



ASIA MAIOR

Vol. XXXVI / 2025

**Asia in 2025:
Great power rivalry, contested politics,
and global disorder**

viella



CENTRO STUDI PER I POPOLI EXTRA-EUROPEI “CESARE BONACOSSA” - UNIVERSITÀ DI PAVIA

ASIA MAIOR

The Journal of the Italian think tank on Asia founded by Giorgio Borsa in 1989

Vol. XXXVI / 2025

Asia in 2025: Great power rivalry, contested polities, and global disorder

viella

Asia Maior. The Journal of the Italian Think Tank on Asia founded by Giorgio Borsa in 1989.

Copyright © 2026 - Viella s.r.l. & Associazione Asia Maior

ISBN 979-12-5701-257-1 (Paper) 979-12-5701-258-8 (Online)

ISSN 2385-2526 (Paper) ISSN 2612-6680 (Online)

Annual journal - Vol. XXXVI, 2025

This journal is published jointly by the think tank Asia Maior (Associazione Asia Maior) & the CSPE - Centro Studi per i Popoli Extra-europei "Cesare Bonacossa", University of Pavia

Asia Maior: The Journal of the Italian Think Tank on Asia founded by Giorgio Borsa in 1989 is an open-access journal, whose issues and single articles can be freely downloaded from the think tank webpage: www.asiamaior.org.

The reference year is the one on which the analyses of the volume are focused. Each *Asia Maior* volume is always published in the year following the one indicated on the cover.

Paper version	Italy	€ 50.00	Abroad	€ 65.00
Subscription	abbonamenti@viella.it www.viella.it			

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-in-chief (direttore responsabile):

Michलगuglielmo Torri, University of Turin.

Co-editors:

Axel Berkofsky, University of Pavia;

Filippo Boni, The Open University;

Diego Maiorano, The University of Naples «L'Orientale»;

Marco Pinfari, University of Pavia;

Elena Valdameri, ETH Zürich;

Consulting editors:

Elisabetta Basile, University of Rome «Sapienza»; Kerry Brown, King's College London;

Peter Brian Ramsay Carey, Oxford University;

Rosa Caroli, University of Venice;

Jaewoo Choo, Kyung Hee University (Seoul, South Korea);

Jamie Seth Davidson, National University of Singapore;

Ritu Dewan, Indian Association for Women Studies;

Laura De Giorgi, University of Venice;

Hewison, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill;

Lucia Husenicova, University Matej Bel (Banská Bystrica, Slovakia);

David C. Kang, Maria Crutcher Professor of International Relations,
University of Southern California;
Rohit Karki, Kathmandu School of Law;
Jeff Kingston, Temple University – Japan Campus;
Mirjam Künkler, Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study – Uppsala;
Noemi Lanna, University of Naples «L'Orientale»;
James Manor, School of Advanced Studies – University of London;
Aditya Mukherjee, Jawaharlal Nehru University;
Mridula Mukherjee, Jawaharlal Nehru University;
Giulio Pugliese, European University Institute, Fiesole;
Parimala Rao, University of Delhi;
Guido Samarani, University of Venice;
Marisa Siddivò, University of Naples «L'Orientale»;
Eswaran Sridharan, Institute for the Advanced Study of India, University of
Pennsylvania;
Arun Swamy, University of Guam;
Akio Takahara, University of Tokyo;
Edsel Tupaz, Harvard University alumnus, Ateneo de Manila University and
Far Eastern University;
Pierluigi Valsecchi, University of Pavia;
Sten Widmalm, Uppsala University;
Ather Zia, University of Northern Colorado.

Book reviews editors:

Elena Valdameri, ETH Zurich (Review-editor- in-chief);
Teuku Reza Fadeli, Universitas Indonesia (UI), Jakarta.

Graphic project:

Nicola Mocchi, University of Florence.

Before being published in *Asia Maior*, all articles, whether commissioned or unsolicited, after being first evaluated by the Journal's editors, are then submitted to a double-blind peer review involving up to three anonymous referees. Coherently with the spirit of the double-blind peer review process, *Asia Maior* does not make public the name of the reviewers. However, the reviewers' names – and, if need be, the whole correspondence between the Journal's editors and the reviewer/s – can be disclosed to interested institutions, upon a formal request made directly to the Editor in Chief of the journal.

Articles meant for publication should be sent to Michelguglielmo Torri (mg.torri@gmail.com), Filippo Boni (filippo.boni@open.ac.uk), Diego Maiorano (dmaiorano@unior.it); book reviews should be sent to Elena Valdameri (elena.valdameri@gess.ethz.ch).



ASSOCIAZIONE ASIA MAIOR

Steering Committee: Filippo Boni, Marzia Casolari, Matteo Fumagalli, Michelguglielmo Torri (President).

Scientific Board: Guido Abbattista (Università di Trieste), Domenico Amirante (Università «Federico II», Napoli), Elisabetta Basile (Università «La Sapienza», Roma), Luigi Bonanate (Università di Torino), Claudio Cecchi (Università «La Sapienza», Roma), Alessandro Colombo (Università di Milano), Anton Giulio Maria de Robertis (Università di Bari), Thierry Di Costanzo (Université de Strasbourg), Max Guderzo (Università di Siena), Giorgio Milanetti (Università «La Sapienza», Roma), Paolo Puddinu (Università di Sassari), Adriano Rossi (Università «L'Orientale», Napoli), Giuseppe Sacco (Università «Roma Tre», Roma), Guido Samarani (Università «Ca' Foscari», Venezia), Filippo Sabetti (McGill University, Montréal), Gianni Vaggi (Università di Pavia).



CSPE - Centro Studi per i Popoli extra-europei
"Cesare Bonacossa" - Università di Pavia

Steering Committee: Axel Berkofsky, Alfredo Ferrante, Marco Gardini, Marco Pinfari, Maria Sassi, Pierluigi Valsecchi, Massimo Zaccaria (President)



viella

libreria editrice

via delle Alpi, 32

I-00198 ROMA

tel. 06 84 17 758

fax 06 85 35 39 60

www.viella.it

CONTENTS

IX Foreword

MICHEL GUGLIELMO TORRI, *Asia in 2025: The unravelling of the Asian order in the pincer of great power pressure and domestic strain*

Articles

- 1 FLORA SAPIO, *China 2025: «Focus our energies on doing our own things well»*
- 25 VERONICA STRINA, *China's 2025: Forging a new global role*
- 53 MARCO MILANI & ANTONIO FIORI, *Korean peninsula 2025: Political transition and strategic consolidation*
- 87 RAYMOND YAMAMOTO & MARCO ZAPPA, *Japan 2025: External shocks, domestic turbulence and the rise of Takaichi Sanae*
- 131 STEFANO PELAGGI, *Taiwan 2024-2025: Constraint, adaptation, and the cross-strait equilibrium*
- 155 THAN KIÜ, *Hong Kong 2025: Conditioned continuity under National Security*
- 173 ENRICO GLORIA, *The Philippines 2024-2025: Feuding families, weak institutions, and the limits of Philippine democracy*
- 193 EMANUELA MANGIAROTTI & NÜR RAFEEDA DAUT, *Malaysia 2025: ASEAN chairmanship under the Madani framework*
- 209 TEUKU REZA FADELI, *Indonesia 2025: The «Red-and-White» project and the consolidation of executive dominance*
- 267 CHRISTINE CABASSET, *Timor-Leste 2025: The 11th ASEAN member and new challenges*
- 285 FABIO FIGIACONI, *Vietnam 2025: Tô Lâm's powerplay and the limits of bamboo diplomacy*
- 299 CAROLINE BENNETT, *Cambodia 2025: Resilience in the face of economic and geopolitical insecurity*
- 319 PAUL CHAMBERS, *Thailand 2025: A year of insecurity and transition*
- 341 MATTEO FUMAGALLI, *Myanmar 2025: The military eschews off-ramping and fights back, as the polycrisis carries on*
- 361 AMIT RANJAN, *Bangladesh in 2025: Under the shadow of «Monsoon Revolution»*
- 389 DIEGO MAIORANO & RAGHAW KHATTRI, *India 2025: Economic paradoxes, political recovery, and the battle for electoral integrity*
- 411 IAN HALL, *India 2025: Turbulence and turmoil in foreign policy*
- 431 PUSPA SHARMA, *Nepal 2024-2025: Political upheaval, economic challenges and mixed foreign relations*
- 453 GULBIN SULTANA, *Sri Lanka 2025: Maiden year of the NPP administration*

477	MARCO CORSI, <i>Pakistan 2025: Internal governance challenges, security perils and foreign policy crosswinds</i>
499	ANAHITA MOTAZED RAD, <i>Iran 2024-2025: Strategic retrenchment amid regional setbacks and systemic pressures</i>
521	CARLO FRAPPI, <i>Azerbaijan 2025: Foreign policy behaviour in a fragmenting Eurasian order</i>
	<i>Special articles</i>
543	DAVID SCOTT, <i>Naval Hegemony and Deterrence: Aircraft carrier strategies and power projection in Asian waters</i>
559	SARA BERLOTO & NICOLÒ FASOLA, <i>From Monopoly to Dual Patronage: The evolution of Russian and Chinese influence in Central Asia (1991-2025)</i>
585	HAMIDEH SABERI, «We did not make a revolution to go backwards»: <i>The Iranian women's uprising of march 1979 and its systematic erasure from historical memory</i>
601	ENRICO BARTOLOMEI, «Colonialism of a Dual Nature»: <i>Fayez A. Sayegh, the Palestine Research Center and a Palestinian genealogy of the settler colonial paradigm</i>
625	<i>Reviews</i>
653	<i>Appendix</i>

THE PHILIPPINES 2024-2025: FEUDING FAMILIES, WEAK INSTITUTIONS, AND THE LIMITS OF PHILIPPINE DEMOCRACY

Enrico Gloria

University of Philippines Diliman
evgloria@up.edu.ph

The past two years marked a decisive turning point in Philippine politics, as the «UniTeam» alliance between President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Vice President Sara Duterte unravelled and exposed two enduring features of the country's political order: the centrality of elite family politics and the persistent embeddedness of corruption within the state and bureaucracy. What had appeared in 2022 to be an electorally dominant and politically advantageous coalition quickly gave way to impeachment battles, corruption exposés, and increasingly public elite infighting. Far from being a merely personal or episodic split, the rupture revealed the structural fragility of coalition rule in a political system where parties remain weak and accountability is often subordinated to political manoeuvring. The political realities carried significant consequences for the country's economic and foreign policy prospects as well. Corruption scandals weakened public trust and constrained development spending, underscoring how institutional weakness impedes inclusive growth. Political rivalries on the other hand intensified extreme foreign policy positions vis-à-vis Beijing and Washington at the expense of a more sustainable foreign policy logic. Taken together, developments over these two years suggest that Philippine politics remains deeply constrained by elite rivalry and weak institutions, with immediate consequences for the Marcos administration's legacy and lasting implications for the capacity of Philippine democracy to deliver good governance.

Keywords – Philippines, Marcos Jr., Duterte, democratic elections.

1. Introduction

The years 2024 and 2025 marked a decisive turning point in Philippine politics with the unravelling of the governing coalition that had underpinned President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s administration since he assumed office in 2022. As the defining political development of this period, it exposed deep institutional vulnerabilities and intensified political polarization across the country. Now at the midpoint of the Marcos presidency, current developments underscore how Philippine politics remains largely shaped by two enduring features: the centrality of powerful political families and the persistent embeddedness of corruption within the state and bureaucracy, both of which have proven difficult to arrest despite repeated reformist efforts. Yet while these themes are hardly new, their interaction during 2024-2025

took on a particularly revealing form, offering an opportunity to reassess the dynamics of political power, elite competition, and accountability in the Philippines from a fresh perspective.

The fracturing of the «UniTeam» alliance between President Marcos and Vice President Sara Duterte – an arrangement that united two of the country's most dominant political families, each with well-entrenched and geographically distinct support bases in the northern and southern Philippines – stands out as one of the most high-profile elite ruptures in recent Philippine political history. This is not only because of the coalition's decisive electoral strength in 2022, but also because of the expectations it generated regarding regime stability and leadership continuity. While 2024 set the stage for this breakdown through corruption allegations, governance controversies, and intensifying elite infighting, 2025 laid bare its political consequences. The midterm elections revealed growing public dissatisfaction with the Marcos administration without eroding Duterte's enduring support base, while successive corruption scandals and the arrest of former President Rodrigo Duterte by the International Criminal Court (ICC) further intensified debates over accountability, executive authority, and the rule of law. Taken together, these developments raise a broader question that goes beyond personal rivalries or episodic crises: why did an alliance that appeared electorally dominant and politically advantageous in 2022 collapse so quickly, and what does this reveal about the structural limits of coalition governance in the Philippines?

Closely intertwined with this elite rupture was the growing salience of the Philippines' position vis-à-vis major powers, as the Marcos administration moved toward a more confrontational stance on China amid ongoing maritime disputes. With the two political families advancing sharply divergent foreign policy positions, developments over the past two years illustrate how intra-elite competition, compounded by weak institutional constraints, has shaped the direction of Philippine foreign policy. At the same time, the administration's subsequent recalibrations underscore the country's continued susceptibility to shifts in major power dynamics, even in the face of broad public support for a more assertive approach toward China.

Indeed, the high-stakes rupture between the country's two most powerful political families not only defined developments over the past two years, but also laid bare the limits of Philippine democracy in delivering the promise of good governance, accountability and development. For one, the credibility of both camps has come under increasing strain, as each has been implicated in high-profile corruption controversies. At the same time, weak institutional safeguards have allowed the continued misuse of public funds and other illicit practices to persist, eroding public trust in government and confidence in the country's economic prospects. And as the results of the 2025 midterm elections have shown, there is growing public dissatisfaction with both political camps – being the leading choices in the 2028 national

elections – and their ability to provide effective governance amid mounting domestic and external challenges. The following sections examine how these dynamics have shaped the trajectory of Philippine domestic politics and the economy, as well as the foreign policy choices pursued over the past two years.

2. *Domestic Politics*

2.1. *2024 Efforts on Constitutional Amendments*

In February 2024, the leadership of the House of Representatives, the lower branch of the Philippine congress, filed Resolution of Both Houses No. 7 to amend selected economic provisions of the 1987 Constitution through the national congress acting as a constituent assembly. The move was framed as a means of promoting economic liberalization and expanding foreign participation in key sectors of the Philippine economy, specifically in public utilities, educational institutions, and the advertising industry. Indeed, Charter Change (or «Cha-Cha», as it is locally referred to) has remained a recurring yet contentious agenda across successive administrations since the ratification of the 1987 Constitution. Most proposals in the past centred on shifting to a parliamentary or federal system, in tandem with the goal of advancing greater economic liberalization which is what the latest proposal has purely emphasized. While the 2024 initiative came closest to materializing, it ultimately faltered amid persistent public scepticism, lingering legal ambiguities surrounding the congressional process, and a widespread perception that the proposed amendments were unnecessary and a means to eventually introduce changes to the constitutional system [Tamase 2024, 29 April]. Collectively, these factors prevented the emergence of a strong political momentum needed to carry the effort to historic completion.

In particular, efforts to amend the Constitution through a people's initiative became mired in allegations of bribery and collusion involving sitting members of the House of Representatives, with critics pointing to the perceived backing of Speaker Martin Romualdez and his political network [Senate of the Philippines 2024, 28 January]. Because the initiative was widely seen as a means of sidestepping the 24-member Senate (upper house) in the amendment process, it deepened institutional tensions between the two chambers, eroding trust and further complicating prospects for a successful Cha-Cha. Romualdez's efforts, as a close ally and the cousin of President Marcos Jr., represented the administration's active push to advance constitutional reform. At the same time, these moves fuelled speculation that proposals to shift toward a parliamentary system could be introduced, potentially positioning Romualdez for a future role as prime minister and, in the process, altering the succession landscape to the disadvantage of Vice President Sara Duterte, who is widely viewed as a leading

contender for the presidency after Marcos Jr. These dynamics gradually placed the two previously allied families on opposing sides, showing one of the earliest signs of the emerging rift between the Marcos and Duterte camps. Ultimately, the failure of the 2024 efforts to charter change is consistent with the observation that «competitive-clientelist dynamics among oligarchic families serve as a countervailing force» in allowing any change to the constitution, thus still making the Philippine 1987 charter one of the most enduring constitutions in the world pure of any amendments since its ratification [Bonoan & Dressel 2026].

2.2. *Unravelling of the ‘UniTeam’*

In June 2024, the Vice President announced her resignation as Secretary of Education and as a member of the administration’s cabinet, a post she had held since her appointment by President Marcos following their landslide victory in 2022. While Duterte did not initially provide a formal explanation for her resignation, she later suggested that the decision was tied to her deteriorating personal relationship with the president stemming from prior understandings reached when they agreed to run as a tandem in the 2022 national elections [Chi 2024, 18 July]. Ultimately, this move proved pivotal, as it marked Duterte’s «final breakaway from the *UniTeam* alliance», while also laying bare the political and electoral motivations underlying earlier moves to join forces by the ruling majority [Chi 2024, 18 July].

The rupture became even more pronounced in August 2024, when the House of Representatives decided to slash the 2025 proposed budget for the Office of the Vice President (OVP) from Php 2.037 billion to Php 733 million – an unusual move given the parliamentary courtesy typically extended to the country’s second-highest official during budget proceedings. The decision was reached as the lower house’s supermajority, sanctioned by the House leadership under Speaker Romualdez, subjected the OVP to more stringent scrutiny and questioning in light of state auditors pointing out serious discrepancies in how the Vice President handled confidential funds granted to her office in 2022 [De Leon 2024, 11 December]. For her part, Duterte maintained that the budget deliberations were intended to place her, her office, and ultimately her political standing under pressure in a bid to undermine what is framed as a key political threat to the President [Sarao 2024, 4 September].

Beyond the budget deliberations, allegations of corruption within the OVP prompted Congress to launch a series of investigations into its budget utilization in previous years, further illustrating how an alliance forged out of electoral convenience rapidly unravelled into a highly public and closely scrutinized political split. In one of the most sensational episodes of this breakdown, Vice President Duterte publicly issued death threats against President Marcos and his family, which later formed part of the basis for an impeachment complaint filed against her [GMA News Online 2024].

Notwithstanding these corruption allegations and conduct widely deemed unbecoming of a public official, the Vice President's tirades and visible frustration had the effect of consolidating her support base, which has fervently portrayed her – particularly on social media – as «an indestructible, larger-than-life leader» capable of withstanding «political persecution» amid the Marcos administration's betrayal of the Duterte family [Baizas 2025, 16 January]. The unravelling of this alliance forged around short-term electoral gains only underscores how a «winner-takes-all» logic continues to shape interactions among ruling families in the country, with coalitions prone to collapse in the absence of a sustained governing agenda beyond the convenience of political manoeuvring [Arugay 2024, 4 July].

2.3. Escalation of the Marcos-Duterte Rivalry

The Marcos-Duterte rivalry further intensified in 2024 as major congressional investigations brought renewed scrutiny to the Duterte administration's drug war, which featured explosive testimonies from alleged insiders and the interrogation of former President Rodrigo Duterte himself before lawmakers. This domestic wave of scrutiny was later compounded by Duterte's arrest by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on charges of crimes against humanity [Bolledo 2025, 11 March]. The former president's anti-illegal drug campaign, which defined much of his six-year tenure from 2016 to 2022, saw as many as 30,000 deaths attributed to police operations and vigilante-style killings [Iglesias 2023]. In cooperating with Interpol in Manila to serve the former president's ICC arrest warrant, the Marcos administration defended its position by citing its international commitments and its obligation to assist the international agency in carrying out its mandate. While efforts to seek accountability for Duterte's «War on Drugs» through the ICC enjoy majority support among the Filipino public, the arrest itself has not translated into tangible gains in public trust or support for the Marcos administration [Butuyan 2025, 1 May]. Indeed, the immediate reaction to this development pointed to a consolidation of the Duterte support base, alongside the attraction of new adherents from the Marcos bloc as the narrative of political persecution gained traction in the wake of Rodrigo Duterte's sudden arrest [Calimbahin 2025, 21 March].

Further reinforcing this narrative was the impeachment of Vice President Sara Duterte in February 2025 by the House of Representatives after the endorsement of 215 lawmakers – well above the three-fourths threshold required to transmit an impeachment case. This made Duterte the first Filipino vice president to be impeached, despite being at the time the most popular and trusted public official in the country [Pechay 2026, 11 February]. Indeed, while her trust ratings as measured by various polling firms have also dropped similar to President Marcos during this time, ultimately as a result of the corruption allegations and the series of widely publicized congressional hearings against her office's spending of its confidential

funds, she nonetheless remained comparatively more trusted and widely popular than the president or any other high-ranking official in the country [Baroña 2026, 2 February; Cabato 2026, 16 March].

Indeed, her popularity provided the leverage that not only preserved her political career, but also emerged as a significant challenge to the Marcos presidency. Unlike the House of Representatives, senators – elected at the national level, much like the holders of the two highest executive offices – are more directly attuned to shifts in public opinion, particularly in the wake of the Marcos administration’s declining popularity after the 2025 midterm elections. It is within this context that the Senate ultimately chose to archive the impeachment complaint against the vice president, despite the overwhelming support it received in the lower house. Likewise, the Supreme Court, which is currently dominated by Duterte appointees, also declared earlier impeachment efforts against the vice president as unconstitutional on procedural grounds. These outcomes suggest that while there may be sufficient reasons to pursue corruption allegations against Duterte, the fate of removing a public official ultimately hinges on political arithmetic and shifting loyalties, especially with their sights firmly set on the 2028 national elections.

2.4. Expressing Dissent Through the Elections

In the Philippines, midterm elections, during which half of the 24-member Senate is elected to six-year terms alongside a new cohort of district representatives in the lower house, are often viewed as a referendum on the sitting administration’s performance and popularity. In light of the results of the 2025 elections, analysts have argued that Marcos Jr. has effectively entered a lame-duck phase of his presidency, following the underperformance of the administration’s slate in the polls [Chen & Wang 2025, 15 May; Asia Sentinel 2025, 15 May]. More specifically, of the 11 Senate candidates endorsed by the administration, only five government bets were able to secure seats, signalling President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s waning influence. By comparison, former President Duterte, at a similar point in his presidency in 2019, secured nine seats, as did former President Aquino in 2013. Meanwhile, candidates aligned with the vice president won five seats. The Liberal Party-linked opposition also made a notable recovery from its complete defeat in 2022, securing two seats in the senate.

This senatorial reshuffle was not entirely unexpected given the clear split between the two powerful families that had already peaked in the preceding year. To some extent, the Marcos administration’s weak showing in the Senate afforded Vice President Duterte greater room for manoeuvre and bargaining leverage, particularly amid calls to hold her accountable through impeachment. At the same time, however, the results in the lower house continued to reflect the administration’s strong hold across congressional districts, with many candidates running unopposed,

while those openly aligned with the vice president failed to secure comparable gains. Hence taken together, some observers have also described the midterm elections as a draw between the two families, noting in particular that because «party discipline is weak» in the country, candidates for district representative are incentivized to not strictly endorse their party slates «in exchange for support and endorsement from other influential groups» [Atienza 2025, p. 178]. Beyond the competition between the two dominant families, questions of accountability and state capacity also surfaced in other areas. The postponement of the first parliamentary elections in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao in 2025 further exposed the continuing fragilities of transitional governance in the region.

Ultimately, the administration's electoral defeat is effectively a showing of much public dissatisfaction over the government's failure to deliver on the promises of economic relief, continuity and «unity», as well as its inability to hold corrupt politicians accountable. Indeed, the administration openly recognized this failure, immediately reshuffling the Marcos cabinet after the elections [Cupin 2025, 22 May]. There is also evidence of «voter remorse», as segments of the public expressed regret over supporting an alliance that not only failed to deliver on its promises but also became consumed by intense political infighting that diverted attention and resources away from more pressing issues [Arugay 2025, p. 165]. In this regard, younger voters, who comprise around 60% of the national electorate, turned out in large numbers, partly explaining the opposition's improved performance in this electoral cycle through their support for progressive, liberal-democratic candidates at the senate and the party-list system [Alba 2025].

2.5. *Politics of Accountability amid Corruption Scandals*

Driven by the need to shift attention away from (1) the political feud that had come to define Philippine politics in the last two years and (2) the dismal electoral performance of the government, President Marcos Jr. launched a full-scale probe into widespread corruption in the country's infrastructure spending. In particular, the president revealed in his annual State of the Nation Address that infrastructure funds allocated to flood control projects in previous appropriations had been diverted through kickbacks and other illicit arrangements involving corrupt officials, politicians, and private contractors, resulting in projects that were either substandard or, in some cases, even non-existent [Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines 2025]. The government immediately made public a list of 15 construction firms implicated in the scandal, reportedly siphoning off as much as 20% of the Php 545 billion budget allocated for flood control projects since Marcos assumed office in 2022. In an effort to assure the public of its commitment to addressing corruption, the administration turned to highly publicized investigations and established an Independent Commission on Infrastruc-

ture (ICI) tasked to audit projects, review procurement, and recommend accountability reforms.

Among the many contractors and politicians implicated in the scandal, several figures stand out as emblematic of its broader significance, having drawn significant public outrage and revealing close ties to influential decision-makers: the Discaya couple and former party-list representative Elizaldy Salcedo Co. Prior to the revelations of deep-seated corruption, these individuals and their relatives had openly flaunted their extravagant wealth on social media, even attributing it to their connections with government agencies, particularly the public works department [Philippine Daily Inquirer 2025, 29 August]. Owners of two companies identified in the government's list of 15 contractors, the Discayas disclosed during highly publicized congressional investigations the involvement of government officials and lawmakers in the systemic corruption surrounding the country's flood control projects. For his part, Elizaldy Co, who fled the country in August 2025 amid mounting accusations, released a series of video statements and testimonials that ultimately pointed to the alleged involvement of President Marcos himself and then-Speaker Martin Romualdez in the scandal.

While the Discayas, along with 14 officials from the public works department and former Senator Bong Revilla, were eventually detained and made to face trial for their alleged involvement in the flood control scandal, public sentiment has remained largely unsatisfied as congressional investigations have raised more questions than they have resolved. In particular, the resignation of the president's cousin, Martin Romualdez, as House Speaker amid accusations of his direct involvement in these infrastructure anomalies raised serious questions about the integrity of the Marcos administration. At the same time, the fact that many implicated officials remained in office reinforced the perception that the government's response amounted to «mere gestures of scrutiny that replaced meaningful sanction» [Go 2026, p. 246]. While President Marcos' initial focus on addressing corruption may have been driven in part by a desire to shift attention away from the Marcos-Duterte feud, the scandal also bolstered claims from the Duterte camp that deeper political calculations were at play, as key Marcos allies appeared insulated from accountability during the exposé, in contrast to the treatment the Vice President has faced in her impeachment proceedings.

3. *Domestic Economy*

Although the Philippines remained among the region's stronger performers, with growth at 5.6% in 2024 and 4.4% in 2025, these figures still fell short of official targets. At the same time, longstanding challenges related to uneven development and income inequality persist, compounded by pres-

tures from an ongoing education crisis, rising prices of basic goods, and the country's exposure to natural disasters.

3.1. *Exposing Structural Vulnerabilities*

A succession of powerful typhoons struck the Philippines in mid-2025, affecting nearly 10 million people and leaving Manila and its surrounding provinces submerged in floodwaters for days. Indeed, the *World Risk Report* in 2025 identifies the Philippines as the most exposed globally to «extreme natural events and negative climate change impacts» [Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft 2025]. Similarly, a 2023 UN Migration assessment estimates that disasters in the country have persistently triggered internal displacements, with storms and floods accounting for 81% of these regular evacuations [UN Migration 2024]. Such conditions disproportionately affect already vulnerable populations and, in turn, undermine the effectiveness of social protection programs and poverty alleviation efforts.

In the immediate wake of the mid-year tragedy, President Marcos Jr. delivered his fourth State of the Nation Address where he expressed both disdain and frustration over reports of rampant corruption tied to the country's flood control infrastructure projects. This revelation not only exposed systemic irregularities in infrastructure spending but also laid bare the vulnerability of large segments of the population to substandard public services, alongside the normalization of inequality by those who have unjustly benefited from such arrangements.

Ultimately, corruption in the country's flood control projects undermined confidence in the country's growth prospects and in the government's ability to manage public funds effectively. It has also weighed on the country's growth prospects by constraining the government's role as a facilitator of economic expansion, amid declining trust and confidence in public institutions. In response, infrastructure spending has been curtailed, with delays in fund disbursement as projects come under heightened scrutiny. The renewed emphasis on accountability and anti-corruption has also limited the executive's flexibility in deploying public funds in line with development priorities. As a result, the government faces the dual challenge of restoring institutional integrity while ensuring that its capacity to implement critical projects is not unduly constrained by the renewed emphasis on anti-corruption.

3.2. *Targeting Inflation*

More on the development front, a key challenge to the Marcos administration's efforts to address poverty and promote inclusive growth during this period was the rise in commodity prices. Although official poverty incidence declined from 18.1% to 15.5% as shown in the latest data available, self-rated poverty or Filipino households' own assessments of their

economic condition moved in the opposite direction, from 48% in 2023 to 57% in 2024. This divergence reflects the impact of inflation during this period, which was primarily shaped by a surge in consumption recovery following the pandemic, as well as external shocks linked to the war in Ukraine [Punongbayan 2024].

Indeed, the country's economic growth for 2024 has been «heavily moderated by the lingering effects of the accelerating and slowing inflation in 2023» which saw a year-on-year increase in prices at 6% [Rivera et al. 2024, p. 8]. While inflation eased to 3.2% in 2024, overall consumer sentiment, as recorded by the Central Bank of the Philippines, became more pessimistic during this period. This negative sentiment was driven by perceptions of rising prices and household expenses, declining income, limited job opportunities, and concerns over the government's effectiveness in managing inflation, improving transport conditions, providing financial support, and addressing employment issues [Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas 2024].

It is also noteworthy that the headline inflation rate for 2025 declined to 1.7%, its lowest level in nine years, following a coordinated government response that included lowering the maximum suggested retail price for imported rice, setting price ceilings for selected agricultural products, and expanding relief and emergency cash assistance programs for vulnerable groups [Department of Finance 2026, 6 January]. One of the Marcos administration's most visible policy commitments has been its pledge to bring down the price of rice to Php 20 per kilo. Framed under the program «Benteng Bigas Meron na!» (Php 20 Rice, Now Available!) – a slogan that also echoes the president's initials (BBM) – the initiative sought to cushion the impact of rising food costs by providing subsidized rice to vulnerable groups. The government reported that it reached 2.5 million beneficiaries by the end of 2025, prioritizing senior citizens, solo parents, persons with disabilities, low-income households, and minimum-wage earners [Patinio 2026, 24 January]. Originally a campaign promise, the program was positioned as a key measure to address food affordability in the country.

However, the BBM initiative has also drawn criticism. Analysts argue that it does little to improve the livelihoods of poor farmers and other vulnerable actors in the agricultural sector [De Santos 2025, 24 April; Salcedo 2025, 28 July]. Moreover, its broader impact on food security and poverty reduction remains limited without deeper structural reforms, including improved agricultural infrastructure, stronger measures against smuggling and cartel activity, and more efficient production and distribution systems [Chavez 2025, 20 March].

Nevertheless, the easing of inflation signalled the government's responsiveness to the economic concerns of ordinary Filipinos, a shift that was also reflected in improved consumer sentiment in the following year in 2025 [Gonzales 2025, 6 June]. More broadly, economic governance over

the past two years has shown a degree of stabilization despite the persistent political tensions that have defined much of the Marcos administration. In this sense, Marcos Jr. was able to project «an image of economic continuity even as trust in political institutions weakened» [Go 2026, p. 250]

3.3. *Human Capital Development under Strain*

Despite improvements in overall economic performance and the easing of basic commodity prices, progress in human capital development has remained limited in the past two years. Indeed, it is reported that «increasing job opportunities» ranked as the top priority for Filipino voters when choosing candidates in the 2025 midterm elections, underscoring the urgency of the country's employment situation. The unemployment rate rose to 5.8% up from 4.3% in January 2025, equivalent to roughly 2.96 million jobless Filipinos. This marks the highest unemployment rate recorded since the country's post-pandemic recovery in 2022. Indeed, the persistence of weak labour market conditions amid rising unemployment points to deeper structural challenges, as the economy continues to struggle to generate stable and sufficient employment beyond its pandemic-era baseline [De Leon 2026, 14 March]. This is partly reflected in the pattern of employment gains over the past two years, which have been concentrated in the services sector, accounting for the largest share of total employment at 61.4%, followed by agriculture at 20.9% and industry at 17.7% [Department of Finance 2025, 6 August].

In connection to the lack of stable jobs is the ongoing education crisis in the country. Long marked by weak performance in international assessments of basic skills and overall educational quality, recent results further indicate that more than three out of four Filipino students fall below minimum proficiency levels in mathematics, science, reading, and creative thinking [Second Congressional Commission on Education 2026]. Current assessments also point to a deepening learning crisis in the country, shaped by decades of underinvestment in the education sector. Government agencies remain overstretched, while gaps in learning materials and infrastructure persist, and deficiencies in teacher training and skills continue to undermine educational outcomes [Hernando-Malipot 2025, 7 July].

In response to these persistent challenges, the Marcos administration approved what it described as a «historic budget» for the Department of Education for the coming year, amounting to Php 1.044 trillion. This marks the first time the Philippines has met the global benchmark of allocating 4 to 6% of GDP to the education sector [Escosio 2026, 6 January]. This significant increase in the education budget is also partly a result of budget reallocations from flood control projects following the corruption exposé surrounding the public works department. Indeed, this development also highlights a «deeper imbalance», as «education continues to compete with infrastructure for [limited] resources», while persistent fund leakages fur-

ther widen disparities across regions and schools [Second Congressional Commission on Education 2026, p. 583].

4. *Foreign Policy*

When it comes to the country's external relations with major powers, developments in domestic politics over the past two years have proven crucial in shaping the trajectory of Philippine foreign policy. The case of former mayor Alice Guo and her alleged links to the proliferation of offshore gaming operations in the country offers a telling example.

4.1. *Exposing Vulnerabilities*

In early 2024, authorities conducted a series of raids on offshore gaming operations, many of which had been set up and run by Chinese nationals whose presence in the sector had grown in recent years. These establishments were subsequently shut down after being identified as hubs for a range of transnational criminal activities [Buan 2024, 24 August]. The situation shifted decisively with the emergence of Alice Guo in the controversy. As a local chief executive, her authority and political position enabled an online gambling facility in Bamban City, Tarlac Province, to operate largely unnoticed until it was eventually brought to public attention. Similar to the other high-profile political scandals discussed earlier, widely publicized Senate and congressional hearings into her involvement exposed extensive government links to corruption and transnational criminal networks in the country, as well as the underlying vulnerabilities of Philippine institutions.

Of Chinese descent, Guo's citizenship became a central point of scrutiny in congressional hearings, as she failed to provide a clear and consistent account of her background in the Philippines. In particular, her claim that she was the child of a Filipina mother was called into question, with investigations instead indicating that she was born to two Chinese nationals thus raising serious doubts on how she was able to assume public office and secure the mayoralty. As a result, a local court ordered the cancellation of her birth certificate, effectively ruling that she is in fact a Chinese citizen by virtue of her parentage.

Public scrutiny and widespread frustration over the scandal stemmed from concerns that Filipino citizenship could be fraudulently obtained, particularly by foreign nationals with links to transnational crime. These concerns were further amplified by the context of strained bilateral relations with China, reinforcing a broader narrative that the country has become increasingly vulnerable to perceived Chinese influence. Indeed, Guo's jailing and conviction in November 2025 was not primarily due to the issue of fraudulent citizenship, but rather her central role in a scam operation

linked to human trafficking. The broader issue of accountability for the proliferation of fraudulent Filipino citizenship documents remains unresolved, even as it raises far more serious concerns [Philippine Daily Inquirer 2026, 26 March]. This is particularly troubling for the government given estimates that as many as 50,000 birth records similar to Guo's are fraudulent, spread across more than 1,600 civil registry offices nationwide [National Bureau of Investigation 2026, 19 March].

Interpreting the Alice Guo saga as an unintended consequence of the Duterte administration's (2016-2022) China pivot has also emerged as a dominant narrative in explaining the issue. Set against the backdrop of the unravelling alliance between the Duterte and Marcos families, the controversy has not only cast a negative shadow over the former president's foreign policy legacy but has also complicated efforts to improve bilateral relations with China under Marcos Jr. While the Chinese government has denied any official involvement and has cooperated with authorities in Manila in addressing criminal activities, particularly amid allegations of espionage, these developments have nonetheless «collectively emboldened nascent Sinophobic tendencies as the nation grappled with both the unknown and the untrusted» [Gloria 2025, 25 March].

4.2. *Escalating Tensions at Sea*

While the Alice Guo saga dominated public discourse on the country's relations with China, which has reinforced perceptions of the domestic risks associated with closer engagement, tensions in the South China Sea persisted over the past two years, marked by frequent and increasingly direct confrontations in contested waters. In particular, coast guard vessels from both sides have repeatedly clashed as the Philippines carried out rotation and resupply missions (RORE) to the BRP *Sierra Madre*, which remains grounded at Second Thomas Shoal. The World War 2 vessel was deliberately beached there in 1999 to serve as a military outpost, thereby reinforcing the Philippines' claim over the area. During one of the Philippines' routine RORE missions to personnel stationed at the shoal in June 2024, a particularly intense confrontation occurred between the two sides' coast guards. Chinese forces reportedly seized personal belongings, firearms, and equipment from their Filipino counterparts, and one Filipino sailor lost a thumb as a result of the physical altercation [Kabagani 2025, 15 August]. While a provisional understanding was later reached between the two countries regarding subsequent RORE missions, thus temporarily easing tensions, similar incidents continued to occur thereafter.

Specifically a year later in August 2025, during a similar mission near the Scarborough Shoal, a Chinese Coast Guard vessel pursuing its Filipino counterpart, BRP *Suluan*, collided with a Chinese Navy warship «in an attempt to try and sandwich» the Filipino vessel «in a pincer movement» [Storey & Arugay 2025, 25 August]. While the deft manoeuvring of the Phil-

ippine Coast Guard was widely praised in the Philippines, the incident also heightened concerns that China had doubled down on its aggressive tactics in the area. Indeed, shortly after this dangerous collision, China formally announced plans to establish a national nature reserve at the vicinity of Scarborough, a move the Philippines viewed as being aimed at further consolidating Beijing's control over the area [Gan & Magramo 2025]. Indeed, by the Philippines' own account, China's maritime presence in contested waters has increased over the past two years, with an average of 27 days in a month of what Manila considers illegal presence at the Scarborough Shoal – effectively «displac[ing] Filipino fishermen ... from their traditional fishing grounds» [Philippine Coast Guard 2025].

In addition to maintaining a sustained presence in the South China Sea in response to rising tensions, the Philippines has pursued a mix of strategies that emphasize expanding partnerships beyond its traditional alliance with the United States, continuing the modernization of its military, and reinforcing a nationalist discourse to sustain public support for defending the country's rights in contested waters. Efforts to consistently expose what Manila views as China's growing assertiveness in Philippine waters have also been complemented by initiatives aimed at more systematically educating the public on the country's claims and legal rights in the area, countering misinformation, and fostering a stronger sense of patriotism around the issue [National Task Force for West Philippine Sea 2025, 25 January]. The Marcos administration has also updated and streamlined its procurement plans for critical military equipment, prioritizing the acquisition of maritime and air assets – such as guided missile hybrid frigates, combat helicopters, and light fighter jets – to strengthen deterrence and maintain a credible defence posture in the South China Sea [Sadongdong 2025, 30 December]. Finally, the country also saw the continued expansion of its regional and global partnerships, pursuing agreements on joint military training and exercises with new partners such as France, Canada, and New Zealand, thereby complementing its existing ties with like-minded nations motivated by shared security concerns.

4.3. *An Evolving China Policy*

Despite the negative externalities associated with the expansion of transnational criminal networks in the country, as well as rising tensions and close encounters at sea, Manila's management of its bilateral relations with Beijing over the past two years has continued to emphasize the importance of diplomacy and sustained communication. This approach has been shaped by both domestic and external factors, which have ultimately pushed Manila to recalibrate its China policy toward a more balanced posture that places diplomacy at its core.

Domestically, the poor performance of Marcos-aligned senatorial candidates in the 2025 midterm elections suggests that the populist appeal

of nationalist, anti-China policies does not necessarily translate into electoral success, particularly in light of the continued popularity of Duterte and her allies. Indeed, her camp has largely maintained a lower profile on China's activities in the South China Sea despite public opinion overwhelmingly supporting a more proactive stance against China [Cervantes 2025, 29 April]. Moreover, none of the 12 winning Senate candidates campaigned explicitly on an anti-China platform, with successful administration-aligned candidates instead emphasizing pressing domestic issues. At the same time, candidates outside the administration who are closely associated with the Duterte camp were not penalized at the polls despite their more China-friendly positions. The resilience of the Duterte camp suggests that Marcos's attempt to reposition himself as an anti-establishment figure, which was partially anchored in a more confrontational stance toward China during the first half of his term, did not resonate with the Filipino electorate [Gloria 2025, 29 May].

From this context, part of the Marcos administration's response to its poor electoral performance has been a recalibration of its more assertive foreign policy stance. One indication of this shift was the appointment of a veteran China negotiator as foreign affairs secretary during the post-election cabinet reshuffle [Cupin 2025, 1 July]. Maria Theresa Lazaro, who assumed the position, was also the lead negotiator in facilitating a provisional agreement between the two sides during the 2024 Second Thomas Shoal incident. She has also led several rounds of regular bilateral consultations with China prior to her appointment. Additionally, it is under her leadership that the Philippines is holding the ASEAN chairmanship this year, during which negotiations on a Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea, ongoing for more than two decades, may move closer to conclusion. While key points of contention remain, particularly over whether the COC should be legally binding – a position on which China and the Philippines continue to differ – Lazaro's background as a pragmatic China negotiator, alongside the Marcos administration's effort to recalibrate and temper Manila's diplomatic approach, offers cautious optimism that talks will continue to advance under Philippine leadership. As Lazaro has noted, «issues concerning [Philippine-China] bilateral matters will be set aside» in leading the COC negotiations, with the aim of prioritizing broader regional interests as this year's ASEAN chair [Chi 2025, 17 November].

Taking stock of the first 50 years of official relations between the Philippines and China, which was also a milestone reached last year, recent developments and shifts in Manila's China policy suggest that changing priorities among dominant political actors remain the primary driver of bilateral relations [Gloria 2025, 11 August]. It has proven difficult for the Marcos administration to sustain the more assertive stance it initially adopted, particularly in light of its declining popularity relative to Vice President Sara Duterte, who has maintained a more China-friendly position. At the

same time, the Philippines continues to stand out within ASEAN for its more confrontational posture toward Beijing, a path most regional states have avoided. Finally, evolving dynamics in U.S. policy toward the region have also altered the strategic context, complicating Manila's earlier, more proactive approach.

4.4. *Navigating Changing American Priorities*

Indeed, apart from domestic factors, perhaps one of the most crucial aspects that has shaped the Marcos administration's current foreign policy recalibration are the significant global changes brought about by American foreign policy under Donald Trump. In particular, the renewed vitality of American protectionism has placed the country in a precarious position vis-à-vis its regional partners. The Liberation Day tariffs announced in April 2025 have mainly targeted countries in the region including US allies, threatening the stability of regional supply chains from which the Philippine economy is highly dependent. Subjected to a 19% tariff on all its exports to the United States, the Philippines was forced to reduce tariffs on American imports to zero from the previous 8%. This development, alongside declining investor confidence driven by corruption scandals, contributed to the country's failure to meet its 2025 growth target of 5.5 to 6.5% [Felipe 2026, 29 January]. Indeed, many in the country have described this outcome as a «bad deal» with the United States, particularly as Marcos's negotiations secured only a one percentage point reduction from the original tariff plan [Lalu 2025, 23 July]. The result has been widely viewed as insufficient recognition of the Philippines' role in advancing shared efforts to counter China's regional influence. These developments also reflect the Trump administration's comparatively limited attention to the Indo-Pacific and its partners, as its strategic focus shifted to other priorities.

Meanwhile, China has doubled down on its focus on prioritizing its neighbourhood, framing the region as collectively victimized by Trump's protectionism. Immediately after the announcement in April last year, Xi Jinping embarked on a multi-country visit across Southeast Asia, where his message of standing together against unilateral bullying, rejecting protectionism, and embracing a spirit of good neighbourliness was received well by audiences in Cambodia, Malaysia, and Vietnam [Gloria 2025, 26 April]. Indeed, Trump's tariffs have nudged ASEAN countries closer to China, further isolating the Philippines' more confrontational posture at sea and complicating the level of support it can expect from the regional bloc.

Just as surprising was the adoption of the Liberation Day tariffs, so too was the speed with which US-China relations were recalibrated in the latter half of 2025. In a landmark meeting between the leaders of the world's two largest economies last October, both sides agreed to reduce reciprocal tariffs, on top of other significant agreements. Trump also struck an optimistic tone on the prospects for major power relations, even describing his

meeting with Xi Jinping in Busan as a «G2» meeting. This shift in rhetoric, together with the promise of further meetings between the two leaders this year, suggests that confrontation with China has moved lower on Trump's list of external priorities, with ripple effects reflected in subsequent adjustments in Philippine foreign policy.

By early 2026, Philippine foreign policy was already showing notable shifts in response to the recalibration of major power relations. Marcos himself signalled a «very serious restructuring» of ties with China [Domingo 2026, 25 March]. While public opinion in the Philippines remains largely sceptical of any move toward a softer approach, developments over the past two years suggest that external dynamics and elite political calculations continue to play a decisive role in shaping the country's strategic direction, often overriding prevailing public sentiment.

5. *Conclusion*

Many of the developments that have preoccupied the Philippines over the past two years point to the centrality of elite politics and weak institutions as enduring features that continue to define Philippine democracy. As discussed in this review, the unravelling of the alliance between the country's two most powerful political families shows how short-sighted electoral goals continue to trump more sustainable visions rooted in party ideology or the pursuit of clean governance. Indeed, current efforts to pursue accountability and combat corruption under the Marcos administration have been widely perceived as an extension of political manoeuvring carried over from the 2022 national elections, made evident by the rapid collapse of the «UniTeam» alliance. Likewise, the failure to hold close allies of the Marcos government accountable, despite the extent of the corruption networks uncovered, has left the broader public dissatisfied with the country's political prospects.

This prevailing mistrust and lack of confidence have also spilled over into the country's economic outlook, undermining progress toward its transition to an upper-middle-income economy. Developments over the past two years show how corruption, weak institutions, and intense elite rivalry not only erode the confidence needed to sustain short-term growth, but also carry longer-term consequences. As discussed in this review, investments in human capital are either siphoned off through corruption or constrained by the need for tighter oversight. Indeed, this dilemma rooted in institutional weakness, continues to hinder the country's pursuit of sustainable and inclusive growth.

This review has also shown how political infighting figures in the country's foreign policy choices, particularly in the context of evolving major power competition between China and the United States. For the Marcos administration, the initial incentive to adopt a more confrontational stance toward China was clear, given strong public support and the desire to distinguish

itself from the Duterte legacy of leaning closer to China. Yet the continued popularity of the Duterte bloc over the past two years, especially evident in the 2025 midterm elections, suggests that more hardline foreign policy positions do not necessarily translate into electoral advantage. Combined with abrupt shifts in US-China relations driven by Trump's transactional foreign policy and changing American priorities, these dynamics ultimately pushed the Marcos administration to recalibrate its China policy by the end of 2025. In this context, the coherence and predictability of Philippine foreign policy remain constrained by the short-term calculations of political elites and the structural pressures of navigating between two major powers.

With declining trust and optimism toward the Marcos administration, it is reasonable to conclude that the focus on political conflict with the Dutertes – with both sides already looking toward the 2028 presidential elections – has, at the very least, failed to deliver meaningful gains for the government's political standing and, more importantly, for the welfare of ordinary Filipinos. At the halfway point of his presidency, the country may see significant policy adjustments aimed at delivering tangible outcomes especially as the Marcos administration seeks to secure a more enduring legacy amid signs of faltering leadership.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alba, Emmanuel L., 2025, 'Elite capture of the party-list: Analysing the 2025 Philippine midterm elections', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 47(2), pp. 188-193.
- Arugay, Aries A., 2024, 4 July, 'Unravelling of the Marcos-Duterte dynastic alliance', *Fulcrum*.
- Arugay, Aries A., 2025, 'Exit, Voice and Loyalty: The 2025 Philippine Midterm Elections', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 47(2), pp. 163-168.
- Asia Sentinel, 2025, 15 May, 'Philippines' Marcos: Lame duck'.
- Atienza, Maria Ela L., 2025, 'Not Everything Is About Her: The Impeachment of Vice-President Sara Duterte and the 2025 Midterm Elections', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 47(2), pp. 175-181.
- Baizas, Gaby, 2025, 16 January, 'Duterte social media army very much alive, roars to defend embattled Sara Duterte', *Rappler*.
- Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, 2024, *Consumer expectations survey report*.
- Baroña, Franco Jose C., 2026, 2 February, 'Trust in President Marcos dips in Q4 2025 Octa survey; Vice President Duterte's ratings rise', *The Manila Times*.
- Bolledo, Jairo, 2025, 11 March, 'ICC warrant: Rodrigo Duterte used DDS, law enforcers to kill "criminals"', *Rappler*.
- Bonoan, Cristina Regina, & Björn Dressel, 2026, 'Constitutional Change and Oligarchic Politics in the Philippines, 1987-2024', *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 45(1), pp. 171-197.
- Buan, Lian, 2024, 24 August, 'Shades of gray: How PH ended up with a POGO crisis', *Rappler*.
- Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft, 2025, *World Risk Report 2025*.

- Butuyan, Joel Ruiz, 2025, 1 May, 'What the surveys say on Duterte's ICC arrest', INQUIRER.net.
- Cabato, Luisa, 2026, 16 March, 'Marcos ratings improve, VP Duterte rises in latest Pulse Asia poll', INQUIRER.net.
- Calimbahin, Cleo Anne A., 2025, 21 March, 'Polarized opinion: The arrest of Duterte', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Cervantes, Filane Mikee, 2025, 29 April, 'SWS poll shows Filipinos demand leaders who defend PH sovereignty', Philippine News Agency.
- Chavez, L., 2025, 20 March, 'Anatomy of rice prices in the Philippines: Why ₱20/kilo remains a Marcos pipe dream', Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.
- Chen, Alyssa, & Orange Wang, 2025, 15 May, 'China-Philippine ties face reckoning after Marcos fails to thwart Duterte camp', *South China Morning Post*.
- Chi, Cristina, 2024, 18 July, 'Sara Duterte teases 'long story' behind resignation from DepEd', Philstar.com.
- Chi, Cristina, 2025, 17 November, 'Philippines ready to propose more frequent Code of Conduct talks as ASEAN chair', Philstar.com.
- Cupin, Bea, 2025, 22 May, 'Marcos orders Cabinet courtesy resignations in 'bold reset' after 2025 midterms', Rappler.
- Cupin, Bea, 2025, 1 July, 'Who is Tess Lazaro, Marcos' new foreign affairs secretary?', Rappler.
- De Leon, Dwight, 2024, 11 December, 'Bicam decides not to restore VP Sara Duterte's slashed budget for 2025', Rappler.
- De Leon, Nyah Genelle C., 2026, 14 March, 'Jobless Filipinos reach nearly 3M', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*.
- De Santos, Jonathan, 2025, 24 April, 'DA promises quality P20/kg rice; farmers say program is 'poll gimmick'', ABS-CBN News.
- Department of Finance, 2026, 6 January, 'DOF: Whole-of-government approach pushed 2025 inflation to 1.7%, lowest in nearly a decade'.
- Department of Finance, 2025, 6 August, 'Recto on all-time high 52.4M Filipinos in the labor force as of June 2025: Not just more jobs, but quality jobs are on the rise'.
- Domingo, Katrina, 2026, 25 March, 'Marcos: "Very serious restructuring" of relations with China "certainly going to happen"', ABS-CBN News.
- Escosio, Jan, 2026, 6 January, 'Marcos signs 2026 budget with record P1.015 trillion for DepEd', INQUIRER.net.
- Felipe, Jesus, 2026, 29 January, 'Tariffs and scandals tested Philippine growth in 2025', East Asia Forum.
- Gan, Nectar & Kathleen Magramo, 2025, 'Why is China setting up a nature reserve in one of the world's most contested waterways?', CNN.
- Gloria, Enrico, 2025, 25 March, 'China is set to be an election issue, and there are pitfalls ahead', Rappler.
- Gloria, Enrico, 2025, 26 April, 'Why the Philippines can't ignore China's Southeast Asia pivot', *South China Morning Post*.
- Gloria, Enrico, 2025, 29 May, 'Tensions with China fail to move the needle in Philippine elections', Rappler.
- Gloria, Enrico, 2025, 11 August, '50 years of Philippines-China relations offer lessons for engaging an indispensable power', East Asia Forum.
- GMA News Online, 2024, 'The impeachment trial of Vice-President Sara Duterte'.
- Go, Jan Robert R., 2026, 'The Philippines in 2025: Scandals, accountability and resilience', in Terence Chong & Daljit Singh (eds.), *Southeast Asian Affairs 2026*, Singapore: ISEAS, pp. 241-257.

- Gonzales, Anna Leah, 2025, 6 June, 'BSP: Consumers expect improved economic prospect in next 12 months', Philippine News Agency.
- Hernando-Malipot, Merlina, 2025, 7 July, 'State of Philippine education 2025: How bold reforms can turn crisis into opportunity', *Manila Bulletin*.
- Iglesias, Sol, 2023, 'Explaining the Pattern of "War on Drugs" Violence in the Philippines under Duterte', *Asian Politics & Policy*, 15(2), pp. 164-184.
- Kabagani, Lade Jean, 2025, 15 August, 'Phl renews compensation demand from China over Ayungin Shoal incident', *Daily Tribune*.
- Lalu, Gabriel Pabico, 2025, 23 July, 'Bad deal: Activists claim Marcos deal with Trump a sell-out of PH', INQUIRER.net.
- National Bureau of Investigation, 2026, 19 March, 'NBI files charges against civil registry officials over fraudulent birth registrations involving foreign nationals'.
- National Task Force for West Philippine Sea, 2025, 25 January, 'From comics to consciousness: Educating the nation with "The Stories of Teacher Jun"', Philippine Information Agency.
- Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines, 2025, State of the Nation Address of Ferdinand Marcos Jr.
- Patinio, Ferdinand, 2026, 24 January, 'DA targets 15M household beneficiaries of "Benteng Bigas" this year', Philippine News Agency.
- Pechay, Isabelle, 2026, 11 February, 'Sara Duterte's satisfaction rating higher than other PH officials – SWS', INQUIRER.net.
- Philippine Coast Guard, 2025, Annual report.
- Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2025, 29 August, 'From "roads to riches"'.
Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2026, 26 March, 'Dangerous fakery'.
- Punongbayan, J. C., 2024, 'Much a Duterte about nothing: Continuity, complacency, and crisis in the Philippine economy (2016-23)', in Aries A. Arugay & Jean Encinas-Franco (eds.), *Games, changes, and fears: The Philippines from Duterte to Marcos Jr.*, Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, pp. 33-58.
- Rivera, John Paolo R., Mark Gerald C. Ruiz, and Ramona Maria L. Miral, 2024, *Macroeconomic prospects of the Philippines in 2024-2025: Toward upper middle-income status*, PIDS Discussion Paper Series, No. 2024-18, Quezon City: Philippine Institute for Development Studies.
- Sadongdong, Martin, 2025, 30 December, 'Shifting threats: How 2025 tested the AFP beyond the battlefield', *Manila Bulletin*.
- Salcedo, M. J., 2025, 28 July, 'Marcos' P20/kilo rice created "so much injustice" for farmers – UP scientist', *Philippine Daily Inquirer*.
- Sarao, Zacarian, 2024, 4 September, 'Marcos: No politics in OVP budget deliberations', INQUIRER.net.
- Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2026, *Turning point: A decade of necessary reform*.
- Senate of the Philippines, 2024, 28 January, 'Chiz shows "resibo" Romualdez declaring plans to change charter via PI'.
- Storey, Ian, & Aries Arugay, 2025, 25 August, 'Scarborough Shoal incident: A test for ASEAN, China and regional stability', Think China.
- Tamase, Paolo, 2024, 29 April, 'Unconstitutional Moments: The 2024 Attempts to Change the Philippine Constitution', ConstitutionNet.
- UN Migration, 2024, *Country Factsheet: The Philippines*.