces of the Philippines - Office for Strategic Studies and Strategy Management (OSSSM).

This roundtable discussion serves as a strategic response to the volatile security challenges that the country faces in the South China Sea and Taiwan. While previous military modernization efforts acquired necessary assets, the heavy reliance on external suppliers has limited local technology transfer and created supply chain risks. To address these vulnerabilities, the government aims to foster a domestic defense industry through the enactment of the Self-Reliant Defense Posture Revitalization Act (RA 12024). Local manufacturing and self-sufficiency are key priorities of this legislative shift in order to ensure national security.

This event serves as a collaborative platform for the military, industry leaders, and academia to map out practical pathways in the implementation of the RA 12024. Leveraging on the university's extensive research and engineering expertise, the discussion aims to support private industries in meeting the technical needs of the military. This synergy aligns with national industrial policies and the university's commitment to active, collaborative partnerships for national development.

Academic and Research Institutions

- 1. Dr. Rosalie Arcala Hall**
Executive Director, UP CIDS
- 2. Vgd Luis Juan Oreta**
National Commander, UP Vanguard Inc.
- 3. Dr. Benjamin Vallejo Jr.**
Convenor, UP CIDS Conservation and Biodiversity Program
- 4. Lt Col. Maria Theresa R. Escolano PAF (Res), MNSA**
Acting Chief, Defense Industry Development Division,
Department of National Defense

- 5. Dr. Luis G. Sison**
Director, Technology and Business Development Office,
University of the Philippines System

- 6. Dr. Annette Balaoing-Pelkmans**
Director, Technology and Business Development Office,
University of the Philippines System

- 7. Mr. Eleazer E. Ricote**
Deputy Executive Director, Public-Private Partnership Center,
Department of Economy, Planning, and Development

- 8. BGEN Joel Paloma, PA**
Chief, Office for Strategic Studies and Strategy Management,
Armed Forces of the Philippines

Welcoming Remarks

This roundtable discussion served as a strategic platform to transform the Self-Reliant Defense Posture (SRDP) Revitalization Act from being a legislative mandate into a practical reality. In his welcoming remarks, Vgd Luis Oreta emphasized that the RA 12024 serves as both an economic and defense strategy for the country. It aims to empower local industries, stimulate national innovation, while also strengthening the country's sovereignty. He stressed that the discussion aims to lead actionable outcomes. By focusing on industrial empowerment, the initiative seeks to build a resilient foundation for long-term national security.

Representing the University of the Philippines, Dr. Rosalie Arcala Hall highlighted the unique role of the UP Center of Integrative and Development Studies (UPCIDS) as a vital bridge between the government, industry, and academia. In her welcoming remarks, she emphasized the necessity of establishing robust regulatory mechanisms and fostering strong academe-industry linkages to support the full and successful implementation of the SRDP. The goal of the university is to craft an intellectual and technical framework necessary in navigating the complex domestic defense production. This collaborative approach ensures that institutional research directly serves the practical needs of the country's defence sector.

Ultimately, in their welcoming remarks, Vgd Oreta and Dr. Hall established and set the tone and a unified vision for the SRDP. The SRDP will be the cornerstone of Philippine national resilience. They both underscored that achieving true self-reliance is not merely a military objective. Self-reliance is a collective nation building endeavour as well that requires deep institutional trust. Aligning strategic mandates of the government with industry capacity and academic expertise, the roundtable sets the stage for a sustainable defense ecosystem.

Keynote Speech

Representing Undersecretary Rene S. Diaz of the Defense Technology Research and Industry Development, Department of National Defense, is the Acting Chief of the Defense Industry Development Division, Lt Col Maria Theresa R. Escolano PAF (Res), MNSA. In his message, USec Diaz articulated a transformative vision for the country's national defense. He shared that we need to move beyond traditional procurement and towards a comprehensive

industrial ecosystem. RA 12024 provides that essential framework for the revitalization of the Self-Reliant Defense Posture which puts focus on high-impact sectors. Thirteen cooperation areas are central to our strategy:

- Establishment of unmanned systems
- Production of propellant powder
- Establishment of Maintenance Repair and Overhaul for Aircraft
- Ship Artillery
- Missile System and Radar
- Suitable Ship Building Capability
- Critical Minerals and Industrial Component Production
- Additive Manufacturing or 3D Printing Capability
- Government Arsenal Capability Upgrade
- Munitions Production
- Cyber Security Operations System Modular Energy Solutions
- Production of Individual Clothing and Individual Equipment
- Force Protection Equipment

The Undersecretary emphasized in his message that policy alone is insufficient. We need technology and innovation for defense industrialization. To bridge this gap, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) had inducted a strategic SRDP concept focused on four core pillars:

1. Developing a research and development workforce
2. Acquiring Critical Technologies
3. Technology Operation and Maintenance
4. Improvisation and Innovation when standard solutions fall short

The SRDP is both a defense initiative and a nation-building effort. To achieve this transformative vision requires a whole-of-nation approach that fosters deep-rooted collaboration across four key sectors to ensure a secure and self-reliant Philippines.

On Mechanisms Available for Government Industry Partnerships

Eleazar E. Ricote

Deputy Executive Director, Public-Private Partnership Center, Department of Economy, Planning, and Development

Mr. Eleazar E. Ricote, the Deputy Executive of the Public-Private Partnership Center, advocates for a strategic shift from procurement-centric models to a defense industry ecosystem. Powered by the new PPP Code and Self-Reliant Defense Posture (SRDP) Act, this vision redefines defense development as an essential economic growth agenda. By leveraging private sector innovation and financing, the government aims to overcome historical hurdles such as bureaucratic red tape, poor interagency coordination, and a persistent preference for imports that have long kept the local production at the prototype stage.

Policy and Institutional Reforms

Partnership modalities such as joint ventures and concessions are now streamlined into a single process through the new legal framework. It provides higher approval thresholds of up to Php 15 billion. At the core of this transformation is the newly institutionalized Office of the Undersecretary for Defense Technology, Research, and Industry Development (DTRID), which is mandated to:

- Facilitate technology transfers and establish PPPs to promote in-country manufacturing
- Incentivize private participation through commercially viable revenue streams and risk-sharing
- Formalize “entry and exit” rules to ensure project sustainability

Strategic Pipeline and Roadmap

Several flagship initiatives are actively prioritized by the government currently to prove the viability of this model. Among these are some unsolicited proposals for the small arms co-production at the Government Arsenal, a national drone program of the Aerospace Development Authority, and the expansion of private shipbuilding for naval maintenance.

Ricote proposes an approach for long-term growth. It involves a comprehensive market study and a Defense Industry Development Roadmap aligned with the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028. This specific framework treats the West Philippine Sea situation as a catalyst for domestic industry. In aligning national security requirements with broader economic goals, the Philippine seeks to foster a self-reliant industry that is both operationally effective and globally competitive.

On Academe-Industry Collaboration Mechanisms

Dr. Luis G. Sison

Director, Technology and Business Development Office, University of the Philippines System

The University of the Philippine is shifting toward a proactive role in the national economy. It is now actively seeking to commercialize laboratory research and prioritize real-world applications. UP is now situating itself as having a transformative role in the national economy through structured partnerships. This strategic shift aims to transform academic work into a primary driver of domestic productivity and innovation. Early successes of partnerships with various sectors such as those in health and agricultural sectors already demonstrate the immense economic viability of this university-led approach. By aligning scholarly excellence with market-driven development goals, UP is actively redefining its institutional identity.

High-Impact Successes

UP is successfully moving beyond criticisms of “ivory tower” and research staying trapped in the laboratory. Engagements from the industry such as that of biopharmaceutical and natural product sectors have proven how UP is actively seeking opportunities to reposition itself in the national economy. In fact, the engagement in these sectors, have already generated over Php 1 billion in estimated economic value. Furthermore, UP Los Banos has partnered with AgriSpecialist Inc. to launch a 300-million peso facility for the biofertilizer BioN. These milestones attest that academic excellence can go beyond the university and transition into large-scale industrial operations when supported by right commercial framework.

The University Innovation Fellowship (UIF)

Within this commercial framework now is the UIF which serves as a critical cultural catalyst that reskills researchers to prioritize formal industry agreements over traditional academic publications. Inspired and influenced by international models like the British Council and USAID, this program introduces “customer development” to identify who will ultimately fund and

utilize new technologies. This pivot ensures that research is conceptualized and designed with a clear market in mind from its inception rather than purely a theoretical exercise.

- Reverse Pitches: Industry stakeholders articulate the specific technological gaps to guide the research.
- Multidisciplinary Teams: UP assembles an “Avenger-style” groups to tackle complex, market-driven use cases.

Sustainability Mechanisms: Bridging the Gap

To prevent the risk of “discontinuity” often felt when research grants expire, support systems to retain staff and maintain momentum are institutionalized. These mechanisms are set in place to ensure that promising prototypes do not lag behind during the critical transition from the lab to a functional pilot stage. By weaving market insights early, the university guarantees that its technologies are both scientifically sound and investment worthy.

- Bridge Grants: small, rapid-response funds that can cover demonstration costs and staff retention between major funding cycles
- AMBAG: a digital platform that connects external stakeholders directly with academic experts
- Industry Mentorship: industry experts provide critical business insights that are often missing in traditional academic settings

The Vision for a Productive Ecosystem

Dr. Sison envisions a future where innovation and business analysis are integrated into university curricula to create a “virtuous cycle”. Through this, we gear students with the right skills and knowledge that can ensure that the university has a steady pipeline of talent that is capable of navigating with the complexities of the entire R&D ecosystem. This sustained engine for national development shall serve as a permanent backbone of the country’s economy. By inculcating an entrepreneurial mindset among students, the university hones a culture of scientific inquiry as societal problem-solving. This holistic approach ultimately aims to bridge the final gap between academic discovery and the long-term industrialization of the country.

On Regulatory Imperatives with Bearing on Industry Development

Dr. Annette Balaoing-Pelkmans

Convenor, Escaping the Middle-Income Trap (EMIT) Program, UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (CIDS)

The Tatak Pinoy Strategy (TPS) represents the first legally mandated national industrial strategy. It is designed to reverse decades of domestic deindustrialization. TPS seeks to stimulate local industrial activity and generate sustainable, high-paying jobs by confronting the social costs of import dependence and overseas employment. It responds to the stark economic decline that the country is facing as evidenced by the drop manufacturing's share of GDP (from 22% to 17%) and its share of national employment. Through this comprehensive roadmap, the government intends to transition from a service-heavy economy to one characterized by broad industrial dynamism. This landmark initiative is currently moving toward a public presidential endorsement to solidify its status as the country's primary economic engine.

Confronting the Missing Middle

The national economy suffers from the “missing middle”. Ideally, our small and medium-sized firms must connect micro-businesses to larger, global markets. The heavy concentration of industrial activity within the National Capital Region exacerbates further this structural gap as it further create and expand the systemic regional inequality. Furthermore, the country's innovation potential is severely hindered by the lowest Research and Development (R&D) spending among its regional neighbors.

- **Value-Added Deficit:** approximately 60% of service jobs are in low-value sectors that lack the wage-earning potential of manufacturing.
- **Exporter Decline:** exporting firms are shrinking in numbers which limits the scale necessary to generate widespread domestic employment
- **Spatial Imbalance:** provincial growth is hindered by the lack of industrial dispersion as it economic benefits remain concentrated within a few urban hubs.

TPS “Tree” and Defense Integration

TPS is uniquely structured as a “dynamic live document” symbolized by a tree to underscore implementation over static, aspirational planning. Rigorous theory of change is represented by the roots, institutional backbone to break agency silos as trunk, and agile, adaptive policymaking as branches. Within this framework stands the defense sector as priority proof-of-concept for the entire industrial policy.

- Dual-Use Potential: leveraging defense both for security and commercial technological advancements
- Sector Development Unit: unifying onboarding and testing infrastructures across the AFP and PNP to support local suppliers
- Strategic Resilience: strengthening the domestic supply base to reduce reliance over foreign contractors

Reforming Procurement: Value for Development

A fundamental shift in government procurement is crucial to the success of the strategy. Procurement needs to pivot from the model of taking the “cheapest price” to the Most Economically Advantageous Responsive Bid (MEARB). This reform puts a prime into innovation and domestic supplier development by evaluating bids based on their contribution to the national industrial goals. Under this system, the “Tatak Pinoy seal” shall serve as certification for qualified domestic suppliers so that they will receive preference in government contracts.

Economic Impact and Long-Term Vision

It is projected that the full implementation of TPS will bring six to eight trillion pesos to the national economy. As it do so, it is projected to generate around 11.3 million jobs as well. Although the strategy requires capital-intensive investments, the anticipated ₱900 billion in new government revenue justifies the fiscal commitment to national capability. This vision aims to “bring dignity back to local production” by ensuring Filipino firms are no longer left to face global competition alone. By formalizing these regulatory imperatives, the Philippines intends to escape the middle-income trap through sustained productivity and innovation. Ultimately, the strategy serves as a commitment to transforming the Filipino workforce into a globally competitive industrial powerhouse.

Roundtable Discussion: Identifying Strategic Gaps and Solutions

The roundtable discussion served as a critical platform for addressing the operational and legislative gaps that hinder national self-reliance. Participants have highlighted that there is a clear disconnect between high-level policy and the practical realities faced by personnel on the ground during disasters and defense operations. The need for integrated planning that goes beyond individual agency silos for a unified national posture emerged as a core theme. While there are technical solutions, the primary obstacles remain rooted in outdated legal frameworks and a lack of centralized resource mapping. By surfacing these challenges, the panel established a clear mandate for the synchronized implementation of the SRDP and Tatak Pinoy strategies.

Operational Challenges and Basic Needs

Critical concerns on the management of military reservations were raised by Major General P.J. Bondo. He has also shared that there is a persistent lack of locally produced Meals Ready-to-Eat (MREs). Despite the Philippines' strong agricultural sector, the military continues to struggle with supply chain disruptions and basic sustenance for both soldiers and displaced citizens during natural disasters. He specifically questioned why military land remains underutilized and poorly secured thereby failing to serve as a productive base.

Legislative and Policy Mapping

Policy frameworks like the AFP SRDP have long existed. However, General Esperano and Maria C. Val asserted that there is a severe lack of policy mapping that hinders effective inter-agency cooperation. This current “discord” is mainly rooted to the lack of centralized data. Therefore, even though agencies have specialized assets oftentimes these remain unknown or inaccessible to other potential users. With the Department of National Defense’s inability to finalize Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) for vital laws, this systemic issue is further exacerbated leaving personnel on the ground without clear, modern legal mandates. To remedy these structural hurdles, the country must embrace a “whole-of-nation” approach modeled after Executive Order 70 to mandate collaboration across all government agencies and the private sector.

Lt Col Escolano confirmed that a 10 to 20-year strategic roadmap is underway, formulated in close collaboration with the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DepDev).

The session was concluded with a consensus that the “virtuous cycle” of innovation and self-reliance cannot be achieved if all efforts continue to be fragmented and siloed. Participants of the roundtable discussion reiterated that the success of both SRDP and Tatak Pinoy Strategy depends on the government’s capacity to bridge the gap between research and real-world action. When we create structured mechanisms that will enable asset mapping and legislative reform, the country can move past the state of industrial erosion and move towards achieving resilient growth. This transformation requires not only funding but a persistent institutional “champion” that will guide the country through political transitions and bureaucratic constraints. At the end of the day, national security is an all-encompassing endeavor. It therefore calls for a total integration of industrial, military, and academic expertise and collaboration.

Center for Integrative and Development Studies

Established in 1985 by University of the Philippines (UP) President Edgardo J. Angara, the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) is the policy research unit of the University that connects disciplines and scholars across the several units of the UP System. It is mandated to encourage collaborative and rigorous research addressing issues of national significance by supporting scholars and securing funding, enabling them to produce outputs and recommendations for public policy.

The UP CIDS currently has twelve research programs that are clustered under the areas of education and capacity building, development, and social, political, and cultural studies. It publishes policy briefs, monographs, webinar/conference/forum proceedings, and the Philippine Journal for Public Policy, all of which can be downloaded free from the UP CIDS website.

The Program

The Executive Director Special Projects portfolio covers research, stakeholder engagement, and event organizing in the policy areas of security, civil-military relations, energy, water, and gender which are currently not accommodated in the existing CIDS programs. These include initiatives under the Declaration of Cooperation (DOC) agreement with the AFP Office of Strategic Studies and Strategy Management (AFP-OSSSM) and externally-supported projects directly undertaken by the Executive Director. This will also cover partnerships/collaboration with government agencies, SUCs, LGUs, and private entities as directed by the UP President and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

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