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Philippines

Priming the Philippines for a “globalized NATO”

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Global dynamics are powerfully impacting the foreign policy of the Philippines and driving it in a dangerous direction. In his second State of the Nation Address, on July 24, 2023, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s [speech](#) declared: “We have formed strategic alliances with our traditional and newfound partners in the international community.” In the context of the Philippine state’s diplomatic language, “strategic alliances” chiefly refers to its major North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-linked “partners”—the United States, Japan, Australia, and the United Kingdom. In fact, the Marcos Jr. regime is gearing up to join NATO’s creeping project to envelop and control the vast Eurasia-Indo-Pacific area.

Consequently, the top echelon of the Philippines’ foreign policy apparatus is steering the country along a militarist course. This dangerous policy is Manila’s deliberate answer to the acute global shifts threatening southeast Asia’s general stability. And as it aligns its interests with the core strategic aims of the U.S., the Philippine government blatantly bolsters U.S. war-mongering against the People’s Republic of China.

Global dynamics

More than three decades since the Cold War ended, the imperialist world system has now entered a new phase in its history. Over the past year alone, the capitalist global order’s innate contradictions generated systemic and complex crises. All of these predicaments—economic, social, political, ecological—severely combined to exacerbate an already volatile world environment. Accordingly, this shifting international milieu categorically shapes Manila’s global outlook and frames its external policy logic.

Certainly, the current list of worldwide crises conditions includes the following: a) a continuing downturn in the international economy due to persistent [global inflationary pressures](#), with a projected slower global growth rate of less than 3 percent by 2024; b) [sharpening class struggles worldwide](#) amid combined oppressive economic policies and repressive government measures; c) [an escalation of open diplomatic clashes](#) between the rival blocs of the imperialist great powers within major international forums, especially in the United Nations Security Council; d) [a worsening of the global climate change emergency](#), with October 2023 being the hottest October on record; e) [an acknowledgement-
[https://www.who.int/news/item/05-05-2023-statement-on-the-fifteenth-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-\(2005\)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-coronavirus-disease-\(covid-19\)-pandemic](https://www.who.int/news/item/05-05-2023-statement-on-the-fifteenth-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-(2005)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-coronavirus-disease-(covid-19)-pandemic)] by the World Health Organization concerning “remaining uncertainties posted by potential evolution of SARS-CoV-2”; and f) [lasting fallouts](#) resulting from the current wars inside Ukraine (between Russia and the U.S.-led NATO) and in Zionist-occupied Palestine (between Israel and the oppressed Palestinian nation).

In this context, the U.S. and China remain locked in a fierce contest for global hegemony despite the U.S. being the top superpower with significant military superiority.

And in actively pursuing their national interests abroad, Washington and Beijing are guided by their respective foreign policy frameworks.

The U.S.-led alliances

The U.S. seeks to effectively degrade China’s “comprehensive national power.” As such, Washington’s integrated foreign policy/national security parameters—expressed in its [2022 National Security Strategy \(NSS\)](#)—commits the U.S. to counteract China as the “pacing challenge,” i.e., its top priority. As the U.S.’s up-to-date strategic guidance doctrine, the 2022 NSS openly describes how, “to outmaneuver our geopolitical competitors,” so as, “to win the competition for the 21st century.”

To concentrate its preeminent might upon China, the U.S. constantly fortifies its security alliances—from Western Europe to East Asia, and around central Eurasia (covering Russia).

Viewed through the lens of this modern-day grand strategy, the U.S. deems the Eurasia-Indo-Pacific area as “important for NATO.” This is the reason why Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea have already become NATO’s Asia-based “Global Partners.” Similarly, Washington is enticing countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to join the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad/comprising Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S.)—in harmonization with the Australia-U.K.-U.S. (AUKUS) regional security mechanism. Concurrently, the U.S. and its allies are pushing for the creation of NATO liaison offices within Asian states, specifically in Japan and Jordan. These schemes are undoubtedly geared toward globalizing NATO’s political-military scope and influence throughout the Eastern Hemisphere.

NATO has lately confirmed such an approach. This was clearly imparted at the 2023 NATO Vilnius Summit last July. As a main strategic premise, it was stressed in [NATO’s post-summit communiqué](#):

The Indo-Pacific is important for NATO, given that developments in that region can directly affect Euro-Atlantic security. We welcome the contribution of our partners in the Asia-Pacific region—Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea—to security in the Euro-Atlantic, including their commitment to supporting Ukraine.

So, the expansion to the Asia-Pacific region is one of NATO’s major policy trajectories.

In the first week of September 2023, during the forty-third ASEAN Summit in Jakarta, Southeast Asia’s premier regional bloc acquiesced to the U.S.’s foreign policy overtures once again.

Indeed, U.S. imperialism is forcefully deploying its brand of obstinate international leadership and utmost resources to assure its global predominance, including the Asia-Pacific region, in the period ahead.

Chinese policy in the region

Conversely, to negate the belligerence of the United States toward it, China just freshly passed its 2023 Foreign Relations Law (FRL) last June. This is Beijing’s foreign policy framework to principally foil Washington’s anti-China offensive.

China’s 2023 FRL distinctly proposes three major diplomatic initiatives: Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative. This signifies a robust external relations agenda counterposed to the U.S.’s supercilious narrative of upholding a “rules-based international order” (also known as, “Protecting the post-1991 imperialist world system for the global advantage of the United States”). In this manner, Beijing’s 2023

FRL is unquestionably a proactive foreign policy instrument set to impede Washington’s policies in major international arenas and domains.

In truth, the content of China’s present-day foreign policy course already displays an emergent form of Chinese imperialism—a result of its potent capitalist development—that is prepared to contest the United States as the world’s paramount imperialist power in order to reshape the global order to benefit Beijing’s long-range strategic interests.

It is beyond doubt that China has had an astonishingly steady capitalist economic growth since 1978. This change began not long after Chairman Mao Zedong’s death. In the wake of the Communist Party of China’s (CPC) 12th National Congress in August 1977, China firmly pivoted onto the “capitalist road” by joining the twin instruments of international capital in 1980—the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank—to reintegrate into the global capitalist economy.

Soon afterward, the CPC dropped its promise to the Chinese working class of guaranteed jobs for life. Throughout this starting phase, Chinese society was reintroduced to the rule of the law of value to boost the profit-motive for economic growth. China replaced an economic orientation of production-for-use with that of production-for-exchange.

The CPC embarked upon a second phase of stronger bourgeois-oriented economic reforms in 1992. This came after the Party’s 14th National Congress resolved to solidify China’s state-capitalism under the banner of “Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics.” These policies further destroyed China’s organized proletarian base. Moreover, it unleashed even greater contradictions resulting from the emergence of a ‘new bourgeoisie’ entrenched along the Party-State nexus.

By the time of its 15th National Congress in September 1997, the Party decided to transform Chinese state-owned enterprises into profit-driven firms. As a result, nearly all public companies were refitted along capitalist lines to fast-track China’s global competitiveness. The devastating consequence, however, was that many historic working-class gains were wiped out almost overnight. In fact, between 1998 and 2002, it was estimated that more than 25 million Chinese workers had lost their jobs inside China’s state-capitalist apparatus.

Additionally, the continuing direction taken by the last three CPC national congresses (in 2012, 2017, and 2022), under the leadership of Xi Jinping, merely solidified China’s imperialist track.

Given these national conditions, China has by now definitely attained greater economic and material advantages which essentially validate Lenin’s “five principal features” of imperialism: a) the public sector’s transformation from state-monopoly capitalism into private monopoly; b) the new state-capitalist bourgeoisie, having a dominant position within the Party-State process, ensures unified control over industrial and bank capital; c) China became a net capital exporting country in 2014 through its supranational financial giant, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and was able to export up to \$1.2 billion in major overseas direct investments starting in 2016; d) Beijing-led regional and transregional monopoly projects, like the AIIB, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the Belt and Road Initiative, are all aimed at enhancing external market-access objectives; and, e) China continues to actively carve out [new spheres of influence](#) and domination across Europe, South America, the Caribbean, Africa, West Asia, Central Asia, and the Asia-Indo-Pacific area.

Still, China’s amplified regional military superiority enables Beijing to immensely project force well beyond its frontier zone to protect its national interests. At the same time, the PRC’s deepened strategic depth remains highly fortified with huge economic resources to match its rising strategic contention with U.S. imperialism. This is already the developing situation within the Southeast Asian Sea (also known as the South China Sea).

China’s capitalist road to development has unquestionably led it onto an imperialist trajectory. It is a fast-rising imperialist global power with regional hegemonic clout across most of the Asia-Pacific. And through this path, Beijing is clearly forcing a redivision upon the world market.

Economically, China’s growing process of capital export, via its phenomenal Belt and Road Initiative across Eurasia, is absolutely extending its sphere of influence—in direct confrontation with the existing U.S. sphere of influence. This material undertaking helps to expand Beijing’s political and diplomatic sway around and beyond its immediate frontiers. With an ever-increasing number of foreign governments enhancing their external relations with Beijing, China’s hegemonic pull becomes even greater.

In this way, Beijing is further transformed into a strategic center of global power with its own set of national values, goals and objectives. And to guarantee its uniquely developing imperialist project—even as it shares similar basic features with the historic imperialist powers of the twentieth century—China is compelled to project its respective military prowess within its immediate regional security environment. So, and in this regard, the U.S. military’s proximate presence within the area is assessed not just as a clear and present danger. But even more, the U.S. is seen as an existential threat to China’s national well-being, not least in relation to Taiwan, which is understood as an integral part of the Chinese nation.

Therefore, the existence of U.S. military bases on Philippine soil leads to China’s hardening national security posture in its immediate regional security environment—just like the U.S. reaction to Cuba in October 1962, and Russia’s toward Ukraine in February 2022. This is mainly because the Philippines is geographically the closest U.S. client state to Taiwan; U.S.-controlled military bases are in the northernmost province of Cagayan (approximately 613 kilometers south of Taiwan). In contrast, U.S. military bases on Okinawa, Japan are still further in distance (approximately 716 kilometers away from Taiwan). And so, this significantly explains why Chinese military forces have ramped up their level of aggressiveness against Philippine aircraft and maritime vessels in the Southeast Asian Sea over the past decade.

Within this emergent global context, the Philippines under Marcos Jr. is determined to integrate itself into a “Globalized NATO.”

The following factors are, therefore, priming Manila into pursuing this reckless and perilous foreign policy track:

- Manila sees a series of bilateral military and security agreements with the U.S. as sacrosanct [for example, the [1951 Republic of the Philippines-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty \(MDT\)](#)—including the [1947 R.P.-U.S. Military Assistance Agreement \(MAA\)](#), [1998 R.P.-U.S. Visiting Forces Agreement \(VFA\)](#), [2002 R.P.-U.S. Mutual Logistics Support Agreement \(MLSA\)](#), and the [2014 R.P.-U.S. Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement \(EDCA\)](#)];
- Manila continually enlarges the United States’ military presence within the Philippines through basing schemes. In practice, this directly involves the creation of U.S.-controlled military bases on Philippine soil. At present, there are already nine American military bases within the Philippines—with more being considered for the future;
- The Philippines remains a [Major Non-NATO Ally \(MNNA\)](#). The MNNA status is a U.S.-designated term for non-NATO countries that have close security relations with Washington;
- All six U.S. partners (including the Philippines) belonging to the San Francisco System (the U.S.-led “hub and spokes” regional security architecture in the Asia-Pacific) are either MNNAs and/or NATO’s Global Partners;
- Manila endlessly conducts combined Philippines-U.S. military exercises;
- The Philippines maintains a bilateral defense arrangement with the United Kingdom (the latter is the leading power of the [Five Power Defence Arrangements/FPDA](#) in East Asia). The FPDA is a military alliance that also contains Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Singapore;
- The Philippines recently inked a [Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership](#) agreement with Australia as an integral military support component of the AUKUS-Quad regional security infrastructure to further augment the U.S. 2022

Indo-Pacific Strategy framework;

- Manila also joined the [2023 U.S.-Japan-Philippines trilateral security framework](#) to further boost the above-mentioned U.S. imperialist-driven initiatives;
- Manila incessantly bolsters the interoperability arrangements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines for its easy assimilation into the U.S. globalized military structure;
- The Philippines affirms chief aspects of the U.S.’s [2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy \(IPS\) framework](#) document thru the [2019 ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific \(AOIP\)](#) framework. The 2022 IPS is a regional security agenda to “bolster Indo-Pacific security”, while the 2019 AOIP is an initiative to enhance existing regional mechanisms, including those led by the U.S.;
- The Philippines, together with its fellow ASEAN member states, just recently adopted and signed an [ASEAN-Japan “joint vision” agreement](#) in December 2023 emphasizing stronger security cooperation between the two;
- The Philippines champions the [2022 ASEAN-U.S. Comprehensive Strategic Partnership](#). This CSP is geared to further strengthen strategic relations between Southeast Asia’s top regional body and the U.S., especially in the realm of economic and security cooperation; and
- Manila [fully promotes](#) Washington’s foreign policy mantra of a “rules-based international order” guarantees “freedom of navigation operations” for U.S. military forces worldwide. In practice, this really means that all U.S. military forces must be granted unimpeded access to all the seas and oceans of planet Earth in order to permanently preserve and protect the strategic interests of U.S. imperialism anywhere in the world.

These facts and conditions basically expose Manila’s “ironclad loyalty” to Washington’s uber-bellucose foreign policy. They reveal how the Philippines perpetually aggravates its tense regional security environment—to privilege the U.S.—but to the detriment of Southeast Asia’s neighborhood. The interests of the people of the Philippines, not to mention the international working class, would best be served by an alignment with neither Washington or Beijing. Toward this direction, the Philippines has to crucially consider the option of “Strategic Non-Alignment” as a principled foreign policy alternative.

The ensuing elements are vital: a) Permanently uphold cooperative amity in the field of external relations; b) Actively advance internationalist solidarity with oppressed nations and peoples; c) Unwaveringly defend the core non-alignment principles of both the 1955 Bandung Conference and the 1966 Havana Tricontinental Conference; and d) Always maintain a progressive posture on critical issues and concerns in global affairs.

This general stance of Strategic Non-Alignment would serve the Philippines in being able to help enrich international amity, transregional cooperation and global solidarity in a profoundly changing world. Humanity truly deserves this future—not imperialist wars of aggression.

[S]ocialists in the Philippines must resolutely struggle to reforge a socialist and worker-led anti-imperialist/anti-fascist united front.

And to help achieve this goal—and even beyond—socialists in the Philippines must resolutely struggle to reforge a socialist and worker-led anti-imperialist/anti-fascist united front. Such a revolutionary socialist project has to encompass the broadest layers of the Filipino working-class masses—from the grassroots, and upward to the national level. One of its priority aims should be to immediately scrap the Philippines-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty—plus its four attached bilateral military agreements.

This anti-imperialist resistance fight has to be waged in order to expel all U.S. imperialist troops from Philippine soil once and for all. By successfully doing so, a key chain-link underpinning U.S. imperialism in East Asia can be broken. And hopefully, this will further diminish the United States’ malign power within the region.

Moreover, a region-wide movement of anti-imperialist mass campaign networks, actively involving revolutionary Left forces (and other progressive formations) representing the Eurasia-Indo-Pacific, has to be effectively organized. A

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regionally coordinated mass-based political offensive against U.S. imperialism can largely help to blunt and undermine Washington’s belligerent onslaught across the area. Truly, for this common effort to have any significant impact and resonance, the campaign’s central calls should basically be: “No to a ‘Globalized NATO’! Shut Down the AUKUS-Quad Axis of Aggression! U.S. Imperialist Troops Out of Asia Now! Neither Washington nor Beijing!”

4 January 2024

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