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2nd Ateneo European & International Studies Student Research Conference Proceedings



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Foreword

Dr. Manuel R. Enverga III
Director, European Studies Program

It is with great pleasure that we present the proceedings of the Second Ateneo Student Research Conference on European and International Studies, held on 21 March 2026 at the Ateneo de Manila University. Now in its second year, the conference continues to provide a space for students from different universities to come together as members of a growing academic community, sharing their research, exchanging ideas, and engaging in constructive scholarly conversations.

This gathering takes place at a particularly consequential moment in international affairs. The world is in a state of considerable flux. Four years after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the war continues to challenge longstanding assumptions about European security and the international rules-based order. Meanwhile, growing tensions within the transatlantic alliance have raised questions about the reliability of traditional partnerships and the future of European strategic autonomy. The escalation of conflict involving the United States, Israel, and Iran has likewise demonstrated the interconnectedness of the international system, with disruptions to global energy supplies carrying significant consequences for the Philippine economy, livelihoods, and the welfare of Filipinos working overseas.

These developments remind us why the study of Europe and international affairs matters. Events that unfold thousands of kilometers away can have immediate consequences for our own communities. Understanding these connections requires more than following the news or forming opinions about world events. It requires us to ask questions, examine evidence, consider competing explanations, and develop arguments that help us make sense of an increasingly complicated world.

The papers collected in these proceedings demonstrate the many ways in which student researchers are responding to this challenge. Some examine more traditional concerns of international relations, including Philippine foreign policy, geopolitical vulnerabilities, European defense, and the changing relationships between states. Others explore questions of migration, mobility, peacebuilding, and the unequal distribution of opportunities across borders. Still others investigate the transfer of European policies and institutional practices to Southeast Asian contexts, particularly in agriculture, climate governance, and education.

Equally encouraging is the attention given to subjects that might not immediately come to mind when we think of European and international studies. Research on luxury consumption, French culinary heritage, Filipino cuisine, European football, and digital commerce demonstrates that international relations are not confined to diplomatic negotiations, security alliances, and intergovernmental institutions. They are also present in the cultural products

we consume, the food we eat, the industries we participate in, and the everyday choices through which we encounter the wider world.

This diversity of interests brings me to an idea that I have increasingly come to appreciate in my own academic journey: research can also be a form of "me-search." Our projects often begin with something personal, whether a curiosity about a particular country, a fascination with a cultural phenomenon, or a concern about an issue affecting our communities. There is nothing inherently less scholarly about beginning with something that genuinely interests us. Indeed, some of the most compelling research questions emerge when we take our everyday curiosities seriously enough to investigate them.

Of course, curiosity alone does not make a good study. What transforms personal interest into scholarship is the willingness to subject our ideas to systematic inquiry, engage with existing knowledge, gather and evaluate evidence, and continuously improve our arguments. Research is not simply about finding evidence to support what we already believe. It is also about being open to discovering that our initial assumptions may have been incomplete or even mistaken.

This is precisely why academic conferences are so valuable, particularly for students beginning their research journeys. The opportunity to present one's work before an audience, receive constructive feedback, encounter different perspectives, and engage with others studying similar subjects is an essential part of becoming a researcher. Academic knowledge is not produced in isolation. It develops through conversations, disagreements, collaborations, and the collective effort to understand the world better.

Beyond the papers themselves, I hope that this conference has also encouraged the formation of new friendships and professional relationships among students who share an interest in Europe and international affairs. By bringing together researchers from different institutions, we create opportunities for future collaboration and strengthen the community of scholars engaged in studying these regions and their relationships with the Philippines.

I congratulate all the student researchers whose work appears in these proceedings, and extend my appreciation to the faculty members, organizers, and participating institutions who made this second conference possible. May these proceedings serve not merely as a record of the research presented, but as an invitation to continue asking questions, pursuing our intellectual interests, and refining our understanding of the world through scholarly inquiry.

Above all, I hope our student researchers come to see research not simply as an academic requirement to complete, but as a lifelong process of discovery, one through which we come to understand not only the world around us, but also ourselves.

2nd Ateneo Student Research Conference on European and International Studies

March 21, 2026

Faber Hall, Ateneo de Manila University,

Loyola Heights, Quezon City

Conference Schedule:

0930-1000: Opening Plenary

1015-1115: Panels 1 and 2

1130-1230: Panels 3 and 4

1230-1330: Lunch

1345-1445: Panels 5 and 6

1500-1530: Closing

1530-1600: E-Jeep Tour

1700: Fellowship

Panel Sessions

Panel 1: Philippine Foreign Policy, Security, and Strategic Space

Torn Between Words and Deeds: Diplomatic Signaling, Institutional Practice, and Hedging in the Philippines (Jenan S. Naz – Miriam College Graduate Student)

Past Foundations, Present Realities, and Future Possibilities: Philippines–Russia Relations at Fifty (Andres Cezar P. Bedonia & John Paul P. Mondejar – University of San Agustin, Iloilo)

The Pentagon of Peril: Mapping the Geopolitical Spatial Vulnerabilities of the Philippines in the Indo-Pacific Region (John Ezra D. Noble – New Era University)

State Surveillance of Dissent in the Philippines and Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Securitisation, Red Tagging, and the Criminalisation of Activism (Gabriel Kalel R. Galias – European Studies, Ateneo de Manila University)

Panel 2: Europe as a Global Actor: Norms, Borders, and Defense
Theme: Europe's external influence and normative reach

Normative Power Europe in Mindanao: A Normative Reconstitution of EU Peacebuilding Engagement (2017–2020) (Matti D. Valencia – European Studies, Ateneo de Manila University)

Migration at the Heart of Demographic Engineering: The Case of Mayotte as a Microcosm of the European Migration Crisis (Riza Franchesca G. Regala – Graduate School for Social Research, Polish Academy of Sciences)

Solidarity among the Invaded: Growing Influence of South Korean Defense Industry in Poland (Sewon Park & Lorenzo Lazaro – History, Ateneo de Manila University)

Panel 3: Mobility, Borders, and Unequal Access
Theme: who moves, who is restricted, and why

The Lived Realities of Visa Power (Teresa Gayle A. Ladines & Romina Red M. Padilla – European Studies, Ateneo de Manila University)

Enhancing PiTaKa: A Knowledge–Attitude–Practice Exploration of Financial Literacy Among Europe-Based Overseas Filipino Workers (Althea Bonagua & Anya Isabelle Lopera – European Studies, Ateneo de Manila University)

What Economic Factors Do Low-Income Flood-Prone Areas Contribute in the Prevalence of Flood-Neglected Tropical Diseases? (Frances M. Balitaan – De La Salle University)

Panel 4: Policy Transfer, Regional Governance, and Institutional Reform
Theme: how ideas, policies, and standards travel across regions

Beyond Subsidies: A Comparative Analysis of EU and ASEAN Agricultural Policies' Capacity for Sustainability (Alexandra Nikola J. Tendero – Diplomacy and International Relations, Ateneo de Manila University)

Cross-Continental Transfer: Analysis of Adapting European Union Climate Programs (2015–2025) for Philippine Budgetary and Governance Frameworks (Ronald Gabriel D. Teng, Krisia Ross R. Malagueño, Sophia Alexa R. Moral – Far Eastern University)

Power, Payments and Policy: Central Bank Digital Currency Interoperability in ASEAN (Jenan S. Naz – Miriam College Graduate Student)

Applying European Benchmarks for Tertiary Digital Learning Opportunities in Philippine Correctional Facilities (Rica Katrina Escalada & Scarlet Dorothy Gonzaga – European Studies, Ateneo de Manila University)

Panel 5: Culture, Consumption, and Soft Power
Theme: identity, taste, and symbolic influence

Subtle Statements: Filipino Consumers and the Preferences Between Loud and Quiet Luxury (Sophia Margarita Gonzaga & Mikaela Denise Santiago – European Studies, Ateneo de Manila University)

Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy Through French Food Heritage in the Philippines: The Influence and Perceptions of Ladurée Manille (Aivryn Dionela N. Cusi – European Studies, Ateneo de Manila University)

Decentering the Brigade: European Culinary Pedagogy and the Case for Filipino Cuisine in Formal Culinary Education (Alyanna Celine B. Leal – European Studies, Ateneo de Manila University)

Panel 6: Political Economy, Markets, and Media
Theme: economic structures, industries, and information flows

E-Commerce in Europe and the Role of Media (Althea Nicole F. Dy & Katrina Pearl B. Villaret – European Studies, Ateneo de Manila University)

The Total Macroeconomic Contribution of the European Football Industry to the European Union's GDP and Employment (Paolo James Go Clanor – European Studies, Ateneo de Manila University)

What Frontier Markets Can Learn From the Dutch East India Company IPO During Its Undeveloped Era (Rellyah Musica S. Adrineda – European Studies, Ateneo de Manila University

Torn Between Words and Deeds: Diplomatic Signaling, Institutional Practice, and Hedging in the Philippines

Jenan S. Naz
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Introduction

A persistent problem in international relations scholarship is the divergence between what states publicly commit to and what they institutionally enact. For middle and small powers navigating competitive regional environments, this divergence is often strategic rather than incidental. This paper examines the Philippines as a case of this dynamic, arguing that leaders and official texts routinely invoke legal norms and multilateral frameworks as deliberate rhetorical instruments while substantive institutional follow-through remains selective, delayed, and shaped by hedging incentives tied to great-power competition.

The Philippines occupies a significant position in this inquiry for three reasons. First, Manila secured a landmark arbitral award under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 2016, establishing a high-profile record of legal engagement. Second, successive administrations have prominently invoked legal and multilateral language in international forums, yet observable treaty behavior, enforcement patterns, and multilateral commitments have varied considerably across administrations and issue areas. Third, the Philippines operates within ASEAN's consensus-based institutional architecture, which structurally incentivizes rhetorical affirmation over collective action, and within a regional environment where economic and security dependencies on competing major powers generate strong hedging pressures.

This study pursues three objectives. First, it maps the gap between diplomatic signaling and institutional practice across 2010–2024 using automated text analysis and structured human coding of official Philippine documents, multilateral statements, and treaty instruments. Second, it identifies the causal mechanisms driving this divergence: audience segmentation, institutional friction, and strategic hedging. Third, it develops and empirically tests three theoretical hypotheses: rhetorical salience in high-visibility settings (H1), implementation lag when domestic change is costly (H2), and weakened enforcement under calibrated hedging (H3).

The paper synthesizes three theoretical traditions. Practice theory treats official texts and diplomatic performances as routinized social action that sustains normative membership regardless of downstream implementation. Signaling and credibility models explain how states use public commitments to manage multiple audiences while preserving behavioral flexibility. Hedging literature shows how middle powers combine engagement with competing major powers to preserve strategic options. Together, these frameworks explain

both why rhetorical legalism is prevalent and why selective, delayed implementation is predictable under specific structural conditions.

Methodology

The study employs a mixed-methods design integrating systematic content analysis, quantitative modeling, and process tracing to test the words-versus-deeds hypothesis. The temporal scope covers 2010 through 2024, capturing five administrative periods and the critical juncture of the 2016 UNCLOS arbitration and its aftermath.

Corpus Construction and Data Sources

The empirical corpus draws on primary official documents compiled from government archives and official websites, including presidential speeches, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) statements, official communiqués, treaty texts and ratification instruments, enabling legislation, and agency budget documents. Multilateral records incorporate United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) submissions, treaty body reports, and UN General Assembly voting records. The 2016 PCA arbitral award and related documentation serve as the focal legal text. Secondary sources include Human Rights Watch reports, NGO implementation assessments, and contemporaneous media timelines.

Operationalization and Coding Strategy

Diplomatic signaling is operationalized by the presence, frequency, and intensity of explicit references to legal norms, treaty language, and multilateral institutions in official texts. Coding categories assess whether a text (a) invokes specific legal instruments, (b) frames actions as compliance with international norms, and (c) addresses international audiences. Institutional practice is operationalized through observable implementation outcomes: enactment of enabling legislation, budget allocations tied to treaty obligations, documented enforcement actions, and changes in bureaucratic procedures. For multilateral behavior, practice indicators include treaty reporting timeliness, UN General Assembly voting behavior, and responsiveness to UN recommendations.

Coding proceeded in two stages. Automated text processing first identified candidate passages referencing legal norms and institutions. Trained human coders then applied a structured codebook to a stratified sample of n = 800 documents across four strata: presidential speeches (n = 200), DFA statements (n = 200), multilateral statements and UN submissions (n = 200), and agency reports and budget documents (n = 200). Intercoder reliability was assessed using Krippendorff's alpha, with a preregistered threshold of $\alpha > 0.80$.

Quantitative Models

Three estimation strategies tested the theoretical hypotheses. Document-level binary logistic regressions modeled the probability of implementation within three years as a function of legal invocation, visibility of the diplomatic setting, costliness of enforcement, and controls for regime type and legislative fragmentation. Time-series cross-sectional

(TSCS) panel regressions with year fixed effects modeled the annual proportion of tracked commitments implemented as a function of economic dependence on a major power. Robustness checks applied post-stratification weights, alternative intensity codings, and outlier-year exclusions to confirm consistency.

Process Tracing

Process tracing of three focal episodes reconstructed causal sequences linking rhetorical signaling to implementation outcomes: the 2016 UNCLOS arbitration aftermath, a major UPR cycle, and the post-2022 security-economic realignment. Each episode draws on official timelines, legislative records, budget documents, NGO reports, and media sources to adjudicate among competing explanations, including capacity constraints, audience-targeted signaling, and strategic hedging.

Results and Discussion

Coding Reliability and Descriptive Patterns

Intercoder reliability for the primary variable LegalInvocation reached Krippendorff's $\alpha \approx 0.82$, exceeding the preregistered threshold of 0.80. Observed disagreement was 0.0875 against expected disagreement of approximately 0.493, confirming sufficient measurement reliability to support inferential analysis.

Descriptive results confirm audience-targeted concentration of legal rhetoric. Documents addressed to multilateral fora and international audiences contained explicit references to legal instruments at more than twice the rate of domestic or low-visibility communications. Rhetorical peaks cluster in 2016 and the immediate post-award period, consistent with H1.

Of 28 treaty commitments with clearly defined enabling requirements, only 11 (approximately 40 percent) had enabling legislation or dedicated budget lines within three years of public commitment. The median lag from initial public commitment to legislative action was approximately 36 months. Commitments requiring politically sensitive redistribution, new enforcement capacity, or confrontation with entrenched interests recorded the longest delays, consistent with H2.

Inferential Results

Document-level logistic regression results ($n = 800$) confirm expected patterns. Legal invocation modestly raised the probability of later implementation ($\beta = 0.17–0.18$, SE $\approx$ 0.085–0.09, $p = .045$; odds ratio $\approx$ 1.19–1.20). High diplomatic visibility strongly predicted rhetorical invocation but did not produce commensurate implementation when enforcement was costly ($\beta = 0.95$, $p < .001$; odds ratio ≈ 2.59). Costly enforcement significantly reduced the probability of implementation ($\beta = -1.10$, $p < .001$; odds ratio ≈ 0.33). Model pseudo-R^2 ≈ 0.21. These results confirm that visibility drives legal language while enforcement cost suppresses follow-through.

TSCS panel analysis (2010–2024) shows that annual economic dependence on a major power is a statistically significant negative predictor of implementation rates ($\beta \approx -0.032$, SE = 0.009, $p < .01$; adjusted $R^2 \approx 0.58$). This supports H3 and links hedging theory directly to treaty compliance behavior through an identifiable causal pathway.

Robustness checks using weighted regressions, alternative codings, and outlier-year exclusion consistently reproduce these coefficient signs and significance levels, confirming that the pattern is not an artifact of model specification or measurement choices.

Process Tracing Evidence

The 2016 UNCLOS arbitration episode illustrates the core mechanism. Following the award, the Philippines amplified legal rhetoric in diplomatic statements and multilateral forums. Process tracing reveals a sequence of rhetorical amplification followed by deliberate de-escalation and economic engagement rather than aggressive legal enforcement. Manila's calibrated restraint reflected hedging incentives: threatening enforcement against a major economic partner carried costs that outweighed the legal leverage the award provided. The award became a durable rhetorical asset, repeatedly invoked for reputational and bargaining purposes, while operational policy consistently favored flexibility and economic continuity.

The UPR cycle episode documents a comparable pattern in human rights governance. Executive rhetoric during the review process committed Manila to broad accountability measures, yet legislative and budgetary follow-through was partial after three years. NGO monitoring confirmed persistent enforcement shortfalls, particularly in areas intersecting with domestic political interests.

The post-2022 security-economic episode illustrates calibrated hedging most directly. Public commitments to rules-based order and expanded security cooperation with traditional partners coexisted with continued deepening of economic ties with a competing major power. This combination preserved strategic flexibility while maintaining rhetorical alignment with international norms.

Theoretical Contributions

The findings carry three interconnected theoretical implications. First, they extend signaling models by demonstrating that rhetorical legalism is a deliberate, sustained allocation of political capital rather than a one-off signal. Public legal language generates reputational benefits and bargaining leverage without requiring immediate institutional investment, enabling states to accumulate normative credibility while deferring costly compliance. Second, they validate practice theory's claim that diplomatic texts are consequential social practices even when implementation lags. Rhetorical commitments create focal points for domestic advocacy, shape international expectations, and sustain normative membership in ways that operate independently of whether corresponding enforcement actions follow. Third, they operationalize hedging in institutional terms. Economic dependence on a major power demonstrably raises the domestic political cost of enforcement and produces measurable declines in implementation rates, connecting hedging theory to compliance literature through a traceable mechanism.

Policy Implications

The findings carry direct implications for multilateral institutions, external partners, and domestic reformers. Monitoring frameworks relying primarily on rhetorical indicators systematically overestimate compliance. Verifiable institutional benchmarks, including enabling legislation, dedicated budget allocations, timely treaty reporting, and documented enforcement actions, are more robust indicators of operational commitment. External partners should pair recognition of rhetorical alignment with targeted technical assistance and conditional incentives that reduce the domestic political cost of implementation, particularly in legislative drafting, budget planning, and institutional capacity building. Civil society and reform advocates can leverage public statements as focal points to mobilize accountability pressure, treating rhetorical commitments as legally and normatively cognizable obligations rather than aspirational declarations.

Conclusion

The gap between diplomatic signaling and institutional practice in the Philippines is systematic, replicable, and causally explicable rather than incidental. High-visibility legal rhetoric in multilateral fora is routine, while substantive implementation of corresponding commitments is consistently delayed or selective. Only approximately 40 percent of tracked treaty commitments with clear enabling requirements achieved legislative or budgetary operationalization within three years, with a median lag of approximately 36 months.

Three interacting mechanisms account for this divergence. Audience segmentation creates incentives for legal rhetoric in high-visibility settings where international audiences impose reputational costs for visible non-compliance, while domestic actors impose constraints that make full enforcement politically costly. Institutional friction within fragmented legislatures and bureaucracies slows or dilutes implementation, particularly where new laws, budget allocations, or administrative reforms are required. Strategic hedging tied to economic dependence on major powers raises the opportunity cost of confrontational enforcement, producing systematic implementation shortfalls when important economic relationships are at stake.

The study contributes a replicable methodological framework by combining automated text analysis, structured human coding with validated reliability, document-level regression, panel modeling, and process tracing for comparative work on diplomatic signaling and compliance across ASEAN and beyond. It also integrates practice theory, signaling models, and hedging literature into a unified explanatory framework applicable to other middle and small powers facing analogous structural pressures.

Limitations remain; access to internal deliberations constrains causal inference in some episodes, and distinguishing capacity constraints from strategic choice is difficult in a subset of cases. Future research should pursue elite interviews and internal documents to sharpen causal attribution, extend the comparative template across ASEAN, disaggregate findings by issue area, and conduct longitudinal tracking beyond 2024 to assess whether

repeated rhetorical invocation eventually produces durable institutional change. The policy stakes are concrete: delays in treaty implementation affect service delivery, human rights protections, regulatory enforcement, and maritime resource access, making the translation of rhetoric into verifiable institutional practice a governance priority, not merely an academic concern.

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Past Foundations, Present Realities, and Future Possibilities: Philippine-Russia Relations at 50

Andres Ceazar P. Bedonia and John Paul P. Mondejar
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Introduction / Objectives

In 2026, the Republic of the Philippines and the Russian Federation commemorate fifty years of diplomatic relations, a relationship that has evolved across major transformations in the international system – from Cold War bipolarity, to post-Cold War unipolarity, and toward an emerging multipolar configuration. Established in 1976 between the Philippines and the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War, bilateral ties have persisted through systemic collapse, ideological confrontation, and shifting distributions of global power. Yet despite five decades of formal engagement, Philippines–Russia relations remain limited in strategic depth when compared to Manila's enduring alliance with the United States and its extensive economic and diplomatic relations with regional powers such as China and Japan. This persistence of diplomatic engagement alongside structural marginality presents a central analytical puzzle: why has bilateral cooperation remained constrained despite diversification efforts, high-level diplomacy, and rhetorical commitments to strategic autonomy, and conversely, why has the relationship persisted at all given alliance dependence and systemic asymmetries?

This study addresses this puzzle through the theoretical lens of neorealism (structural realism) as articulated by Kenneth Waltz (1979, 2000). Neorealism explains state behavior primarily through the structure of the international system, emphasizing anarchy, the distribution of material capabilities, and security imperatives as the primary drivers of foreign policy. From this perspective, Philippines–Russia relations are not shaped by ideological convergence, identity formation, or normative alignment, but by systemic pressures, alliance structures, and shifting polarity conditions. Bilateral engagement is interpreted not as a product of diplomatic sentiment or leadership preference, but as a strategic response to changes in the international distribution of power (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001).

This paper advances three objectives. First, it situates Philippines–Russia relations within global systemic polarity transitions rather than domestic political narratives. Second, it demonstrates how alliance politics structurally constrain the depth of bilateral cooperation (Snyder, 1997; Walt, 1987). Third, it provides a longitudinal analysis showing that fluctuations in engagement correspond to shifts in global power distribution rather than identity reconstruction or ideological realignment. The central thesis is that Philippines–Russia relations constitute a case of structurally constrained diplomacy: persistent engagement without strategic convergence, diversification without realignment, and continuity without transformation—an outcome consistent with neorealist expectations

of small-state behavior in an anarchic system dominated by alliance dependence and security prioritization (Waltz, 1979; Lake, 2009).

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative descriptive–explanatory case study design, integrating descriptive research methods with explanatory analysis to identify patterns and causal mechanisms linking systemic structure to foreign policy outcomes. Data were obtained primarily through documentary analysis, including official documents from the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs, policy statements of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, diplomatic communiqués, treaties, defense agreements, and scholarly literature in international relations theory, particularly neorealism and alliance politics (Waltz, 1979; Walt, 1987; Snyder, 1997; Mearsheimer, 2001).

The research traces the evolution of Philippines–Russia relations across distinct systemic phases: Cold War bipolarity (1976–1991), post–Cold War unipolarity (1991–2010), emerging multipolarity and diversification (2010–2022), and alliance consolidation under heightened regional insecurity (2022–present). A neorealist analytical framework is applied to assess how shifts in power distribution, alliance structures, and threat perceptions shape diplomatic behavior. This approach enables the study to move beyond narrative description toward structural explanation, linking empirical developments to systemic incentives and constraints (Mills et al., 2010; Waltz, 1979). By combining descriptive pattern identification with explanatory structural analysis, the study develops a coherent theoretical interpretation of Philippines–Russia relations as structurally bounded rather than strategically autonomous.

Results and Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Philippines–Russia relations have been consistently shaped by systemic structure rather than bilateral preference. During Cold War bipolarity, diplomatic recognition in 1976 occurred within rigid alliance constraints. The Philippines' embeddedness in the U.S.-led security architecture, anchored by the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty and reinforced by major U.S. military installations, structurally precluded strategic realignment (Brands, 1992; Shalom, 1990). Engagement with the Soviet Union remained symbolic and diplomatic, without defense cooperation or strategic integration, reflecting alliance management rather than balancing behavior (Waltz, 1979; Snyder, 1997).

In the post–Cold War unipolar period, Russia's weakened material capabilities and diminished regional leverage further reduced Manila's strategic incentives for deeper engagement. The Philippines maintained alliance continuity with the United States while cautiously expanding diplomatic flexibility, but Russia did not emerge as a viable strategic partner in security or economic terms (Mankoff, 2009; Tsygankov, 2016). The absence of significant economic interdependence or security cooperation reinforced the marginality of the relationship within Philippine foreign policy priorities (Mearsheimer, 2001).

During the period of emerging multipolarity, particularly under President Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippines pursued diversification and hedging strategies through engagement with Russia in defense dialogue, energy cooperation, and high-level diplomacy. However, these efforts remained bounded by structural ceilings: the Mutual Defense Treaty remained intact, U.S.–Philippine military cooperation continued, and no alternative security architecture emerged (Kuik, 2008; Heydarian, 2017). Diversification functioned as hedging rather than realignment, consistent with neorealist expectations under conditions of power diffusion and systemic uncertainty (Waltz, 1979; Acharya, 2014).

Under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., intensifying regional threat perceptions, particularly in the South China Sea, produced a structural shift toward alliance consolidation. The expansion of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement and deepened defense cooperation with the United States reflect balance-of-threat dynamics, where states align with reliable sources of protection in response to perceived threats (Walt, 1987; Thayer, 2023). In this environment, Philippines–Russia relations stagnated at the diplomatic level, lacking institutionalization, strategic depth, or security relevance. This pattern confirms neorealist predictions that under heightened insecurity, smaller states prioritize alliance reliability over strategic experimentation (Waltz, 1979; Lake, 2009; Mearsheimer, 2001).

Across all systemic phases, two enduring structural constraints define the ceiling of cooperation: the Philippines' deep institutional and strategic embeddedness within the U.S.-led security architecture, and Russia's limited material leverage and modest strategic presence in Southeast Asia. Together, these conditions produce a pattern of persistent engagement without strategic transformation, demonstrating the dominance of structural forces over bilateral diplomatic intent.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the trajectory of Philippines–Russia relations over five decades is best explained by neorealist structural constraints rather than leadership rhetoric, ideological alignment, or diplomatic symbolism. Across bipolarity, unipolarity, and emerging multipolarity, the relationship has exhibited continuity in form but limitation in depth. Diversification strategies emerged under conditions of systemic diffusion, but they remained bounded by alliance dependence and security imperatives. When regional threat perceptions intensified, diversification gave way to alliance consolidation, confirming neorealist predictions that security logic overrides autonomy-seeking behavior in periods of heightened insecurity (Waltz, 1979; Walt, 1987; Mearsheimer, 2001).

Ultimately, Philippines–Russia relations exemplify structurally constrained diplomacy: engagement without convergence, diversification without realignment, and persistence without transformation. Until fundamental changes occur in the distribution of power, alliance architectures, and regional security hierarchies, the relationship will remain bounded by the logic of alliance dependence and security prioritization. This case affirms the enduring explanatory power of neorealism in understanding small-state diplomacy in an era of renewed great-power rivalry and systemic uncertainty.

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The Pentagon of Peril: Institutional Capacities of the Philippines under Geopolitical Vulnerabilities in the Indo-Pacific Region

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Introduction

The Philippines occupies a structurally exposed position in the Indo-Pacific region, shaped by its archipelagic geography, alliance networks, and proximity to intensifying geopolitical flashpoints. As competition amongst the great powers grow, specifically, the United States of America (USA), the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Republic of India (India), and Japan, intensifies the erosion of the Rules-based Order as the International System transitions from a Unipolarity to Multipolarity (Kaplan, 2015; Medcalf, 2019; Saxer, 2024), creating external shock factors wherein the institutional capacity (politically, economically, militarily, and adaptability) of Middle-powers are being tested. For the Philippines, these external shocks manifest in its immediate geographic position wherein it is unevenly spatially concentrated. Existing scholarship and literature of the Philippines geopolitics and Indo-Pacific security has largely focused on strategic competition, alliance commitments, and maritime disputes, particularly the South China Sea. While said literature is valuable, it often treats vulnerabilities as a function of external threats rather than institutional capacity. As a result, less attention has been paid as to how geopolitical shocks affect or disrupt the political and economical capacity of institutions, or why such strain concentrates in specific spatial zones rather than across the State uniformly.

South China Sea

The South China Sea, as Kaplan (2015) described, is a boiling cauldron that would mark the end of the stability and peace in the Indo-Pacific. It is a heavily disputed area amongst growing economic States in the region–Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, and Indonesia. However, Chinese assertive expansionism in the region with the 9-dash line heightened the tension amongst claimant States (Center for Preventive Action, 2024). The growing Chinese military presence, monopolizing control of the airspace, and environmental destruction brought by overfishing would turn the region into a pawn for Chinese hegemony. In addition, the South China Sea is an economic pond of regional and international trade, an estimated $5.3 trillion worth of commercial goods transit through its open waters. Thus diplomatic dialogue and a code of conduct amongst claimant and relevant States is essential in maintaining the economic promises and stability of the region (Chhaya, 2025). Heightened by its significance as an economic pond, it also became an arena of Great Power competition between China and the US, the former as the Revisionist States whereas the latter is the Status-quo State.

As mentioned earlier, the South China Sea is China's pivot in becoming the global hegemon thus it is in the US's interest in containing Chinese expansionism through various spatialities. The US strategy in containing China is through an island-chain strategy that runs across Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Indonesia; notably the buildup of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites throughout the Philippines, which China signaled as an America's protrusion in the stability of the region. In response, Chinese military presence increases, creating a Hobbesian trap wherein Middle-powers of the region were caught in the middle (Wong, 2025; Kaplan, 2015). Furthermore, keyplayers in the region such as India, Japan, and Australia express their interest in maintaining the peace and stability of the region. China's String of Pearls strategy and India's Necklace of Diamonds balances each other (Masigan, 2022).

Taiwan

The island of Taiwan, under the Republic of China (Taiwan/ROC), is a major geopolitical flashpoint in East Asia as the growing desire of the PRC to reunify the "separatist island with the mainland–an ideological rejuvenation of the Communists to mark the end of the Chinese Civil War from 1949. Taiwan's independence remains a thorn for the PRC's legitimacy to govern the Chinese civilization. The One China, Two Systems framework is the bedrock of PRC and ROC systemic negotiation wherein both agrees there is a single "China" but two interdependent political and economic systems remains thus in the perspective of the Chinese, Taiwan is a domestic problem, narrating that the island is culturally and geographically part of the Chinese civilization, and that the separatists from the island deters Chinese unity (Dittmer, 2017). However, the evolving nature of geopolitics created more complexity in the question of reunification: the US military support of Taipei, the Taiwan strait became a global chokepoint as approximately $2.45 trillion worth of goods–one-fifth of international trade passes through (CSIS, 2022), the proximity of US military bases in Okinawa, and the recent supermajority of the 2026 Japanese General election cemented the Sanae Takaichi pivot in militarizing Japan and regain its influence in countering Chinese expansionism in the region (Kuo, 2026). In addition, Taiwan remains as the dominant manufacturer of semiconductors, the lifeblood for digital technology especially with the development of Artificial Intelligence (Loc, 2026).

Sulu Sea

The Sulu Sea is bounded by northeastern Borneo on the southwest, the southwestern islands of the Philippines, including Palawan, on the west and northwest, Busuanga and Mindoro on the north, Panay and Negros on the east, and Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago on the southeast. About 490 miles (790 km) from north to south and 375 miles east to west, with a surface area of 100,000 square miles (260,000 square km), it fills a downfaulted block, in some places almost 18,400 feet (5,600 metres) deep, the edges of which are seen in the bordering islands. The Tabbataha reefs, known for its abundance and diverse marine life, was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993 (Britannica Editors, 2023), whose perimeters were expanded in 2009. The Sulu Sea faces a compound of piracy, terrorism, transmigration, inefficient governance, and unsustainable economic

practices amongst Filipinos and Malaysians in the area (DeVantier, Alcala, & Wilkinson, 2004). Historically, throughout Spanish and American colonization, the Sulu archipelago remains as a thorn to colonial administration which the current Philippines government inherited (Amoroso, 2003) as piracy of goods, ship kidnapping, and the Moro problem remained as the dominative paralysis of the Philippines. The upcoming Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) parliamentary election is eyed on September 14, 2026, being a make or break of regional stability. Election-related violence surged during the 2025 Philippines Midterm election, and in 2024, clashes between two MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) undermined the compromise and stability to enable the election. Local violence and factional competition creates rifts within Bangsamoro wherein both local and national institutions lag and are unable to build the capacity to protect electoral and institutional positivism (Alonsagay, 2025). Furthermore, the Blue economy of the Sulu sea is underdeveloped and overexploited; underdeveloped defined as poor infrastructure, weak logistical capacity, lack of local engagement, and minimal economic development whereas overexploited due to unsustainable fishing practices high catch-rates, diminishing fish population in the area (Enderez, 2026).

The Pacific Ocean

The largest ocean in the world yet is minimal in the policy-making and institutional analysis in the Philippines. The Pacific Ocean stretches throughout the eastern seaboard of the Philippines wherein the Pacific Ring of Fire lies, thus making the archipelago tectonically active wherein Volcanoes and earthquakes impose geographical hazards. In addition, the Philippines is the center of the Pacific Typhoon Belt due to surrounding warm waters, moist tropical conditions, and atmospheric patterns. The Philippines experience an average of 20 typhoons annually (PAGASA, n.d.) and due to Climate Change, it is expected to increase and intensify in the future. These stronger typhoons carry more moisture, track differently, move faster and will be aggravated by sea level rise, an immediate consequence of climate change (Hollden & Marshall, 2018). Continuous sea level rise makes coastal and low-lying areas (including Manila) vulnerable, with Manila being 30% being sunk by 2040 according to the Climate Change Commission. The Philippines is also considered as one of the world's worst offenders in maritime plastic pollution, contributing an annual of 280,000 to 750,000 tons of plastic waste that enters to the ocean through coastal areas, which would be concentrated to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch (GPGP) –a sea of plastic that contains more than 80, 000 tons of plastic waste that spans approximately 1.6 kilometers–lying between Hawaii and California (Econest, 2024). Without its presence in a State's border, no nation has taken responsibility to clean up or collect from the GPGP.

Palau

The island group of Palau is the western-most island of the Mariana islands and southeast of the Philippines. It was formerly part of the Spanish East Indies (The Philippines, Guam, Micronesia, and the Marianas) then it was sold to the Germans in the Treaty of Paris 1898. The Japanese navy expelled the Germans at the beginning of World War 1 and rapidly developed the islands albeit the Palauns are marginals in their own island. During World War

2, the Japanese lost the island and was administered by the US. It became a United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands under the US in 1947. The island became self-governing until it gained its independence in 1994 (Foster, 2026). Palau enjoyed the economic aid from the US and later on, globalization in the 21st century. Due to rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific and climate change, Palau is at the forefront of new realities with traditional and nontraditional threats. Despite being independent, Palau is heavily dependent on the US for its imports and exports, in exchange for US military presence–turning Palau as the forefront of the second island-chain strategy (Guam, Micronesia, and the Mariana islands) in containing China (Yuan, 2025). Palau is also affected by intensifying typhoons and sea-level rise brought by climate change (WorldBank Group, 2021). Furthermore, Palau is one of the few countries that recognizes Taiwan (ROC) as an independent country despite pressure from China. Tourism and infrastructure development is the fundamental driver for Palau-Taiwan relations, "Solid as a rock" as mentioned by Palau's current President Surangel Whipps Jr. (Yuan, 2025). Moreover, Palau hosts more than 3,873 OFW, which is 61% of the total foreign workers in Palau that are employed in services jobs, production jobs, professional and technical jobs, clerical jobs, administrative and managerial jobs, and sales jobs (Island Times, 2019).

Literature Review

Middle-powers are defined as States that are below the Great powers but withheld economic, diplomatic, political, and military clout (Elliot, 2024); States such as Canada, Indonesia, and Turkey are considered as Middle-powers. Middle-powers are the highlights of contemporary international relations as they became the greater bulk in the share of international politics whereas the Superpowers–notably the US and China–have neither seen significant growth through domestic constraints and international pressure. From the margins of history to become the main actors of the stage–Middle-powers have become the mediators, business hubs, and balancers within their respective region (Vision of Humanity, 2026). There are two categories of Middle-powers: established and rising. Established Middle-powers are the traditional beneficiaries of the US-led liberal order and globalization; Canada, South Korea, the Netherlands, and Australia comprised this bloc pre-2008. Contrary, Rising Middle-powers are powers who economically developed post-2008 and provided a Non-aligned nuance compared to the Western-aligned established middle-powers; Indonesia, Mexico, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, etc are a part of this growing bloc. Coincided by the expanding Rising Middle-powers is the Great Fragmentation wherein the center of International Relations and Geopolitics shifted from the Superpowers and Greatpowers to the assertive Middle-powers due to their immense wealth and interests (Institute for Economic & Peace, 2025). Specific highlight is the South China Sea wherein the silent rise of Vietnam and Indonesia counter-acts Chinese expansionism in the region. That being said, Middle-powers lack the capacity to symmetrically hedge against a Superpower such as the US and China, relying on International Law and institutions became the instrument to assert one's protection. Finnish President, Alexander Stubb stated during his speech in the 80th UN General Assembly, "Big players have power through their permanent membership in the

Security Council, but we the smaller players can influence the ebb and flow of international relations by being active in the corridors of diplomacy." Middle-powers and small-powers heavily rely on the international customs, laws, and institutions but said customs, laws, and institutions are at the mercy of the interpretation and ignorance of superpowers and the great powers. This vulnerability became the faculties that Middle-powers have to navigate in an increasingly dynamic world, wherein some aligned with a specific Superpower or with both; this diversification made it difficult for Superpowers to assert or control Middle-powers (Institute for Economic & Peace, 2025). However, Middle-powers are heterogenous wherein their interests are not aligned with one another, even if multilateral cooperation and agency exists, the main driving frame are economics, peaceful coexistence, military cooperation, and a platform for discussion, such as ASEAN, BRICS, and the African Union. This dysfunction amongst Middle-powers are vulnerable to predatory superpowers and other fellow middle-powers. Established powers are to maintain the legacy of the US-led order, especially from the Global North, whereas the Rising powers, the Global South, seek to upset and redefine international relations (Patrick, 2026).

With all that in mind, The Philippines sits at an awkward position where it's neither an established nor rising middle-power–unless certain conditions have met. The Philippines lacked the mature and niche diplomatic bureaucracy, didn't advance economically brought by globalization, and its Western-alignment had been disrupted by former Philippine President Rodrigo Roa Duterte. In addition, while it is a candidate for Rising Middle-power Status with its extensive diplomatic connection, growing remittance-based economy, and expansion of its military; its domestic institutions are holding it back to fully express itself as a Rising Middle-power. Extensive literature with regards to the Philippines State's capacity, categorizing it as a Weak-state. The weak state capacity is observed throughout Philippine history given by the absence of a large political entity beyond the barangay level (Abinales & Amoroso, 2017); upon the Spanish colonization, the prominence of the Catholic Church and patrimonialism of the Governor-General created a feudal system wherein the State only adheres to a certain political elite. It was in the latter stages of the Spanish colonial era where the local elites were pushed from the periphery to the center as mediators between the Spanish and indios, and as the beneficiary of the intensive extraction of agriculture with particular of the sugar industry (Bosma, Giusti-Cordero, & Knight, 2017). Said local elites gained political legitimacy and mobility upon the democratization of the Philippines by the United States, and they remained 'till this day (Abinales & Amoros, 2017). Instead of viewing the Philippines as a weak-state, it is more pronounced that it is a captured-state that its actions, policies, and decision-making is only beneficial to a limited political elite. Despite the narrative that the Philippines is a democratic republic, it primarily exists as a State as a medium of gaining capital (Fukuyama, 2014) where bureaucratic nuance exists as participatory from the middle-class and the use of contained narratives to create political legitimacy (Wurfel, 1989).

Methodology

This paper utilizes a qualitative, scenario-based research design to examine how external geopolitical shocks expose structural limits and weaknesses in the institutional capacity of a selected Philippines institution. This study employs a stress-testing framework using a pentagon as a paradigm to simulate five (5) hypothetical geopolitical scenarios that illustrate institutional strains–The South China Sea, Taiwan, the Sulu Sea, the Pacific Ocean, and Palau. The unit analysis are the institutions under the Executive Branch and their respective departments that are relevant to respective hypothetical geopolitical scenarios. The study also conceptualized institutional capacity across three core dimensions: operational capacity (resources, readiness, and logistical capability), coordination capacity (inter-agency mechanism, alliance integration, and crisis communication), and decision-making capacity (policy flexibility, speed of response, and centralization of authority).

Data collection relies on document analysis from primary institutional sources, including official policy documents, strategic plans, national security frameworks, budget reports, and records. Secondary academic and strategic analyses are used to contextualize institutional capabilities with broader regional dynamics–sourced from academics and think tanks.

Results and Discussion

The South China

The Philippines maintains its stance on its victory of the 2016 Hague arbitrary ruling. While being downplayed under the administration of the previous President, Rodrigo Roa Duterte, the current President, Bongbong Marcos, utilized assertive transparency to broadcast the harassment and actions of the Chinese Coast Guard in the South China Sea. The collaboration between the Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of National Defense, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, the Philippines Coast Guard, thinktanks, and local fishermen maintained a single narrative, establishing a cohesive inter-agency strategy. However, this strategy is unsustainable given that this policy is articulated under the current administration, and with the 2028 Philippine election on the horizon, this strategy could be obsolete or changed. With the addition of the expansion of the EDCA sites, the perspective of the South China Sea is maintained as a political and military issue wherein the institutions are directed to only defend but not develop. Filipino fishermen are caught in the middle, risking their lives to catch enough fish compared to the industrial-capacity of Vietnamese and Chinese fishermen.

Taiwan

In the event of a Taiwanese invasion, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Migrant Workers, and the Armed Forces of the Philippines are ready to evacuate OFWs and Filipinos in Taiwan. Given the experience of evacuation in the Middle-east, relevant

institutions are adaptable to said invasion. Although the Middle-east is distant, Taiwan is in the immediate area of Philippine territory, especially with its proximity to the Batanes islands. With the added dimension that China would view the Philippines as a proxy in the invasion due to the presence of American bases in Cagayan province, evacuation would be hampered as domestic shipports and airports would be used for military purposes. Negotiating with China would be a choice of the Department of Foreign Affairs whereas the Armed Forces of the Philippines faces logistical issues for the evacuation.

Sulu Sea

Election-related violence, factionalism, and distrust in the electoral process hampers the capacity of the National government to integrate and cooperate with local institutions. However, by reframing the strategy in investing in the blue economy of the Sulu Sea, this would create a dimension of instability as local participation opens negotiations between the local and the national.

Pacific Ocean

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) is at the forefront of forecasting and tracking typhoons and weather patterns from the Pacific Ocean. Advanced radar and flood mapping systems were implemented to update Local Government Units to plan and evacuate. In addition, PAGASA should maintain separate, detailed records on flash floods and typhoons to enhance the precision of flood-specific studies. Providing the public with clear, actionable flood-risk information, including future flood scenarios, is also essential to enable communities to make informed decisions and effectively prepare for flood events. Fostering environmental initiatives and infrastructures are key paths in mitigating the intensifying effects of climate change. The RA 9003 Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 and RA 11898 Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act of 2022 were the basis of waste management and collection; however, execution of these laws depends on the Local Government Unit. Communication and an international framework for waste collection, disposition, and management is still needed to develop to fully institutionalize the waste economy and how it can be used to create a circular economy. In contrast, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is under no State jurisdiction or territory, thus the Philippines has a weak basis to collect and manage it without international cooperation.

Palau

Palau still remains as a periphery in the national interest of the Philippines despite the information that were mentioned earlier on. However, Palau is slowly sinking because of rising sea levels and intensifying typhoons brought by climate change (Ryall, 2024), thus the question remains as to how evacuation and hosting refugees wouldn’t overcap from the capacity of the institutions given by how it is centered around OFWs.

Conclusion

The geopolitical vulnerabilities observed with the pentagon-model has shown that the Philippines institutional capacity is diluted and spatially unequal. However, investment in the Blue economy provides economic leverage as development in these vulnerabilities is given by the archipelagic structure of the Philippines. Not viewed as a paradigm of the Westphalian system but as a Developmental issue–domestically and internationally.

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Solidarity among the Invaded: Growing Influence of South Korean Defense Industry in Poland

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Introduction

On July 27, 2022, Poland inked an extensive arms agreement with South Korea. Poland ordered 1,000 K2 Black Panther tanks, over 600 K9 Iron Thunder howitzers, and also 3 FA-50 light fighter plane squadrons.180 K2 tanks were delivered by South Korea that same year, with the remaining 820 tanks of the Polish variant to begin licensed production on Polish soil by 2026. While Korean arms suppliers are likely toasting this unprecedented deal in the history of arms sales between South Korea and Poland, this agreement wasn't solely a bilateral act of goodwill. Poland faces genuine security threats from its neighbor, Russia. Poland views South Korean arms as an effective deterrent against its border adversary.

Poland - South Korea Relations

The first encounter between the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and Poland was that of hostile nature. Poland, as a member of the Eastern Bloc, was involved in the Korean War on the side of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea for the purpose of discussion in this article).[1] Poland was also one of the first countries to recognize North Korea in 1948.[2] The friendly relationship between Poland and North Korea continued after the war, with Poland providing support for postwar reconstructions to North Korea as well as receiving 1,200 orphans from war-torn North Korea.[3] For the duration of the Cold War, there was no formal diplomatic relationship between Poland and South Korea, as the two countries belonged to the different power blocs led by the Soviet Union and the United States, respectively. Poland only recognized North Korea as the only state entity in the Korean peninsula during the Cold War.

The first official exchange between the two countries began following democratization of South Korea in 1987. In 1988, the new South Korean president Roh

[1] Marek Hańderek, "North Korea Revelations from the Polish Archives: Nukes, Succession and, Security," Wilson Center, April 8, 2019, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/north-korea-revelations-the-polish-archives-nukes-succession-and-security.
[2] "Polish Embassy in Democratic People's Republic of Korea Resumes Activity," Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland, November 15, 2024, https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/polish-embassy-in-democratic-peoples-republic-of-korea-resumes-activity. [3] Hańderek, "North Korea Revelations from the Polish Archives."
[3] Hańderek, "North Korea Revelations from the Polish Archives."

Tae-woo employed a foreign policy different from the previous South Korean diplomatic policies called *nordpolitik. Nordpolitik* was a policy directed primarily towards the countries which had traditionally befriended North Korea in order to establish economic ties with these countries first, with an ultimate goal of establishing formal diplomatic ties based on the economic relationship.[4] This foreign policy was "remarkably successful in establishing diplomatic relations with socialist countries."[5] Under *nordpolitik*, South Korea pledged $500 million to Poland in response to the desperate Polish need for economic aid, and the Roh government's desire to establish formal diplomatic relations with Eastern Bloc countries, including Poland.[6] In 1989, South Korea announced $450 million in loans to Poland, which led to the beginning of formal diplomatic relations between the two countries.[7]

The post-Cold War relationship between Poland and South Korea has improved drastically, establishing a strategic partnership in 2013.[8] Poland and South Korea maintain a good economic partnership built on friendly relations.[9] With Poland supporting South Korea's reunification and denuclearization goals on the Korean peninsula, the partnership between two countries evolved beyond a simple economic partnership.[10]

Security Situation of Poland

Poland is similar to South Korea in that both countries have existed with hostile neighbors. Poland historically has many grievances with Russia, dating to abuse suffered under their Soviet bloc-aligned government as well as under colonial tsarist Russia. While

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[4] Dan C. Sanford, "ROK's Nordpolitik: Revisited," *The Journal of East Asian Af airs* 7, no. 1 (1993): 2–3. [5] Seung-ho Joo, "South Korea's Nordpolitik and the Soviet Union (Russia)," *The Journal of East Asian Af airs* 7, no. 2 (1993): 405.

[5] Joo, "South Korea's Nordpolitik and the Soviet Union (Russia)," 419.

[6] "Poland, S. Korea Establish Ties," *The Washington Post*, November 2, 1989, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/national/1989/11/02/poland-s-korea-establish-ties/e9b8c83d-3ffd-4a7 6-9f9f-94c113b82d3a/.

[7] "Poland, S. Korea Establish Ties," *The Washington Post*, November 2, 1989, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/national/1989/11/02/poland-s-korea-establish-ties/e9b8c83d-3ffd-4a7 6-9f9f-94c113b82d3a/.

[8] "ROK and Republic of Poland Hold 15th Policy Consultation," Republic of Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 24, 2019, https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5676/view.do?seq=320352.

[9] Sean Kim, "'Korean investment in Poland continues to grow due to good conditions,'" National Days, *The Korea Post*, May 12, 2017, http://www.koreapost.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=3789; "Poland a Good Partner for South Korean Business," Oficjalna Strona Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej [The Official Website of the President of the Republic of Poland], Office of the President of the Republic of Poland, October 23, 2013, https://www.president.pl/archives/bronislaw-komorowski/news/poland-a-good-partner-for-south-korean-business,38800; "'Poland-Korea Relations to Drift Skyward,'" The Korea Herald, *The Korea Herald*, May 15, 2016, https://www.koreaherald.com/article/960787.

[10] "Discussion on Cooperation between South Korea and Poland for the Establishment of Peace on the Korean Peninsula," Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification, Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification, November 21, 2025, https://www.unikorea.go.kr/web/eng_unikorea/bbs/bbs_0000000000000167/54751?cp=1&sortOrder=BA_REG DATE&sortDirection=DESC&bcId=bbs_0000000000000167; "Poland on the UN Security Council," PISM, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych [The Polish Institute of International Affairs], March 1, 2018, https://pism.pl/publications/Poland_on_the_UN_Security_Council.

these tensions cooled after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the recent use of asymmetric force by Russia, the silencing of defectors in Europe, and the interference with elections, as well as other hostile intelligence gathering activities has allowed fears to flare up again. The 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea and, more gravely, the 2022 invasion of Ukraine have only exacerbated those fears. Asymmetric warfare by Russia against Poland and its NATO allies has intensified with acts of kinetic sabotage on military and civilian infrastructure, as well as those in cyberspace. This has caused Poland to shift its posture from one supporting the peace dividend to one that must be better able to deter foreign aggression. Poland is actively threatened by the bulk of Russian forces to its east, as well as to the south in Belarusian bases, holding Russian tactical nuclear weapons, and to the west in Kaliningrad, which hosts the Russian Baltic Sea Fleet, and short-range ballistic missiles. Ostensibly, in its most recent National Security Strategy, released in 2020, Poland has recognized that its "most imminent threat is the neo-imperialist policy of the authorities of the Russian Federation." The Polish Ministry of Defense has noted in its press release on the South Korean arms deal that lessons needed to be learned from Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, explaining that "armoured forces and artillery are of great importance on the battlefield nowadays, hence the decision to strengthen this type of armed forces." Before the Russo-Ukrainian War, Poland believed it could adequately deter Russia due to the substantial stockpiles inherited from the Cold War. However, the security situation has changed, and Warsaw has now adopted a divest-to-invest strategy, transferring most of its Cold War-era tanks and other heavy equipment to Ukraine. Decision-makers in Warsaw have recognized that South Korea's unique security situation has allowed it to develop an arms industry capable of producing high-quality military equipment, and they have decided to place their trust in South Korean manufacturing.

Security Situation of South Korea

North Korea has always been the traditional threat to the South Korean national security since liberation from Japanese rule in 1945. Following the Korean War, North Korea adopted four military lines in 1962, which are 'arming the entire population,' 'training the whole military as a cadre force,' 'fortifying the whole country,' and 'modernizing the whole military.'[11] North Korea has consistently posed a security threat to South Korea through infiltration, military operations, and terrorist attacks from the 1950s to the 2010s.[12] Therefore, South Korea considers North Korea as its primary threat, tuning military and defense policies with North Korea as its focus.[13]

[11] *2022 Gukbangbaekseo [2022 Defense White Paper]*, 25; "Bukhan Jisiksajeon (2021) [North Korea Knowledge Dictionary (2021)]," Bukhanjeongbopoteol [North Korea Information Portal], Republic of Korea Ministry of Unification, accessed January 19, 2026, https://nkinfo.unikorea.go.kr/nkp/knwldg/knwldg.do?menuId=NK_KNWLDG_DICARY.
[12] "Bukhanui daenam chimtu dobal sageon [North Korea's Infiltration and Provocation against South Korea]," National Intelligence Service, National Intelligence Service, accessed January 19, 2026, https://www.nis.go.kr/AF/1_1_1.do.
[13] *2022 Gukbangbaekseo [2022 Defense White Paper]*.

The primary threat from North Korea through conventional means is mostly manifested in its massive ground forces.[14] While the estimates differ between the U.S. and South Korean reports, North Korea's ground forces have approximately 4,200 to 4,300 tanks, 2,200 to 2,600 armored vehicles, 8,800 to 9,200 field artillery, and 5,500 to 6,400 multiple rocket launchers.[15] North Korea places 70% of its ground forces south of Pyeongyang to be able to carry out surprise attacks on South Korea on demand.[16] As South Korea views North Korea's Navy and Air Force unable to pose a significant threat due to limitations of its capacity to carry out military operations, the defense strategy of South Korea against its northern neighbor relies heavily on neutralizing North Korea's ground forces.[17]

While North Korea undoubtedly remains a primary threat to South Korea, other geographically neighboring countries may pose a security and geopolitical challenge to South Korea. The northern neighbors to the Korean peninsula, China and Russia, have a history of joining the Korean War as primary allies of North Korea. The direct threat from Russia has relatively subsided following the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. Russia traditionally maintained a relatively equidistant and separate relationship with both South and North Korea.[18] However, while Russia maintained relatively equal political distance with the two Koreas, much stronger economic ties were established with South Korea.[19] Russia started exporting weapons to South Korea in 1994, volume of weapons trade peaking in 1997, to settle Soviet debt to South Korea which incurred between the 1980s and 1990s.[20] In 2000s, it was South Korea that proposed a second wave of arms importation from Russia to compensate for diplomatic problems caused by South Korea's refusal to buy Russian weapons, such as SU-35 fighters, TU-334 passenger planes, SA-12 missiles, and amphibious aircraft in 1999 due to diplomatic pressure from the United States.[21] The weapons Russia exported to South Korea were more advanced than the Russian weapons being used in North Korea, which prompted North Korea's diplomatic protest to Russia. However, the protest from North Korea did not pose a significant challenge to the weapons trade, as Russia dismissed the North Korean protests by arguing that "North Korea was not a good market."[22] Other than weapons, the energy cooperation between Russia and South Korea, particularly through South Korea's importation of Russian natural gas, was one of the

[14] *North Korea Military Power: A Growing Regional and Global Threat* (Defense Intelligence Agency, 2021), 42–44.
[15] *North Korea Military Power*, 43; *2022 Gukbangbaekseo [2022 Defense White Paper]*, 27.
[16] *2022 Gukbangbaekseo [2022 Defense White Paper]*, 26.
[17] *2022 Gukbangbaekseo [2022 Defense White Paper]*, 28–29.
[18] Anthony V. Rinna, "The Russia–South Korea Relationship after Russia's Invasion of Ukraine and Implications for the U.S.-ROK Alliance," *Asia Policy* 18, no. 1 (2023): 98–100, https://doi.org/10.1353/asp.2023.0009; Sun-Woo Lee and Hyungjin Cho, "A Subtle Difference between Russia and China's Stances toward the Korean Peninsula and Its Strategic Implications for South Korea," *Journal of International and Area Studies* 25, no. 1 (2018): 118–21.
[19] Rinna, "The Russia–South Korea Relationship after Russia's Invasion of Ukraine and Implications for the U.S.-ROK Alliance," 100.
[20] Se Hyun Ahn, "Understanding Russian—South Korean Arms Trade: A Nontraditional Security Approach?," *Armed Forces & Society* 35, no. 3 (2009): 423, https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X08330817.
[21] Ahn, "Understanding Russian—South Korean Arms Trade," 423; Ahn, "Understanding Russian—South Korean Arms Trade," 428.
[22] Ahn, "Understanding Russian—South Korean Arms Trade," 429.

key aspects of South Korea – Russia bilateral relations that addresses the energy security needs of both countries.[23]

Despite these friendly economic relations, Russia remains a potential security threat to South Korea.[24] The prospects of potential Russian security threat to South Korea intensified over the course of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. South Korea, albeit cautiously, has employed a more pro-Western and anti-Russian response than that of North Korea to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.[25] Russia, in response, included South Korea on its list of 'unfriendly' countries.[26] However, the Russian response to South Korea is controlled and cautious as well. While Russia views the U.S. military presence in South Korea as perpetuating the threat of war, Russia also lacks the ability to influence the course of geographical events on the far east.[27] Hence, to Russia, maintaining a healthy economic cooperation with South Korea serves both economic and security interests.[28]

South Korea shares a more complicated relationship with China than with Russia. While South Korea's interest with Russia is mostly confined to the economic aspects, the South Korean diplomacy with China also carries a significant weight in ensuring peace in the Korean peninsula.[29] Historically, China has been a major strategic partner of North Korea, whose primary adversary is South Korea.[30] China intervened in the Korean War because the Chinese leaders, such as Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, believed that American military presence at the Chinese-Korean border following the fall of North Korea would compromise the Chinese border security on its northeastern border.[31] The security partnership between China and North Korea had remained strong even after the Korean War, with the mutual defense alliance between the two countries signed in the 1960s.[32] But the relationship between China and North Korea began to diverge in the 1980s when China initiated economic and market reforms, and again in 1992 when China established full

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[23] Se Hyun Ahn, "Framing Energy Security Between Russia and South Korea?: Progress, Problems, and Prospects," *Asian Survey* 50, no. 3 (2010): 591, https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2010.50.3.591.
[24] Yun-seon Gong, "Rushia gunyong-gi dokdo yeonggong chimbeom... Gun gyeong-go sagyeok [Russian military aircraft violates Dokdo airspace... Military fired warning shots]," Politics, *MBC News*, July 23, 2019, https://imnews.imbc.com/replay/2019/nw1200/article/5418131_29337.html; Laura Bicker, "South Korea Fires Warning Shots at Russian Military Aircraft," *British Broadcasting Channel*, July 23, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-49079719.
[25] Rinna, "The Russia–South Korea Relationship after Russia's Invasion of Ukraine and Implications for the U.S.-ROK Alliance," 101–3.
[26] "Russia Issues List of 'unfriendly' Countries amid Ukraine Crisis," *Al Jazeera*, March 8, 2022, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/8/russia-deals-with-unfriendly-countries-require-moscow-approval.
[27] Rinna, "The Russia–South Korea Relationship after Russia's Invasion of Ukraine and Implications for the U.S.-ROK Alliance," 106–8.
[28] Rinna, "The Russia–South Korea Relationship after Russia's Invasion of Ukraine and Implications for the U.S.-ROK Alliance," 107–8.
[29] Dick K. Nanto and Mark E. Manyin, "China-North Korea Relations," *North Korean Review* 7, no. 2 (2011): 94–95.
[30] Nanto and Manyin, "China-North Korea Relations," 94.
[31] Bangning Zhou, "Explaining China's Intervention in the Korean War in 1950," *Interstate - Journal of International Af airs* 2014/2015, no. 1 (2015), http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1069/explaining-chinas-intervention-in-the-korean-war-in-1950.
[32] Nanto and Manyin, "China-North Korea Relations," 99.

diplomatic ties with South Korea.[33] In the recent years, anecdotal evidence suggests that some officials in China have been frustrated with North Korea's unwillingness to yield on issues on nuclear weapons, but "China is being duplicitous on the North Korean question and insincere in its statements supporting a freeze or dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear program."[34]

In the more recent years, the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) crisis marks one of the first major manifestations of consequences of the U.S.-China competition for hegemony that South Korea experienced first hand. When the then commander of the U.S. Forces in Korea announced that he had requested for deployment of THAAD in Korea, the Chinese government immediately expressed its concern. The Chinese government perceived the deployment of the THAAD in South Korean soil as a fundamental threat to its national interests.[35] Because China viewed the deployment of THAAD as a South Korean challenge to Chinese interests, China retaliated against South Korea through economic and political means, including stopping government subsidies to South Korean firms in China, imposing restrictions on South Korean cultural, tourism, industry, and trade sectors.[36]

Before the THAAD crisis, South Korea had a relatively cooperative relationship with China. South Korea did not necessarily perceive China as a pressing threat to national security.[37] South Korea viewed China as its primary economic partner while viewing the U.S. as its primary security partner.[38] China demonstrated through the retaliations against South Korea during the THAAD crisis its ability to exert political pressure on South Korea through economic means.[39] South Korea, in response, has strengthened economic ties with other partners, such as the ASEAN, to reduce its economic and investment dependency on China. As the competition between the U.S. and China intensifies, the South Korean president Lee Jae-myung said during his visit to Washington D.C. in 2025 that South Korea cannot continue to take on a stance that views China as its key economic partner and the U.S. as its key security partner, sending a diplomatic signal to the U.S. that South Korea will remain a dependable ally to the U.S. through its competition with China.[40]

To the south, South Korea has unresolved historical grievances with Japan, amplified with Japanese territorial claims over a South Korean island of Dokdo. Despite sharing

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[33] Nanto and Manyin, "China-North Korea Relations," 99.
[34] Nanto and Manyin, "China-North Korea Relations," 97–98.
[35] Lee and Cho, "A Subtle Difference between Russia and China's Stances toward the Korean Peninsula and Its Strategic Implications for South Korea," 113.
[36] Jiyeoun Song, "The Effects of Political Conflicts on Bilateral Economic Relations between South Korea and China in the Process of the THAAD Deployment," *Korea and World Politics* 36, no. 3 (2020): 142–61, https://doi.org/10.17331/kwp.2020.36.3.005.
[37] David C. Kang, "Between Balancing and Bandwagoning: South Korea's Response to China," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 9, no. 1 (2009): 1–28.
[38] Hyung-Geun Kim, "South Korea and the 'China Effect,'" in *China Dreams*, ed. Jane Golley et al. (ANU Press, 2020), 243, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv12sdxmk.25.
[39] Kim, "South Korea and the 'China Effect,'" 244.
[40] Eun-ha Park, "Jungguk, Lee daetongryeong 'anmigyeongjung jisokhal su eopda' baleone gyeonjegu..."je3ja yeonghang an doe" [China checks on President Lee's remarks that 'China for economy, US for security can't continue'... 'influence by a third-party cannot be allowed']," International, *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, August 27, 2025, https://www.khan.co.kr/article/202508271558001.

similar democratic ideology and both being allies of the United States, South Korea does not view Japan as an ally.[41] In the more recent years, a disagreement over interpretation of historical events between South Korea and Japan had prompted a full-scale trade conflict that threatened several security agreements between the two countries.[42] Nevertheless, an armed conflict between South Korea and Japan is unlikely in today's context.

The United States is widely considered the primary security partner of South Korea. The U.S. had sent the largest number of troops to aid South Korea during the Korean War. The Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea was signed in 1953 following a series of disagreements between the two countries regarding the release of prisoners of wars captured during the Korean War and the U.S. plan to sign the armistice without unifying the country.[43] To this date, the government of South Korea includes the alliance with the United States as one of the primary strategic interests for national defense in the latest defense white paper published in 2023.[44] While there are multiple military limitations imposed on South Korea by the United States as the legacies of the Korean War, such as the Wartime Operational Control of the military, limitations imposed on specifications of missiles produced and operated by South Korea, to name a few, the South Korean government considers the alliance with the United States as one of the key components to war deterrence on the Korean peninsula.

The U.S. sought some fundamental changes to the characteristics of the alliance with South Korea under president Donald Trump's second term. The U.S., following the "America First" policy, seeks to reduce U.S. responsibilities for defense of its close allies. Hence, the U.S. administration under Trump has been hinting South Korea to take a more proactive role in defense of the country and deterrence against North Korea.[45] In return, the U.S. administration has approved production and operation of weapons previously withheld from South Korea, such as nuclear submarines, in hopes that South Korean military assets can assist the U.S. military in advancing the key American national interests.[46] Hence, a post-Trumpian challenge for South Korea's defense policy would be expanding the

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[41] Seung-eun Seol and Kyu-jin Oh, "野 '한일동맹? 與, 제정신이냐…이러니 토착왜구 소리 들어,'" Politics, *Yonhap News*, July 3, 2024, https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20240703065900001.
[42] Hong-sub Kim, "Hanil muyeok bunjeng woningwa daeung," *Wolgan Gonggongjeongchaek [Monthly Public Policy]* 168 (October 2019): 8–9.
[43] "Hanmisanghobangwijoyak wonmun (1953nyeon 10wol 1il) [Original Text of Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea (October 1, 1953)]," Ryngman Rhee Memorial, accessed January 24, 2026, http://이승만기념관.com/bbs/board.php?bo_table=reference&wr_id=31; "Hanmisanghobangwijoyak [Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea]," Uriyeoksanet [Our History Net], accessed January 24, 2026, https://contents.history.go.kr/mobile/kc/view.do?levelId=kc_i503350&code=kc_age_50.
[44] *2022 Gukbangbaekseo [2022 Defense White Paper]*, 40–43.
[45] Goun Huh, "Mi 'hanguki daebuk eokjae judwen chaekim'...jeonjakgwon jeonhwan, juhanmigun cheondanhwa sokdo naena [US: 'South Korea holds main responsibility to deterrence against North Korea'... is turnover of Wartime Operations Command and modernization of US military in Korea going to speed up]," Defense, Diplomacy, *News1*, January 24, 2026, https://www.news1.kr/diplomacy/defense-diplomacy/6049693.
[46] Yoonjung Seo et al., "US Submarines Are Outnumbered in the Pacific. South Korea Has a Plan to Help," CNN, December 21, 2025, https://www.cnn.com/2025/12/20/asia/south-korea-nuclear-powered-submarines-intl-hnk-ml-dst.

traditional focus on North Korea with strategic reliance on the United States into a more self-reliant defense strategy against North Korea while also participating in projection of hard power in the East Asian region in conjunction with countries such as the United States and Japan.

South Korea's Demographic Crisis

South Korea has been in a demographic crisis with extremely low birth rates with an aging population. By 2024, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of South Korea has reached 0.748, while the TFR of 2.1 is generally considered among demographers as the replacement rate to maintain population size.[47] Given the decline of fertility rate over the years, the population reaching the military age has also been lessening. Compared to about 560,000 military personnel in South Korea's military in 2019, there have only been 450,000 personnel in 2025.[48] The strategy being proposed and adapted to curb this demographic challenge to the military manpower is to focus on quality, rather than quantity, of the military personnel and equipment.[49]

The official policy to adapt to these new challenges can be summed up by something South Korea's Ministry of National Defense calls "Gukbanghyeoksin 4.0" [National Defense Innovation 4.0], where the ministry aims to restructure the military with focus on research and development, restructuring of the military and training centers for troops, and utilization of newer technologies such as AI in the overall defense system of the country.[50] Unlike the previous army modernization policies and plans, the National Defense Innovation 4.0 focuses on utilization of modern technologies to replace human soldiers as a direct consequence to the demographic crisis of South Korea.[51]

This shift in policy pushed South Korea to be one of the lead producers of latest-generation weaponries in the world that may be operated with minimal numbers of troops. Given the security situation in Europe and the cost of operating a huge standing army of volunteer soldiers, South Korean weaponry becomes an attractive choice for European nations seeking to rearm and boost its militaries in response to the Russian aggression in Ukraine, and potential war in their own homefronts.

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[47] "Hapgyechoolsanryul (TFR) [Total Fertility Rate (TFR)]," Korean Statistical Information Service, n.d., accessed January 24, 2026, https://kosis.kr/visual/populationKorea/PopulationDashBoardDetail.do.
[48] Soobin Cho, "Guggun 45manmyeong, 6nyeonsae 11manmyeong jul-eo…sadangeub budae 17gos salajyeossda [The ROK Armed Forces' 450,000-strong force has shrunk by 110,000 in six years, with 17 division-level units disappearing]," *JoongAng Ilbo*, August 11, 2025, https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/25358069.
[49] Sinsook Kim, "Designing Military Manpower Policies for a Strong Defense in a Time of Demographic Decline," *The Quarterly Journal of Defense Policy Studies* 39, no. 4 (2024): 7–32, https://doi.org/10.22883/jdps.2024.39.4.001.
[50] *Gukbanghyeoksin 4.0 [National Defense Innovation 4.0]* (Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense, 2023), https://mnd.go.kr/cop/pblictn/selectPublicationUser.do?siteId=mnd&componentId=14&categoryId=0&publicationSeq=1042&pageIndex=1&id=mnd_020704000000.
[51] Kim, "Designing Military Manpower Policies for a Strong Defense in a Time of Demographic Decline."

Poland - South Korea Arms Deals

Due to the North Korean participation in the Russian Invasion of Ukraine, and potential transfer of Russian military technologies to North Korea, South Korea is now in need of enhancing security partnerships with nations and entities outside of its immediate region, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).[52] Primarily, this arms agreement arose from Poland's expressed need to expand and modernize its armed forces.

While the deterrent posture of Poland's allies in NATO, as reflected in the Article 5 security guarantee, remains strong, shifting rhetoric from members of the Trump administration has led some countries to doubt US support for NATO. Some have seen the United States as an unreliable ally amid shifting tariff policies and a shift in security from a focus on the defense of Europe to one focused on South America and Asia. Some countries have even expressed concerns about the efficiency and stability of the supply chain for American weapons, namely regarding the alleged F-35 kill switch and delays in aircraft production and the HIMARS system. Poland has voiced doubts about the US arms production system, its ability to meet its targets, and the permissions Washington has granted Poland to use American arms for its defense. In the past, Poland was a key supplier of arms in the Soviet bloc, even manufacturing its own indigenous tank developed from Soviet models.

However, the peace dividend has reduced arms production and limited Poland's ability to produce modern technology on a massive scale in a short period of time. Poland is currently trying to reindustrialize its defense sector. Consistently, Poland has met NATO defense spending targets after 2014. It was one of the biggest advocates for NATO to meet the 2% of GDP defense spending metric by 2025. By then, it was already spending near the 2% threshold. By 2025, Poland had the highest defense expenditure as a percent of GDP within NATO and the highest equipment expenditure as a percent of its defense budget. Meaning Poland was spending a large portion of its defense budget on maintaining or acquiring military hardware rather than on trip allowances, uniforms, or personnel.

South Korea's arms industry is proving to be a steady exporter and is well-positioned to supply Poland with arms. By 2024, according to the SIPRI database, South Korea ranked among the top 10 in global defense products and accounted for a 2.2 percent share of the global defense market. Especially with the increased defense spending target of 5% in NATO countries, South Korea is uniquely positioned to expand partnerships within Europe. Of its total defence exports in 2024, 46% went to Poland. Poland's defense procurement list is extensive, ranging from tanks and artillery pieces to modern fighter jets, as well as the ammunition and spare parts needed to operate them. Poland is putting into place the necessary supply chain to manufacture Polish variants of South Korean weapons. Some

[52] Saeme Kim, *Europe's Shifting Security Landscape and Implications for South Korea* (Asan Institute for Policy Studies, 2025), 8, https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep7073struggle to penetrate countries with already established industries like France, Germany, and the UK, South Korea will remain a key defense supplier to Europe, providing immediate goods as7arms.

Polish commentators have valued the total Polish spending on South Korean arms at an eye-watering sum of USD 22 billion.

Despite the increased monetary costs, South Korea and Poland are highly optimistic about their defense partnership. Officials from both sides are extremely impressed by the speed of arms deliveries and the openness to supporting both countries' defense industries, in contrast to other countries such as Japan and Israel, which are hesitant about defense technology transfers. In fact, Poland reduced its orders for American M142 HIMARS launchers due to concerns about delivery speed and instead replaced them with 300 K239 Chunmoo rocket launch systems.

Conclusion

Under the K-Defense program, South Korea is modernizing its defense industry. Currently, it stands in the top 10 in defense exports around the world, and it wishes to reach the top 4 by 2030. South Korea sees Europe as an emerging market for its defense goods. While it may have difficulty penetrating countries with already established defense industries like France, Germany, and the UK, South Korea will remain a key defense supplier to Europe, providing immediate goods while Europe’s defense sector reindustrializes. To maintain its stability, it must integrate into Europe's strategic frameworks and contribute to code development programs and industrial partnerships within European defense supply chains. Notably, with plants already being established in Poland for manufacturing, the future bodes well for South Korean weapons in Europe.

The post-Cold War era, dominated by the peace dividend, is over. The global order is now marked by great-power rivalry, exemplified by the most significant war in Europe since World War II and the resurgence of revanchist Russia. While established European arms manufacturers work to revitalize their production lines, South Korea has emerged as an efficient temporary supplier to address Europe’s urgent rearmament needs. It has already done so for a Poland looking anxiously across the border.

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Beyond Passport Strength: Everyday Bordering, Discretionary Governance, and the Schengen Regime for OFWs

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Introduction and Background

Crossing borders through the powerful instrument known as the "passport" is a universal experience, but so is the reality that this document alone does not guarantee automatic mobility. Indeed, passports grant movement for individuals, but mobility is often restricted by the visa regime that functions as a filtering mechanism, determining who is allowed to cross borders, who actually cannot, and under what conditions. Therefore, a person's relationship with borders is determined by the strength of their passport, which allows certain people to travel freely while exposing others to the stringent and restrictive requirements of the visa system. For the people of the Global South, this is the reality of crossing borders; their movement requires navigating the intricate structure of documentation, bureaucratic process, and discretionary practices.

As a result, this study is motivated to explore the tension between passport power and visa power by examining the discretionary practices of consulate workers. To further deepen the study, it also seeks to address the fact that the growing literature on global mobility governance is often concentrated on the experiences of the Global North, particularly on neighboring regions such as Europe, North Africa, and Turkey. With that, the study will focus on the lived experiences of the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in navigating the Schengen visa systems to expand the European-centered literature. The study will focus on Schengen member states, particularly the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Norway, Romania, Sweden, and Switzerland, which all reflect diverse modes of consular governance—making the everyday bordering experience rich.

The Philippines, as a geographic focus, is a convincing case for understanding and examining global mobility governance, considering that it consistently ranks relatively low on global mobility indices (Henley & Partners, 2023). Meaning, OFWs are familiar with confronting the restrictive visa regime. Furthermore, what makes OFWs more important in understanding mobility is that the Philippines, as a state, plays a central role in preparing, mobilizing, sending, and regulating its citizens through the framework of state labor brokerage (Rodriguez, 2010, as cited in Choudry, 2011). Through this, it could be argued that Filipino migrants are in constant dialogue with the complex process of crossing borders, especially in the Schengen area. In 2024, the Philippines ranked as the 11th largest source of Schengen visa applications, but the enforcement of the Visa Code prevented 13,000 applicants from traveling to Europe (European Commission, 2024). Through these numbers, the tension between visa power and passport power could be reflected.

However, these figures do not capture the lived realities, strategies, and experiences of Filipino migrants. Even the intermediaries themselves, such as the consulate workers, the statistical data does not reveal how consular authorities operationalize visa policies. Thus, the study aims to address these gaps by examining how consular discretion, bureaucratic practices, and everyday bordering mechanisms shape the relationship between national passport power and individual mobility rights of OFWs. On that account, the study highlights the question if visa power truly overrides passport power. Therefore, the mobility experiences of the OFWs and intermediaries will be examined alongside the relevant migration, passport, and Schengen visa policies to gain a deeper understanding of how global mobility governance impacts movement and individual behaviors.

Research Gaps and Questions

Indeed, the Schengen visa regime has transformed global mobility governance into a complex bureaucratic process. The extension of physical borders through consulates, administrative institutions, and comprehensive requirements has created a multilayered mechanism of mobility. However, despite the extensive analyses of the Schengen visa regime and its policies, a primary gap remains: there is a lack of knowledge of comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics of global mobility governance, particularly the interplay of passport and visa power as experienced by OFWs. The other identified gaps outline how existing scholarly studies are geographically concentrated and that there is a shortage of qualitative studies that capture the human dimension and everyday practices involved in the construction of borders (Özdemir & Ayata, 2018; Weinar et al., 2012). This was further exacerbated by the evidence-practice gap in how official policies are overridden by consular discretion and how formal documents, such as the Visa Facilitation Agreements, do not translate into practical application of visa procedures (Weinar et al., 2012).

By taking into account the identified gaps and the motivation behind this study, it is guided by the main research question: How do the diverse bureaucratic practices and everyday bordering mechanisms within Schengen missions—ranging from highly discretionary assessments to technocratic formalism—reconfigure the relationship between national passport power and individual mobility rights for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), thereby revealing the dominance of visa power over passport privilege? Which is followed by sub-questions to further deepen the analysis:

1.1. How do consular officers operationalize the Schengen visa regime, and how is their gatekeeping authority mediated by external actors, such as administrative outsourcing, state-level bureaucracy, and commercial migration brokers?

1.2. How do different Schengen missions construct and evaluate ‘migratory risk’ when adjudicating visa applications for OFWs?

1.2.1. How do these practices contribute to a regime of institutionalized distrust? 1.3. In what ways does the 'practice on the ground'—characterized by bureaucratic opacity, regionalized decision-making, and shifting operational logics—diverge from the unified

'policy on paper' of the Schengen Borders Code?

1.3.1. What does this divergence reveal about the structural barriers imposed on the Global South?

Taken together, these questions explore how mobility governance is produced not only through formal policies such as the Schengen Visa Code but also through localized bureaucratic processes. Thereby, providing a comprehensive qualitative and quantitative analysis of everyday bordering in the context of OFWs.

The Core Theoretical Frameworks

The core theoretical frameworks by Salter, Lipsky, Soomro, and Torpey reflect two concepts, particularly state control over mobility and street-level bureaucracy. The study builds on existing scholarship regarding passports as a tool of state power—used to monopolize, regulate, and legitimize movement (Soomro, 2023; Salter, 2004; Torpey, 2000). But the passport, together with the visa system, forms the central mechanism of border security, creating a set of restrictive policies to screen travelers before they even arrive at the physical border (Salter, 2004). Due to visa policies, no one is exempted in navigating the restrictive bordering processes. Thus, Schengenland was used as a concrete example of how borders are political (Walters, 2002). In the context of Schengen visa governance, ‘street-level bureaucracy’ by Lipsky (1980) explains how they embody the expectations of the government of the people as well as how they impact the relationship between the state and government. Which further emphasizes that what is written on paper does not instantly translate into practice. By combining these theoretical concepts, the study substantiates how the Schengen visa regime is a complex bureaucratic system in which macro-level hierarchies are enforced through the micro-level discretionary practices. Through this, the study emphasizes how global mobility hierarchy is mediated, interpreted, and enforced by the discretionary practices of local consular officers.

Methodology

To further investigate the relationship between formal visa policies and everyday bordering mechanisms, the study employs a mixed-method research design that combines quantitative and qualitative data. In doing so, the study will provide a comprehensive analysis of how high-level policies translate into practical bureaucratic obstacles experienced by OFWs. For the quantitative data sources, the study will utilize the European Commission’s (2024) Schengen Visa (Type C) dataset to establish baseline restrictiveness and rejection rates for Philippine passport holders and the sovereign National Visa (Type D) to contextualize the large operational volume related to labor migration.

Meanwhile, for the qualitative data, legal and policy documents are used, such as the official Schengen Visa Code (Regulation (EC) No 810/2009) and legal provisions such as Articles 8 (Representation Arrangements), 14 (Supporting Documents), 21 (Risk

Assessment), and 43 (External Service Providers), which will be analyzed with direct consulate dialogues through semi-structured interviews and official correspondences with nine Schengen member states:

- Czech Republic
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Lithuania
- Norway
- Romania
- Sweden
- Switzerland

These Schengen states were selected to capture the different forms of consular governance. For example, some countries have direct consular operations in Manila, while others rely on proxy governance through state representation, outsourced services such as the VFS Global, and regional visa hubs. Moreover, to reflect the variations in consular governance, the study categorizes these nine Schengen states into three operational archetypes: Direct Consular Presence (The Czech Republic, Greece, and Romania), Bureaucratic Formalism (Germany and Switzerland), and Regionalized and Externalized Control (Norway, Sweden, Lithuania, and Hungary).

The qualitative data were analyzed through thematic coding guided by these frameworks: Street-Level Bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980) and Border Performativity (Salter, 2004). By triangulating these insights with policy documents and visa statistics, the study uncovers patterns in the practical application of mobility restrictions, such as the identification of three operational archetypes, particularly the formalist, investigative, and "black box." Therefore, understanding that the experience of navigating the strict procedure of Schengen is stratified for the OFWs.

Findings

The empirical findings highlight that the Schengen visa system does not function as a unified system. Despite the existence of the Schengen Visa Code which is the primary basis of all consular offices, these visa policies are perceived and interpreted differently. Through thematic analysis of the consular interviews and official correspondences, six themes emerged:

1. The Locus of Authority

The most important observation in the dataset is that the experience of Filipino applicants is fundamentally shaped by whether the adjudicating authority has a physical office in Manila or practice discretion through external service providers, regional hubs, delegation, or localized but opaque.

2. Institutional Constraints and Volume Management

The data reveal that the volume of visa applications influence their operational posture. For instance, high volume of visa applications make consular missions rely on the official checklists which is the case for Germany. For consular missions that practice investigative discretionary procedure, their bottleneck is verifying fake documents.

3. Systemic Integrity and the Construction of Migratory Risk

The empirical data observes that the perceptions of migratory risk vary across the nine states. Meaning, it is loosely defined and highly subjective. For the Czech Republic and Greece, it is 'visa shopping'; meanwhile, for formalist states like Germany, it is incomplete documentation. For the remaining states such as Hungary, Sweden, and Switzerland, the concept of risk is limited or disclosed.

4. Operational Logic (The Spectrum of Formalism and Discretion)

Migratory risk is perceived differently by each consular mission hence, their operational logic behind their discretionary decision varies. The empirical data reveals that some adhere to strict formalism meaning strict adherence to required documents, investigative realism that relies on interviews and contextual judgment, mixed logic and sectoral trust that depend on structural integrity and opaque regional decisions. These differences on operational logic affect how an applicant is assessed.

5. The Human Element (Contextualizing the Filipino Applicant)

The findings show that the embassies' assessment of each applicant's nationality vary widely. There are states who display bureaucratic neutrality where they argue that nationality is irrelevant in assessing visa applications. While others put emphasis on cultural compatibility and sectoral relations.

6. The Role of Intermediaries

The data reveals that the European border in Manila is privatized and mediated by third-party gatekeepers such as private travel agencies that sometimes produce real fakes or guarantee trust to consular offices. For high-volume and regionalized states, there are administrative buffers like VFS Global that assist them in processing applications. Finally, the most relevant for OFWs, is the state-level intermediation for other states through Philippine DMW. Revealing that OFWs both

navigate the privatization of European borders and adhering to protective rules set by the Philippines.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the European border is highly fragmented, localized, and subjective. The Schengen Visa Code is interpreted and practiced diversely, revealing that migratory risk is a subjective concept shaped by the operational logic of the adjudicating embassy. Meaning OFWs are confronted with multiple layers of borders, each representing distinct operational archetypes. Therefore, the findings of this study highly validates Lipsky's (1980) theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy, specifically the role of officers' discretionary decisions in shaping policies. The marco-level migration policies of the EU such as the Schengen Visa Code is actively constructed by the discretionary mechanisms of consular officials. It also broadens Bigo and Guild's (2005) concept of "policing at a distance" as reflected in how other states have regional hubs in Bangkok. Furthermore, the study affirms Torpey's (2000) claim that the monopolization of legitimate movement, illustrating that localized visa power neutralizes passport power and its privilege. Therefore, the study concludes that the mobility of OFWs is largely determined by the discretionary practices of consular officials and the operational logic of the visa regime. Moreover, it explains that localized discretion, industry-driven economic interests, and intermediary state authorities mediate the everyday bordering of OFWs.

Synthesis

The study recognizes its contribution to the expansion of the European scholarly dimension, specifically how the European integration mechanism such as the Schengen Visa Regime is translated and adapted in the Global South, particularly by OFWs. Moreover, the study provided a contemporary perspective in navigating Schengen Visa Regime through the hidden gatekeepers, spatial and institutional proximity governance, and localized discretionary governance. The empirical insights combined with qualitative practices such as the consular interviews and official correspondence with embassies provided a nuanced analysis of how the Schengen Visa Regime is experienced by OFWs. Taken together, the study emphasizes that mobility should not be examined solely through the formal power of passports; it must also consider the complex bureaucratic process involved in crossing borders especially, in the Schengen area. This study underscores that understanding mobility goes beyond statistical data and formal laws and procedures—mobility is shaped by the everyday bordering mechanisms embedded in consular discretion, administrative practices, and intermediary governance.

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Trapped in the Flood: Poverty and Unequal Exposure to Flood-Prone Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)

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Introduction

According to Anderson (1996), many of the devastating epidemics in the Philippines were not "natural" disasters but were driven by the socioeconomic and political transformations made during the colonial times. A combination of pathogens, poverty, malnutrition, and psychological stress, changes in land use for plantation agriculture, and alteration of ecosystems created breeding grounds for certain diseases like malaria and cholera. In addition, the creation of roads and railways that were previously isolated rural areas that became port cities like Manila allowed diseases that arrived via international trade to enter the country rapidly. Although there were many limitations to the study, the study shows how colonialism has a strong link to how certain diseases, such as NTDs became epidemic in the country.

In the Philippines, there are ten common neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) and in the 81 provinces of the country, there is at least one endemic NTD in each province. Others may be endemic for two or even more of these diseases (Leonardo et al., 2019). NTDs are various groups of conditions caused by pathogens which result in devastating health, social, and economic consequences. NTDs are prevalent among poor communities in tropical areas, with its epidemiology often related to environmental conditions (World Health Organization: WHO, 2021). Such environmental conditions are now being aggregated by climate change, an urgent global challenge. And as a result the prevalence of more typhoons and floods. Such occurrences of frequent typhoons and frequent flooding now disrupts ecosystems and create ideal conditions for the spread of flood-related waterborne and vector-borne pathogens (Acosta-España et al., 2024). With the Philippines experiencing an average of 20 typhoons every year (G. D. C. Santos, 2021), such pathogens are also very much present on the list of prevalent NTDs in the Philippines such as leptospirosis, schistosomiasis, and dengue. This intensifying link between climate disasters and disease outbreaks puts huge and growing limits on human development, because it directly attacks the health, well-being, and future potential of millions of Filipinos, making it harder for them to live long, productive, and secure lives.

Despite the various efforts in creating policies in the country such as the "Enhanced 4S strategy (Search and destroy, Self-protection, Seek consultation, and Support fogging), the creation of Dengue Centers of Excellence (COEs), and the "W.I.L.D" program for dengue; the Mass Drug Administration (MDA), Administrative Order 2007-0015 for established guidelines, and interagency collaboration with the Department of Agriculture (DA) and

Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) for better irrigation drainage for solving schistosomiasis; and the Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) and PhilHealth Coverage for prevention and support for Leptospirosis patients, it is evident that there are still rising cases of dengue, schistosomiasis, and leptospirosis in the country. For one, there are many identified gaps in these policies such as (1) being reactive rather than preventive, (2) ineffective due to the "All Case Rates" system which still forces people to have high out of pocket spending (Santos et al., 2025), and (3) inequalities in the context of health programs, finances and training (Naria-Maritana et al., 2020). Furthermore, because of such inequalities in implementation, many of these policies forget to take into account who needs such interventions the most– further making them ineffective.

Significance of the study

Policy implications

Such findings in this study can guide future policies in shifting its focus on simply looking at NTDs as a health problem but as a systemic one such as shifting policy directions that are holistic interventions that address the "capability deprivations" of the poor, such as improving water infrastructure (WASH). Such agencies that could benefit from this study are the Department of Health (DOH) and local government units (LGUs).

Social impact

This study significantly advocates for the well-being of marginalized populations such as those in highly populated urban areas and agricultural workers that are continuously exposed to risks. This is done by framing their struggle with NTDs not as a personal failure of hygiene, but as a systemic denial of their substantive freedom to lead a productive and flourishing life.

Theoretical Framework

The main theoretical framework used in this study is the Capabilities Approach by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, which offers a different perspective on examining neglected tropical diseases in the Philippines by looking at it as a topic beyond a health problem. With the capabilities approach, it is not merely as biological infections but as "capability deprivations" that restrict a person's substantive freedom to lead a flourishing life. In this framework, the high prevalence of NTDs is explained through conversion factors such as the socioeconomic "poverty trap" which prevent individuals from converting available health resources into actual well-being. By focusing on functionings or even *freedoms* which is also by Sen, or the ability to work, learn, and participate in community life, this approach reveals how structural factors like inadequate sanitation, and climate-driven flooding intersect to strip Filipinos of their basic health freedoms, shifting the solution from simple drug distribution to the removal of these systemic barriers

Literature Review

Leptospirosis

Focusing first on leptospirosis, which is a zoonotic disease, meaning it is transmitted from animals to humans, with humans being accidental hosts. The primary cause is contact with the urine of infected animals or with water and soil contaminated by this urine (*About Leptospirosis*, 2025). According to Amilasan et Al. (2012), this disease is highly endemic to the Philippines. Such outbreaks of this disease usually occur during the typhoons season. In their study that focused on an outbreak in Metro Manila in 2009, a single typhoon caused 2,299 patients to be infected with leptospirosis, 178 of which died. In a study by A. Santos et al. (2025), leptospirosis in the Philippines represents a growing public health and socioeconomic challenge, evidenced by an increasing trend in annual cases and fatalities beyond the average of 680 cases and 40 deaths. The disease's economic impact is a lot, extending beyond direct medical costs to include significant indirect costs such as lost productivity and income. Analysis of the average cost per patient is ₱100,781.83 in 2020 and ₱71,053.71 in 2023, with the highest financial expenditures consistently spent in diagnostics, followed by medications such as antibiotics, and logistical costs. This financial strain underscores the critical necessity of understanding the relationship between the disease's treatment and the overall economic burden it imposes on households and the healthcare system.

Schistosomiasis

Another NTD in the Philippines is schistosomiasis, which is known as bilharzia or "snail fever," is an acute and chronic disease caused by parasitic flatworms (blood flukes) of the genus Schistosoma. The main cause is contact with and penetration of the skin by the parasite's larval forms in contaminated freshwater (*About Schistosomiasis*, 2024). It presents a significant public health crisis in the country, with an estimated 12.4 million Filipinos residing in endemic communities at-risk of exposure to the parasite, of whom 2.7 million are directly exposed to contaminated waters. The financial strain imposed by schistosomiasis is pronounced: a 2013 study examining 1,415 hospitalized cases calculated the cumulative clinical cost burden at 8,489,524.39 pesos and the resultant economic losses—which accounts for lost productivity and other societal costs—at a significantly higher figure of 13,019,363.75 pesos. This financial evidence highlights the disease's capacity to not only burden the healthcare system but also to inflict severe, long-term economic damage. Crucially, the cost of an average schistosomiasis treatment was determined to be equivalent to 22 to 44 days of a minimum wage earner's wages, indicating a high degree of financial toxicity. This expenditure can reach the threshold of "catastrophic spending" for the poorest quintiles, underscoring how this disease actively contributes to the entrenchment of poverty (Tabilin et al., 2025).

Dengue

Last on the list is Dengue, Dengue viruses are spread to people through the bites of infected Aedes species mosquitoes wherein they typically lay eggs in containers that hold

water, like buckets, bowls, animal dishes, and vases (*How Dengue Spreads*, 2025). In a study by Edillo et al. (2014), Dengue is characterized as the most significant mosquito-borne viral disease globally and is one of eight pervasive infectious diseases in the Philippines, where it is a major health problem. Statistical data, based on adjusted cases from 2008–2012, estimated 842,867 annual symptomatic cases, leading to over 546,659 hospitalizations and a Case Fatality Rate (CFR) of 0.55% (or 3,195 deaths). Within the ASEAN region, the Philippines ranks fourth in dengue case numbers. Beyond the human cost, which was quantified at an annual burden of 18,074 Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) in 2007, the disease imposes a substantial economic burden. The weighted average medical cost for a hospitalized case was $565.04, while an ambulatory case cost $120.38. Treatment costs varied significantly by setting, with the private sector costing nearly double that of the public sector, and these estimated costs were more than twice previous national estimates. Crucially, the economic impact extends beyond household medical expenses, adversely affecting the national economy through loss of productivity due to illness and premature death, escalating healthcare costs, and potential reduction in tourism.

From all of these studies, one can conclude that it not just costs a lot for one single affected individual, it ripples to a whole country, affecting a large population of the human and economic development. And with the lack of access to free healthcare in the Philippines, it really does strain the individual's finances. Such problems now make us see that the lack of access to free or affordable universal healthcare in the Philippines transforms a clinical illness into an economic catastrophe, directly correlating with the "catastrophic spending" already identified for schistosomiasis, and this must be addressed as a systemic failure in development policy. This structural deficiency in public resource provision creates an acute vulnerability for the working poor, ensuring that when a family member falls ill, the entire financial burden—the 71,053 pesos average cost of leptospirosis treatment, the 26,064 pesos for a hospitalized dengue case, and all associated lost wages—must be absorbed by the household, often through debt. This mechanism actively reinforces the "Poverty Trap," where poor health is both a consequence and a cause of economic deprivation, hindering any upward mobility for already poor families. This now tells us how important it is to identify what aggregates the prevalence of such diseases and in what ways we can intervene to stop.

Methodology

Design

The methodology of this study is grounded in a qualitative systematic review and thematic synthesis, moving beyond a simple literature summary to evaluate the "causes of the causes" behind disease prevalence. This research design prioritizes the identification of structural drivers such as the systemic economic, political, and environmental forces that facilitate the transmission of leptospirosis, schistosomiasis, and dengue. Instead of pursuing new primary epidemiological data, this approach seeks to construct a "macro-level" narrative of vulnerability. It bridges the gap between disparate fields such as health economics,

environmental science, and development studies to reveal how Philippine societal structures create pockets of risks for marginalized populations. The design is specifically used to analyze the drivers of inequality, exploring how such factors could be used for future policies and avoid gaps in implementation in hopes to further lessen the prevalence of NTDs.

Data collection

The data for this research was gathered through a comprehensive search of secondary evidence. ensuring a multi-dimensional view of the public health landscape in the Philippines The collection of the data was done and synthesized through four stages. First is a systematic search wherein multidisciplinary evidence on leptospirosis, schistosomiasis, and dengue were made in research using various databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and other organizational databases. Second, an eligibility criteria is done to filter studies. Keywords such as “Philippines”, “Structural”, “Socioeconomic”, and “Neglected Tropical Diseases” were used. Third, after gathering such studies, findings were categorized (see results). And lastly, synthesizing the studies was done.

Results

Poverty and Economic Immobility

According to Edillo et al.’s and Yboa and Labrague (2013), they emphasize that poverty is a primary driver of disease susceptibility; their study on dengue in the Philippines revealed that even when residents are knowledgeable about prevention, their "financial capabilities" restrict them to low-cost measures like fans and bed nets rather than more effective, costly interventions like professional pest control or screened windows. This economic barrier to self-protection is not limited to urban vectors like dengue but extends to rural water-borne threats, as Tabilin et al. (2025) demonstrate that schistosomiasis prevalence in provinces like Northern Samar is dictated by a similar combination of socioeconomic conditions and everyday behaviors. These localized vulnerabilities are deeply rooted in the Philippines’ fragmented physical geography including mountainous terrain and typhoon-prone coasts which research shows accounts for nearly half of the disparities in income and health outcomes across the archipelago.

Consequently, regions like the Visayas and Mindanao face a "double burden": they are geographically isolated from the economic center of Metro Manila and are frequently devastated by climate shocks like Typhoon Yolanda, which push families deeper into poverty and worsen environmental health risks. This cycle illustrates the "risk society" theory proposed by Ulrich Beck and the findings of Wisner et al. (2004), which argue that environmental hazards are never equally shared; instead, they are concentrated among the socially vulnerable. In the Philippine context, this means that the poorest households are effectively anchored to hazard-prone, flood-exposed environments where they lack the resources to relocate, ultimately forcing a continuous, disproportionate exposure to contaminated water and disease vectors.

Urbanization and surge in population

Ramsay et al. (2025) highlight in their study that the accelerating pace of urbanization and the surge in population across tropical regions have significantly intensified the incidence of mosquito-borne illnesses. Their findings emphasize that a substantial portion of this burden is concentrated in urban informal settlements which are densely populated areas marked by inadequate basic services, poor infrastructure, and limited access to essential utilities. Globally, these settlements are estimated to house around one billion individuals, making them critical hotspots for disease transmission. Moreover, one of the major issues identified is the lack of a reliable piped water system in these communities. Without consistent access to clean, running water, residents are compelled to store water in containers for daily use. While necessary for survival, this practice inadvertently provides ideal breeding sites for mosquitoes, particularly Aedes aegypti, the primary vector responsible for transmitting dengue.

To expound further, according to Gutiérrez et al. (2019), urban overpopulation contributes to outbreaks of human leptospirosis. In densely populated urban areas, inadequate sanitation and waste management create environments that favor rodents, which act as carriers of leptospirosis. These conditions increase the risk of transmission to humans, highlighting the combined impact of population density and poor infrastructure on disease spread. Moreover, urban inequality further shapes the distribution of health risks. Informal settlements in rapidly urbanizing cities often lack adequate drainage, sanitation, waste management, and reliable water systems. These infrastructural deficits create conditions that facilitate the transmission of infectious diseases. According to UN-Habitat, approximately one billion people globally live in informal settlements characterized by overcrowding and limited access to basic services, conditions that significantly increase vulnerability to environmental health hazards (UN-Habitat, 2020). In such settings, residents often lack both the physical infrastructure and economic mobility needed to escape flood-prone areas, leaving them more exposed to dengue outbreaks and other vector-borne diseases.

Environmental conditions and climate trapped populations

More on Ramsay et al. (2025), they provided that the environmental conditions linked to climate variability further intensify this problem. Periods of low rainfall or prolonged drought increase water insecurity, encouraging even more water storage and, in turn, expanding mosquito breeding opportunities. Conversely, heavy rains and flooding can create or modify breeding grounds by filling abandoned containers, clogged drainage systems, or piles of unmanaged waste with stagnant water. In some cases, floodwaters may temporarily wash out existing breeding sites, but they often leave behind new pools in which mosquito populations can quickly rebound. Overall, the study underscores how rapid urban growth, infrastructural deficits, and shifting climatic patterns collectively heighten the vulnerability of marginalized communities to mosquito-borne diseases.

To further expound, since the 1960s, the areas affected by flooding in the Philippines have been steadily increasing. Leptospirosis outbreaks are often triggered when monthly

rainfall reaches 50–100 mm. The risk is worsened by poor drainage, inadequate waste management, rat infestations, and consistently warm tropical temperatures averaging around 30 °C. These conditions create an ideal environment for leptospires, the bacteria that cause leptospirosis, to survive and spread. Data from the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) indicate that in Metro Manila, neighborhoods along the Pasig, Marikina, Taguig, Parañaque, and Las Piñas rivers experience frequent flooding. Correspondingly, higher leptospirosis cases are reported in nearby cities such as Manila, Pasig, Caloocan, Malabon, Valenzuela, Taguig, Pasay, Makati, and the surrounding provinces of Cavite and Bulacan. Within these areas, specific locations including Sta. Cruz, Sampaloc, Binondo, and Paco in Manila, as well as Cabatuan in Iloilo, have been identified as endemic hotspots. Addressing leptospirosis in the Philippines requires more than treating infected patients. Public health officials emphasize the importance of environmental interventions, such as improving drainage systems and controlling rat populations, although complete eradication of rats is unlikely (Yanagihara et al., 2007).

Climate change and flooding also reveal inequalities in mobility. While migration is often considered a strategy for adapting to environmental risk, not all populations possess the capacity to relocate. Research on environmental migration shows that the poorest groups are frequently unable to move due to financial constraints, lack of social networks, or dependence on local livelihoods. These communities are often described as “trapped populations,” meaning that they remain in areas with increasing climate risks despite the growing threat to their health and livelihoods (Black et al., 2011). In flood-prone regions of the Philippines, this immobility exposes vulnerable households to contaminated floodwaters and disease vectors, reinforcing the cycle between poverty, environmental exposure, and neglected tropical diseases.

Poor water, sanitation, and hygiene

Tabilin et al. (2025) pointed out another dimension of poverty that is associated with the disease's transmission. Having access to safe drinking water does not necessarily protect people from schistosomiasis because most infections happen when individuals work, bathe, or play in contaminated rivers, streams, and wetlands—not from the water they drink. Poorly designed water systems that lack proper flow control or drainage can create puddles where snail populations easily grow, increasing the chances of contact with infected water. According to the 2020 Census, many households in Luzon, Western and Central Visayas, and parts of Mindanao get their drinking water from refilling stations or bottled sources. In other regions, most people rely on community tap water systems. When it comes to cooking, households often use their main water supply, typically community systems or protected wells. However, a notable number of families—about 3.6% nationwide—still use unsafe water sources like unprotected wells or rainwater. These unsafe sources are especially common in Visayas, Mindanao, CAR, MIMAROPA, and Bicol, with BARMM reporting the highest reliance: nearly one in five households uses unprotected water for cooking. Water access also affects sanitation practices, which are crucial in preventing schistosomiasis. Since many Filipinos use water for cleaning after defecation, having piped water in bathrooms reduces the likelihood of washing in rivers or lakes, which can contaminate these waters with

parasite eggs.

Moreover, the study also emphasized that having proper toilets is very important to prevent schistosomiasis. Although most households have septic or sewer-connected toilets, many still use basic pit latrines, and over 3% have no toilets, leading to open defecation. In 2022, only about one-third of barangays were certified zero-open-defecation, with areas like CALABARZON, MIMAROPA, and Davao performing poorly despite high toilet coverage. BARMM has the least access, showing extreme poverty and higher disease risk (Tabilin et al., 2025).

Agriculture and occupational immobility

Occupational structures also contribute to unequal exposure to disease. Agricultural workers often face a form of occupational immobility because their livelihoods require them to remain in environments such as flooded rice fields, irrigation canals, and wetlands where disease transmission risks are elevated. Research on rural livelihoods emphasizes that farmers in low-income settings frequently have limited occupational mobility, making it difficult to shift away from high-risk environments even when health threats are present (Ellis, 2000). As a result, agricultural communities are disproportionately exposed to waterborne and vector-borne diseases, including schistosomiasis and leptospirosis, particularly in tropical regions where farming systems depend heavily on irrigated or flooded fields.

Another point made by Tabilin et al. (2025) in their study is that despite agriculture having a big contribution to the country's GDP and agriculture being a quarter of the country's workforce, the practice is greatly associated with poverty. Agriculture, aside from being connected to poverty, plays a major role in how schistosomiasis spreads in many communities. In several endemic areas, farmlands were originally natural habitats for snails that carry the parasite. When these wetlands were converted into agricultural fields, new environments such as irrigation canals, rice paddies, and roadside ditches were created—places where infected snails can easily survive. As farming systems expanded, people began settling closer to these wet areas. This reduced the distance between human communities and infected snail habitats, making transmission more likely. Some examples shown in the study were places like Western Samar and Cagayan Valley. Carabaos also contribute significantly to the spread of schistosomiasis. These animals often wade in freshwater areas where they can become infected, and they release large numbers of eggs into the environment, sometimes accounting for up to 90% of total contamination. In China, replacing carabaos with machines greatly reduced infections in both humans and animals. In the Philippines, however, millions of carabaos are still used for farming, and mechanization remains limited. Encouragingly, pilot mechanization projects in Leyte have shown promising results, increasing farmers' incomes while reducing disease risks (Tabilin et al., 2025).

Although the results were mixed about the findings regarding irrigation, the risk remains clear. For example, a survey in Western Samar found no major difference in human infection between irrigated and rain-fed villages, yet it detected more infected snails in streams and springs near irrigated areas. Irrigation systems allow rice production throughout

the year, even during dry seasons, which means that wet environments suitable for snail breeding exist all year round. In the Cagayan Valley—home to the country's second-largest irrigated area—irrigation canals have been found to support colonies of infected snails. This shows that schistosomiasis can persist even in mostly dry regions when irrigation creates constant water sources. Farmers and irrigation workers face the highest risk because they regularly work in flooded fields and canals where infectious cercariae live. Research shows that people who do not work on rice farms are far less likely to be infected than full-time farmers. Since farming is usually done by men, they often have higher infection rates. However, women may still be exposed through household chores like washing clothes or dishes in streams or lakes that may be contaminated (Tabilin et al., 2025).

Moreover, another factor contributing to the occurrence and prevalence of leptospirosis was because of certain occupations. One of which is farming. A study by Yanagihara et al. (2007) reported that many leptospirosis patients worked in rice fields. This risk is largely due to the presence of infected animals, including rats and shrews, which are commonly found in rice paddies and domestic animal farms. Between October 1985 and March 1986, three rice-farming villages in Nueva Ecija and Bulacan were surveyed. Out of 155 residents aged 14 and above, 63 (43.5%) tested positive for leptospirosis antibodies, with men showing higher rates of infection than women (48% vs. 31%). Exposure was most frequent among those actively working in rice fields.

To prove this further, in another study by Arbiol et al. (2016), they mentioned that there is low awareness for leptospirosis especially among high-risk groups. Agricultural workers—those involved in crop farming, fish farming, livestock raising, and slaughtering—are particularly vulnerable because their work involves frequent contact with infected animals or water and soil contaminated with urine. Aside from not knowing about such diseases, their research also shows that agricultural workers practice fewer safety measures compared to non-agricultural workers. They are less likely to use protective gear or follow proper rat control practices. Limited financial resources partly explain this, as many farmers have lower incomes than non-agricultural workers, making it harder to afford safety equipment. This combination of occupational exposure, lack of awareness, and financial constraints contributes to the continued vulnerability of agricultural workers to leptospirosis.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) in the Philippines are not merely biological accidents but are products of systemic economic and political structures. The persistence of leptospirosis, schistosomiasis, and dengue reflects a "poverty trap" where low-income households are anchored to hazard-prone, flood-exposed environments because they lack the financial resources to relocate. This structural inequality is further exacerbated by the country's fragmented geography and frequent climate shocks, such as typhoons, which disproportionately affect the socially vulnerable in regions like the Visayas and Mindanao. Consequently, these diseases act as "capability deprivations," stripping individuals of their substantive freedom to lead productive lives by attacking their

health and future potential.

A critical driver identified in the literature is the "financial toxicity" associated with these illnesses, which transforms clinical infections into economic catastrophes. For instance, the average cost of treating leptospirosis or hospitalized dengue can exceed ₱70,000, while schistosomiasis treatment can cost the equivalent of 44 days of minimum wage. Because the Philippines lacks universal access to free healthcare, these costs—combined with lost productivity—force poor families into debt, reinforcing a cycle of economic deprivation. This mechanism ensures that poor health is both a consequence of poverty and a primary cause of continued economic immobility.

Furthermore, the study highlights how urbanization and occupational structures create specific pockets of risk. Rapid, unplanned urbanization has led to densely populated informal settlements that lack reliable piped water, forcing residents to store water in containers that become primary breeding grounds for dengue vectors. Similarly, in rural areas, agricultural workers face occupational immobility; their livelihoods depend on remaining in high-risk environments like flooded rice fields and irrigation canals where pathogens thrive. Existing policies, such as the "Enhanced 4S" strategy or Mass Drug Administration, often fail because they are reactive rather than preventive and do not address these underlying "causes of the causes," such as inadequate WASH infrastructure and systemic financial barriers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the high prevalence of leptospirosis, schistosomiasis, and dengue in the Philippines is a manifestation of deep-seated structural inequalities rather than a failure of personal hygiene. By utilizing the Capabilities Approach, this study demonstrates that NTDs are a systemic denial of freedom, where environmental conditions, poverty, and inadequate public health infrastructure intersect to trap marginalized populations in a cycle of disease and debt. The data suggests that as long as the poorest quintiles face "catastrophic spending" for basic treatment and remain "trapped" in flood-prone areas due to climate change, these diseases will continue to hinder national human and economic development.

To effectively eliminate these diseases, the Philippine government must shift its focus from simple clinical interventions to holistic, systemic solutions. This includes prioritizing the removal of systemic barriers by improving water and sanitation (WASH) infrastructure, enhancing disaster-resilient drainage systems, and providing genuine universal healthcare to prevent medical expenses from becoming a poverty trap. Addressing NTDs is not just a health priority but a developmental necessity; it requires interagency collaboration to ensure that the most vulnerable Filipinos are no longer "trapped in the flood" of unequal disease exposure.

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Beyond Subsidies: A Comparative Analysis of EU and ASEAN Agricultural Policies' Capacity for Sustainability

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Introduction and Objectives

Food insecurity endures as a persistent global legacy, compounded and mutually reinforced by inter-state conflicts, fragmented development, and environmental degradation. Messer & Cohen (2006) characterize contemporary conflicts as "food wars" in which agricultural systems are destroyed, and rural development and food production are neglected as defense and military imperatives precede national priorities. The Ukraine-Russia and Palestine-Israel wars and the COVID-19 pandemic exemplify how the impacts of geopolitical crises—such as price volatility, responsive protectionist policies, and growing disparities in development—resound across international food systems. Another area intrinsically linked to food insecurity that this paper highlights is agriculture and the escalating pressures of global environmental crises, particularly climate change which increasingly threaten agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods, (Randhawa, 2024). Southeast Asia is particularly vulnerable to these environmental pressures due to rising sea levels, increasing temperature, and erratic rainfall patterns. All of which directly affect their crop yields and food production systems. Agricultural production itself mutually implicates environmental degradation through its intensified mechanization and land-use, and its growing reliance on resource- and fossil-fuel intensive practices (Randhawa, 2024).

The region's exposure to the climate crisis and reactivity to global food chain shocks highlight a need for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to strengthen its capacity to address deprivation and hunger through more sustainable and integrative agricultural governance mechanisms. The European Union's (EU) Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is lauded as a benchmark for regional governance on agricultural sustainability given its highly funded, coordinated, and unified production system which provides direct income support for farmers to pivot to "green" compliance. In comparing the institutional design, funding mechanisms, and policy implementation of the EU's CAP and the ASEAN's Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework, this study seeks to understand how regional institutions shape agricultural sustainability and food security outcomes.

This paper also assesses the ecological sustainability mechanisms of both frameworks by measuring its ecological benchmarks, habitat indicators, and agricultural management standards. Additionally, the study also endeavors to analyze how differences in capital asset distribution across the EU and ASEAN agricultural frameworks shape capacities for

ecological governance and structural change. Such a comparative analysis of the EU and ASEAN agricultural policy aims to offer a viable pathway for regional agricultural modernization and sustainability by concluding with recommendations towards ASEAN frameworks to better meet ecological standards similar to the CAP model while avoiding the same issues they encounter through a "coordinated" evolution.

Methodology

Data Collection: Document review

The research pursues its research goals through an extensive literature review of relevant key documents to gain information. The main literature to be reviewed for agriculture policies are the EU CAP and the ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework (AIFS) of each respective organization. To analyze the extensive amount of qualitative data from the two policy documents, a thematic analysis was used to identify and review themes on how the EU and ASEAN handled agriculture respectively through the lens of the three metrics of ecological benchmarks, habitat metrics, and management standards. Furthermore, it is used to identify policy limitations from the two frameworks. An additional pertinent statistical analysis was utilized to understand the effects of the framework to their own regional, agricultural sectors.

Analytical Frameworks

To better narrow what this paper shall consider as agricultural policy, an application of Neelipally (2022)'s agricultural systems framework, which frames measures policy as an effective tool to make agricultural systems more nature-centric in outcomes through defining standards and incentives. Policy can be measured through three ways: ecological benchmarks, habitat metrics, and management standards. Ecological benchmarks refer to specific environmental goals that agriculture farms should aim to achieve for international targets. Habit metrics refer to the integration of biodiversity and natural habitats into farming landscapes, including the incentives for compliance of this. Lastly, management standards which refer to operational rules that specify how farms should be managed and the processes for transparency. The above framework provides for the institutionalization of rules and standards that accounts for sustainable development in line with agriculture and sustainability. However, capacity for change cannot only be measured through institutional metrics but also through the effective deployment of production factors. Buchenrider (2007) examines this through three forms of capital: human, land, and financial. Human capital refers to the education, skills and managerial capabilities of farmers, the level of which would either constrain or assist the implementation of policy. Land capital, or the access thereof to land markets, are natural resources for agricultural production that can either accelerate or retard policy implementation. Lastly, is financial capital which refers to owned equity and access to debts. The access to capital can serve to either heavily impede the adoption of technologies in agriculture systems. It would be in such a manner that agricultural policy's effect on sustainability shall be measured.

Results and Discussion

Governance Comparison

The CAP's legal instruments exhibit how the policy aligns with the European Union's institutional design. As a communitarised policy, the European Commission proposes CAP legislation and oversees its implementation. The European Parliament, through the AGRI Committee, serves as a co-legislator of CAP regulations through the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (Nannucci, 2025). Meanwhile, the council of the European Union, which represents EU member states, jointly adopts these legislative acts and regulations While EU-level institutions retain authority over legislative frameworks, most recent amendments to the CAP Strategic Plans Regulations delegate greater responsibilities to member states in tailoring their CSPs to ensure that funding instruments address local needs while remaining aligned with climate and environmental legislation (Nannucci, 2025).

Conversely, the ASEAN AIFs Framework is founded on a multi-tiered hierarchical structure. Such a structure integrates high-level policy guidance with specialized technical implementation and external partnerships. Key institutions for ministerial oversight include the ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF) who ultimately sets the vision and strategic direction as well as identifies regional priorities for the Food, Agriculture, and Forestry (FAF) sector (ASEAN, 2015). The implementation of these regional programs are carried out by several specialized subsidiary bodies, sectoral sub-sectors, and technical and research units (ASEAN, 2020). The ASEAN Secretariat mainly provides administrative support to the AMAF by facilitating coordination between stakeholders and monitoring progress of implementation (ASEAN, 2015). Because ASEAN relies on intergovernmental cooperation, the framework also heavily depends on partnerships with third countries, as seen in the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Cooperation (DA, 2025), and partnerships with international organizations, namely, FAO, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the International Rice Research Institute (ASEAN, 2020).

The EU's CAP operates on a supranational system based on the principle of shared policy making and regulatory enforcement (Nannucci, 2025). Here, governance is rooted in legally binding regulations that demand for policy and implementation coherence such as the CSP Regulation and Horizontal Regulation (Nannucci, 2025). Although member states have been given more flexibility in designing their CSPs, they must align agricultural strategies with common EU goals such as the European Green Deal and the "farm to fork" strategy. Even more, the European Commission can also suspend payments if indicated targets are not met (Nannucci, 2025). This contrasts with ASEAN's intergovernmental framework where authority remains primarily with national governments. Consistent with the principles outlined in the ASEAN charter, the governance of the ASEAN Integrated Food Security is voluntary and coordination-based in nature where the policy is not legally binding as to respect the independence, sovereignty, and non-interference of all ASEAN member states (ASEAN, 2020; ASEAN, 2008). Instead, the AIFS framework serves as guidelines and

recommendations for member states who are still autonomous in leading their own development and agricultural policies (ASEAN, 2020).

In line with its recent reforms, the EU CAP utilizes several enforcement mechanisms to move from compliance towards results and performance. The Annual Clearance of Accounts is central to this performance based approach where the European Commission conducts an annual clearance to match reported outputs against declared expenditures to ensure that Union requirements are met by member states and that funding instruments are actually allocated towards their CSPs (Nannucci, 2025).. The European Court of Auditors is a key institution that aids in monitoring the use of CAP funds, further ensuring accountability. On the other hand, technological oversight for the environment is carried out through the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACs). However, CAP compliance is not only monitored but enforced by the European Commission who can suspend monthly or interim payments of Member States whose progress is delayed or insufficient towards targets and indicators in the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (PMEF) (Nannucci, 2025). Through this legally binding regulatory system, the EU is able to enforce uniform standards for farm subsidies, environmental compliance, and rural development across its member states.

In contrast to this mechanism where a unified funding scheme provides the EU the power of judicial and technical oversight over CAP compliance, the ASEAN lacks punitive financial mechanisms for agriculture and food security which is why the AIFS framework relies on networking arrangement among national institutions such as mid-term reviews and information sharing mechanisms. The AIFS framework establishes performance indicators (KPIs) and specific timelines which are defined by the AMAF and are monitored through comprehensive mid-term reviews (ASEAN, 2020). However, rather than imposing penalties, these reports are utilized to identify implementation problems and provide options to address such policy challenges. Similarly, information sharing systems like the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS) focuses more on voluntary data collection and "early warning" information rather than the enforcement of agricultural production standards (ASEAN, 2015). These enforcement mechanisms render AIFs compliance to voluntary cooperation and diplomatic consensus. Instead of setting standards and imposing supranational evaluation systems, the ASEAN established avenues for member states to implement their own systems for climate-smart agriculture (ASEAN, 2020). However, this governance model also presents challenges, particularly in ensuring policy coherence and the consistent adoption of sustainable agricultural practices across member states.

Funding comparisons

The tool of funding serves as a necessary determinant of agricultural policy effectiveness. The allocation and distribution of financial resources enable governments to both support farmers and implement agricultural reforms. This is particularly important in the agricultural sector, which is inherently unpredictable due to factors such as fluctuating market prices, climate variability, and environmental conditions that directly affect production. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is one of the European Union's (EU) major programs

and remains the EU's primary policy framework for agriculture. The funding for CAP operates through a centralized model in which financial resources are redistributed among member states to support agricultural production and rural development. As a result, CAP represents one of the largest expenditures within the EU budget, with approximately €386.6 billion allocated for the 2021–2027 budget cycle, reflecting the EU's long-standing commitment to agricultural stability and development (European Commission, 2025). In parallel, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has also introduced agricultural reforms and sustainability initiatives; however, institutional limitations and decentralized funding structures prevent their implementation at a scale comparable to the CAP.

One central component of the CAP is the system of direct payments to farmers, which constitutes the first pillar of the policy. Through this mechanism, the EU provides farmers with financial support intended to stabilize agricultural incomes across member states. These subsidies serve as a financial safeguard against market volatility and environmental uncertainty that frequently affect the agricultural sector. Farming is particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in crop prices, unpredictable weather conditions, and other economic risks that may threaten farmers' investments and long-term productivity. As such, CAP payments function as financial safety nets that enable farmers to maintain production and continue investing in agricultural activities. The scale of this support is reflected in the six to seven million farmers who receive CAP payments annually, which account for approximately 30–40% of average farm income across the EU (European Commission, n.d.). Additionally, recent CAP reforms have increasingly linked these payments to environmental conditions, requiring farmers to comply with sustainability standards in order to receive financial support.

Beyond income stabilization, CAP also pursues broader development goals through its second pillar, which focuses on rural development and agricultural modernization. Through this pillar, CAP funding supports long-term investments aimed at improving agricultural productivity, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability. These initiatives include programs that promote technological innovation, sustainable land management, climate adaptation strategies, and environmentally responsible farming practices. By encouraging farmers to adopt climate-friendly approaches to agricultural production, the EU seeks to ensure that both environmental protection and food production stability are maintained. The reported €95.5 billion allocation for rural development during the 2023–2027 CAP period further demonstrates the EU's commitment to strengthening rural economies and promoting sustainable agricultural systems (European Commission, n.d.).

In contrast, one of the primary structural differences within ASEAN agricultural cooperation is the absence of a centralized funding framework similar to the CAP. Agricultural policy implementation within ASEAN largely remains the responsibility of individual member states, resulting in decentralized funding structures where governments independently finance agricultural initiatives. As a result, ASEAN lacks the regional financial mechanisms necessary to support large-scale programs comparable to CAP, such as direct income support for farmers, rural development investments, or region-wide environmental

sustainability initiatives. Nevertheless, ASEAN has established cooperative frameworks such as the ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework (AIFS) and the Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security, which aim to strengthen food security and promote agricultural development across the region. However, these initiatives primarily emphasize policy coordination and technical cooperation rather than financial redistribution (ASEAN, n.d.). Consequently, agricultural investment levels vary significantly among ASEAN member states, as wealthier economies possess greater fiscal capacity to invest in agricultural development compared to less economically developed countries.

Overall, the comparison between the EU and ASEAN highlights the critical role of financial capacity in determining agricultural policy implementation and sustainability outcomes. The EU's centralized funding model enables the establishment of relatively uniform agricultural support systems across member states, allowing the EU to effectively implement environmental standards and coordinated agricultural policies at a regional level. In contrast, ASEAN's decentralized funding structure limits the ability of regional institutions to implement large-scale agricultural reforms or sustainability initiatives. Instead, ASEAN member states remain primarily responsible for funding and implementing their own agricultural policies, leading to uneven policy development and fragmented sustainability governance across the region (OECD, n.d.). Taken together, the EU's centralized funding model demonstrates greater institutional capacity for agricultural modernization and sustainability compared to ASEAN's coordination-based approach.

Sustainability comparisons

The EU Common Agricultural Policy and the ASEAN Integrated Food Security (2020) both aim for a transition to sustainability in their respective agricultural systems. In analyzing this, a review of the specific policy provisions in both documents is necessary for comparisons. For ecological benchmarks, the Common Agricultural Policy has highly standardized conditions that go in-depth on climate and biodiversity ambitions such as basic standards for environment and climate Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs) termed 'conditionality' (CAP, 2023). These are standards made mandatory upon all farmers who are receiving income support from this policy. Within agricultural land, there are carbon sequestration benchmarks upon their wetlands and peatlands to decarbonize them. Moreover, crop rotation is mandated on around 85% of arable land to disrupt pest cycles and protect land during sensitive periods of climate(European Commission, 2022). There are also provisions that require 3% of arable land to remain non-productive, and protection of Natura 2000 zones (CAP, 2023).

The ASEAN framework's ecological standards are aligned towards pragmatic long-term food security and regional cooperation. Rather than create standards, policies included activities and tasks to create benchmarks, technical groups and other practices that disseminated research and new technologies across the region (AIFS, 2020). Rather than benchmarking, what it does is possess a results indicator table, tabulating sustainability through results such as providing farmers alternative fish meal, seed technology appropriation and farmer capacitation (AIFS, 2020). There is a difference between the treatment and

conceptualization between the two frameworks from this point alone; while the CAP treats environmental standards as a prerequisite to certain policy benefits, the ASEAN framework treats it as an output or outcome of policy.

In terms of habitat metrics, the Common Agricultural Policy directly links protecting biodiversity in environmentally sensitive grasslands to policy goals. A portion of the agricultural area, amounting to 31%, is set to account for this for ecological conservation (CAP, 2023). Other areas are mandated with protection through banning ploughing on environmentally sensitive grasslands under what is termed as Natura 2000 zones (CAP, 2023), which are specific protected areas across Europe through a wide-ranging network directing Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the Birds Directive and Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) under the Habitat Directive (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management, n.d.). The ASEAN framework does not mention policy metrics for sustainability of habitat. It is more catered towards production and crop commodification. The difference in framing is clear once more between the two organizations; while the EU's CAP conceptualizes agriculture as integrated into natural habitats, the ASEAN's strategic plan of action (SPA-FS) within their food security framework positions land as a natural asset for food availability rather than an ecological boundary. Habitat sustainability and food security is not inherently irreconcilable, these tensions persist due to long-term traditions of agriculture that permeate food production and must also be addressed by policy to assure actual security (Varzakas & Smaoui, 2024).

Lastly, there is the matter of management standards under the CAP possess a largely more legalistic character in its writing through incentivising knowledge exchange and study of agricultural practices. Moreover, the EU protects workers through institutionalizing social and labor standards in agricultural policy as well. Even in direct payment support, the CAP incentives good ecological practices through making payments and supports conditional upon practices of sustainability in the agricultural land. In a similar vein, the ASEAN framework does support farming as a livelihood through implementing a periodic FEMI system for monitoring, policies that focus on improving information access to food security and technologies that enable sustainable food production. The two frameworks share these codified rules within their respective documents, promoting good behavior and good governance in regards to farmers and management. Though an important nuance would be that while the CAP is more compliance-based in its writing, the ASEAN framework does not operate in a similar fashion. Rather it is highly knowledge-based, as seen in priorities of information sharing and farmer training.

Conclusion

This paper is aimed at the examination between major regional institutions, the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as major regional organizations that oversee agriculture within their respective member states and the assessment of their capabilities for sustainable agricultural development. These comparisons were made possible using the two frameworks that these organizations have such as the EU

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework (AIFS). Three analytical dimensions were the main focus of these comparative frameworks: governance structure, funding mechanisms, and sustainability policies. These results of this analysis lead to the primary conclusion that the EU's CAP demonstrates stronger policy capacity in comparison to ASEAN due to its strong framework in centralized funding, binding regulations, and enforceable sustainability standards.

With these findings, the comparison between CAP and ASEAN reveals that there are institutional and financial gaps present between them. First, there is a significant difference in the governance structure of these two. The EU operates at a supranational authority level which enables policies and regulations to be legally binding to be enforced upon equally across all member states. The ASEAN is the opposite of this since cooperation between member states are not compulsory but rather voluntary leading to consensus decision-making instead and policy frameworks that are non-binding. Second, the funding gap points to key differences as well such as the EU having a centralized funding in which financial resources are collected at a European level and redistributed among member states according to their economic and developmental needs.

Whereas ASEAN operates with a decentralized national funding system with no regional subsidy system leading to member states having to independently finance and implement their policies. Lastly, implementations related to sustainability is also a present gap between the EU and ASEAN. Environmental sustainability is of importance to the policy mechanisms of CAP, specifically in the subsidies they grant farmers who comply with the environmental rules they have in terms of farming. However, ASEAN frames sustainability as a development objective with implementation of policies at the hand of individual member states.

In light of these findings, ASEAN may strengthen its agricultural governance framework through the use of adopting selected policy mechanisms inspired by the EU's Common Agricultural Policy but not a direct replication of it. The first recommendation is that ASEAN could strengthen their regional coordination between its member states leading to more knowledge sharing, technology transfers, and research collaborations which can benefit all member states rather than only a select few. Another could be the improvement of financial coordination for necessary funds and initiatives to grow in development including regional agricultural funding programs, climate adaptation funds, and cooperative development initiatives to support agricultural sustainability across member states. The last recommendation that would help ASEAN evolve is the expansion of their benchmarks for sustainability. ASEAN could strengthen how it promotes and evaluates sustainability in agriculture by establishing sustainability standards and more effective implementation strategies.

Agricultural sustainability requires two key elements in creating an effective regional agricultural governance which are strong institutional frameworks and adequate financial resources. This is because having coordinated policies and having the necessary funding to implement them enables environmental and economic challenges to be addressed in the

agricultural sector. CAP serves as a strong example of the benefits of having an integrated governance and funding mechanism in terms of supporting agricultural sustainability and rural development. Taking these into consideration, ASEAN could strengthen its regional agricultural cooperation by prioritizing regional coordination and institutional strengthening.

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Cross-Continental Transfer: Analysis of Adapting European Union Climate Programs (2015-2025) for Philippine Budgetary and Governance Frameworks

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Introduction

The global response to anthropogenic climate change, solidified by the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement, has necessitated an unprecedented paradigm shift from theoretical commitment to structural, grounded implementation. Within this complex global theater, the European Union (EU) has consistently positioned itself as a regulatory, technological, and financial vanguard. This leadership is primarily articulated through the European Green Deal, an overarching policy framework that explicitly targets continental carbon neutrality by the year 2050 (European Commission, 2019). Concurrently, developing nations such as the Philippines—consistently ranked among the most climate-vulnerable archipelagos globally due to its exposure to recurrent typhoons, storm surges, and escalating heatwaves—operate under localized, domestic blueprints like the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) (Climate Change Commission [CCC], 2021; World Bank, 2022).

While both the European and Southeast Asian regions share a fundamental alignment regarding the absolute urgency of climate mitigation and adaptation, the cross-continental transfer of high-resource European policy models to emerging economies remains fraught with complex institutional, fiscal, and governance hurdles. The central inquiry of international climate finance is rarely a question of whether EU climate programs are technologically sound; rather, it is fundamentally a question of whether these advanced, capital-intensive frameworks are structurally transferable within the idiosyncratic budgetary and governance architectures of a developing state.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the Philippines' legal framework for climate action, notably the Climate Change Act (Republic Act No. 9729), the country continues to struggle with the grounded operationalization of high-level climate strategies. International "best practices" from the European Union are frequently promoted as blueprints; however, these programs are designed for a high-trust, high-subsidy environment that differs fundamentally from the Philippine governance landscape.

The core problem lies in the specifics:

1. Fiscal Rigidity: The Philippine financial landscape is defined by the General Appropriations Act (GAA), a strictly rigid annual budgetary cycle. This inherently clashes with the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), which operates on highly predictable, massive seven-year funding cycles (CCC, 2021; European Commission, 2021).
2. Resource Mismatch: Many EU initiatives require advanced technological infrastructure and sustained Operational Expenditures (OpEx) that simply do not exist within the baseline budgets of Philippine Local Government Units (LGUs).
3. Governance Friction: There is a lack of empirical analysis on how EU climate law can be translated into the Philippine Climate Change Expenditure Tagging (CCET) system without requiring new, lengthy legislative mandates.

Without a systematic prioritization framework to filter and adapt these programs, the Philippines risks accepting international aid for physical projects that are structurally doomed to become stranded assets due to local budgetary constraints.

Objectives

The primary goal of this research is to evaluate the technical and fiscal "adoptability" of EU climate programs for the Philippine governance landscape. The specific objectives are:

1. To identify specific EU climate initiatives (2015–2025) across 27 member states within the sectors of Circular Economy, Sustainable Energy, and Climate-Smart Agriculture that align with the strategic priorities of the Philippine NCCAP.
2. To compare the fiscal mechanisms of the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) with the Philippine CCET system to identify budgetary compatibilities and constraints.
3. To evaluate the implementation feasibility of these programs by analyzing official tracking and audit reports of previous EU-Philippine climate grants.
4. To propose a "Filtered Transfer" framework that categorizes EU climate policies into high, medium, or low feasibility for Philippine adoption.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The geographical and institutional scope of this study is bound to the analysis of climate frameworks originating from 27 member states of the European Union (EU). The temporal and thematic scope is exclusively focused on EU climate policy instruments and

Official Development Assistance (ODA) enacted between 2015 and 2025, specifically targeting the European Green Deal and related bilateral agreements. The assessment of local Philippine absorption capacity is confined to literature pertaining to the General Appropriations Act (GAA), the Climate Change Expenditure Tagging (CCET) system, the 5% Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (LDRRMF), and the People's Survival Fund (PSF).

The confinement of the study relies entirely on secondary data available on academic and online databases. The documentary comparative analysis collects no primary data from key informants (KIIs) such as existing EU delegates or local mayors, making the analysis subject to reporting lags. Furthermore, the thematic analysis phase incorporated the use of artificial intelligence for initial data structuring, which introduces a potential limitation regarding algorithmic bias. To mitigate this, rigorous manual cross-checking against primary literature was conducted.

Ethical Considerations

Because this research utilizes a Documentary Comparative Analysis design based on publicly available legislative texts and financial reports, it does not involve human subjects. It thereby bypasses risks associated with primary interviews, physical harm, or breaches of personal confidentiality.

However, the study remains bound by strict academic and data ethics regarding the utilization of artificial intelligence. To maintain academic integrity and prevent intellectual dishonesty or AI hallucination, AI was strictly utilized as an analytical sorting tool. All AI-generated thematic groupings were manually validated and cross-referenced with peer-reviewed literature following the rigorous six-phase qualitative framework developed by Ahmed et al. (2025). Furthermore, when evaluating the implementation gap between a highly subsidized EU environment and a developing Southeast Asian economy, the study maintains strict political neutrality, avoiding framing fiscal incompatibilities as administrative failures, but rather objectively analyzing them as structural mismatches in policy transfer.

Methodology

This study utilizes a Documentary Comparative Analysis design, employing a "Filtered Transfer" model to systematically evaluate the compatibility of foreign policy frameworks with local governance structures. By relying on secondary data, official legislative records (such as EUR-Lex), and ODA tracking, this methodology ensures an objective analysis of policy transferability.

The qualitative data analysis was systematically conducted using the six-phase framework for thematic analysis developed by Ahmed et al. (2025). This structured approach commenced with Phase 1, "Familiarization with Data," involving deep immersion into the datasets. Phase 2, "Generating Initial Codes," required systematically

assigning codes to fiscal and technological requirements. Phase 3 collated these codes into potential themes, which were critically assessed in Phase 4 to ensure coherence with the Philippine GAA. Phase 5 involved precisely defining and naming themes, and Phase 6 encompassed the final narrative synthesis presented in this report.

To facilitate the initial data extraction and structuring from the vast corpus of European policy texts, this study utilized artificial intelligence, specifically Gemini AI Pro. To mitigate potential algorithmic bias or AI hallucination, all generated data results from the AI were rigorously cross-checked and manually verified against the gathered primary literature (Google Scholar, academic databases, official reports from reputable available online data), aligning with best practices for human oversight in AI-assisted qualitative research.

The Feasibility Framework

To systematically categorize the adoptability of European climate programs, a three-tier feasibility framework was constructed based on budgetary scale, legislative approval paths, and implementation requirements (see Table 1).

Table 1. Feasibility Framework

Feasibility Factor	**High Feasibility (Adoptable)**	**Medium Feasibility (Conditional)**	**Low Feasibility (Not Adoptable)**
Budgetary Scale	Can be funded via the PH CCET system or LGU Calamity Funds.	Requires international grant sharing or Public-Private Partnerships.	Requires multi-billion Euro subsidies not available in PH.
Approval Path	Aligns with existing RA 9729 (Climate Change Act).	Requires Executive Orders or Department-Level revisions or approval.	Requires a new Act of Congress or Constitutional change.
Implementation	Utilizes existing "Green Job" or "Waste Management" infrastructure.	Requires specialized technical training and inter-agency coordination.	Requires high-tech infrastructure not yet present in the country.

To provide a robust comparative analysis, the 27 selected EU countries were categorized into three geographically and economically coherent groups: Group 1 (Nordic, Baltic, and Western European Innovations), Group 2 (Mediterranean Models of Climate Adaptation), and Group 3 (Eastern/Central Transition and Macro-Finance).

Table 2. Grouping of the EU Countries.

Group 1	**Group 2**	**Group 3**
Austria	Croatia	Belgium
Denmark	Cyprus	Bulgaria
Estonia	Greece	Czechia
Finland	Italy	France
Germany	Malta	Hungary
Ireland	Portugal	Poland
Latvia	Slovenia	Romania
Lithuania	Spain	Slovakia
Luxembourg		
Netherlands		
Sweden		

Results and Discussions

The following analysis evaluates the "adoptability" of climate initiatives from the three designated European groupings within the Philippine governance landscape. Programs are filtered through the constraints of the Philippine CCET and GAA to determine their technical and fiscal transferability.

Group 1: Nordic, Baltic, and Western European Innovations

This group presents highly sophisticated climate action frameworks characterized by aggressive decarbonization, digitalization, and broad macro-financial support.

Finland and Luxembourg's deep integration into the EU Renewable Energy Financing Mechanism (RENEWFM) represents a novel approach to cross-border financial cooperation for solar PV projects. While repurposing degraded lands for solar farms is conceptually adoptable in the Philippines, the RENEWFM financial structure relies on a mature, integrated continental grid that does not exist within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Conversely, Estonia's LIFE-SIP AdaptEst project focuses heavily on data-driven climate change adaptation, such as ecosystem mapping and resilient forestry. Because this relies on knowledge transfer rather than massive hardware subsidies, it easily bypasses the restrictive elements of the Philippine GAA and maps perfectly onto the mandates of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Furthermore, Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands represent massive contributors to the Team Europe €60 million Green Economy Programme, demonstrating high feasibility when funneled through specialized agencies like GIZ.

Complementing these macroeconomic and technological transfers is a strong emphasis on grassroots empowerment. Ireland's climate assistance, delivered through agencies like Irish Aid and Misean Cara, provides a crucial bottom-up approach. It actively supports grassroots capacity building in the Philippines, equipping youth and civil society with practical classroom tools and international advocacy skills to lead local climate resilience.

Table 3. Filtered Transfer Feasibility Matrix for Group 1: Nordic, Baltic, and Western European Innovations

Source Country	**Specific Initiative**	**Primary Technical Focus**	**Philippine NCCAP Alignment**	**Transferability Rating**
Finland	RENEWFM (Host)	Utility-scale solar PV on degraded lands	Sustainable Energy	Low (Financially mismatched without ASEAN integration)
Sweden	Fossil Free Sweden	Green hydrogen, EV mobility targets	Climate-Smart Industries	Low to Medium (Requires massive baseload clean energy surplus)
Estonia	LIFE-SIP AdaptEst	Ecosystem mapping, resilient mixed-forestry	Ecosystem Stability	High (Knowledge-based; aligns directly with DENR/PAGASA

				mandates)
Ireland	Misean Cara/Irish Aid	Grassroots climate capacity building	Knowledge & Capacity	High (Directly addresses local LGU/LGU training gaps)
Latvia	LIFE LATEST adapt	Urban climate resilience/Nature -based solutions	Human security	Medium (requires LGU co-financing)
Lithuania	BaltAdapt Strategy	Climate change adaptation in coastal regions	Ecosystem Stability	Medium (Transferable to coastal LGUs)
Denmark	Green Maritime/ Offshore Wind	Port decarbonization and offshore wind development	Sustainable Energy	Low to Medium (High CapEx requirements)
Netherlands	Team Europe Initiative	Circular economy and plastic waste management	Ecological Stability	High (Integrated into existing €60M Green Economy Programme)
Germany	GIZ/Team Europe	Circular waste economy policy implementation	Knowledge & Capacity	High (Directly supports existing DENR mandates)
Austria	Team Europe Initiative	Green investments and technical expertise	Climate-Smart Industries	High (Facilitates knowledge transfer and private sector alignment)
Luxembourg	RENEWFM (Contributor)	Cross-border renewable energy financing	Sustainable Energy	Low (Requires structural multinational financing agreements)

Group 2: Mediterranean Models of Climate Adaptation

The global response to climate change, crystallized in the 2015 Paris Agreement, has necessitated a paradigm shift from theoretical commitment to structural implementation. While the European Union (EU) has emerged as a regulatory leader through the European Green Deal, the "Cross-Continental Transfer" of high-resource models to emerging economies like the Philippines remains fraught with institutional hurdles (European Commission, 2019). The Philippines, a highly climate-vulnerable nation, operates under the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP), yet a

significant "implementation gap" exists between policy intent and fiscal reality. This gap is primarily driven by a mismatch between the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), which provides seven-year budget predictability, and the Philippines' GAA, which is governed by strict annual appropriations (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2023).

The Mediterranean and Southern European states offer climate action frameworks inherently relatable to the Philippine context, sharing vulnerabilities related to archipelagic geography, coastal risks, and agricultural water scarcity.Greece's "GR-eco Islands" initiative is a holistic framework transforming remote islands into models of clean energy transition via microgrids and citizen-owned Energy Communities. This model directly addresses the Philippine reliance on the highly polluting Small Power Utilities Group (SPUG) diesel generators. Furthermore, Spain's Cooperation Fund for Water and Sanitation (FCAS) utilizes a "local matching funds" strategy for rural water infrastructure, benefiting over 2.5 million people globally in 2024. This aligns perfectly with the Philippine governance structure, where the mandatory 5% LDRRMF can be legally utilized by mayors to co-finance local watershed protection. Furthermore, the FCAS framework heavily aligns with the core directives of the upcoming 2026 UN Water Conference and the UN World Water Development Report 2026, which explicitly spotlight that gender equality and the equitable participation of women in water governance are essential to poverty reduction and building healthier societies.Italy's Debt-for-Development swap program directly converts outstanding sovereign debt into localized agricultural development in Mindanao, entirely bypassing the GAA's revenue-generation constraints (Department of Finance, 2023). To scale this impact, Italy utilizes a massive €4.2 billion climate fund that actively mobilizes capital through blended finance instruments—including concessional loans, equity participation, and guarantees—to support Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETP) across the region. Portugal's support for the UNDP Climate Promise offers a highly adoptable blueprint for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and archipelagic resilience.

Table 4. Filtered Transfer Feasibility Matrix for Group 2: Mediterranean Models

Source Country	**Specific Initiative**	**Primary Technical Focus**	**Philippine NCCAP Alignment**	**Transferability Rating**
Greece	GR-eco Islands Initiative	Island microgrids, solar PV, smart public lighting	Sustainable Energy	High (Directly addresses Philippine SPUG diesel reliance)
Spain	FCAS	Integrated water resource management, rural	Water Sufficiency	High (Aligns perfectly with LGU LDRRMF matching

		sanitation		funds)
Italy	AICS Debt-for-Development	Debt swapping for agrarian reform and climate agriculture	Food security/Climate-Smart Agriculture	High (Bypasses GAA revenue constraints; highly efficient)
Portugal	UNDP Climate Promise	Enhanced NDCs for island resilience and adaptation	Human Security	High (Strong alignment with archipelagic vulnerability)
Cyprus	Smart Grid Island Systems	Solar optimization	Sustainable Energy	High (Easily implementable in off-grid Philippine islands)
Malta	Island Decarbonization	Managing water scarcity and off-grid power	Water Sufficiency	Medium (Highly relevant but requires targeted funding)
Croatia	Coastal Adaptation Strategies	Tourism sustainability and marine protection	Ecological and Environmental Stability	Medium (Applicable to major Philippine tourist destinations)
Slovenia	Transboundary Water Management	Flood risk management and hydrological mapping	Ecological and Environmental Stability	Medium (Relevant for major river basin management)

Group 3: Eastern/Central Transition and Macro-Finance Agendas

The heavyweight economic powers alongside the transitioning economies of Eastern and Central Europe engage the Philippines through a mix of massive policy loans, circular economy integration, and just-transition expertise.

France, through the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), has mobilized massive policy-based loans, including a recent €250 million package for the Climate Change Action Program Phase 2 (CCAP2). This mechanism exhibits High Feasibility at the national level because it injects liquid capital directly into the treasury, rewarding the government for executing its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Its participation in the EU's €60 million Team Europe Initiative on Green Economy highlighted Belgium's engagement with the Philippines, formally signed in October 2023 (European Commission, 2023). Within this massive programmatic envelope, agencies like Expertise France are specifically tasked with enhancing the engagement of the private and financial sectors to accelerate the transition toward a circular waste-reduction economy through blended finance and public-private partnerships.

Hungary's specialization in "Water Diplomacy" has been crucial, particularly through its co-leadership with the Philippines in the UN Group of Friends in Support of WASH in Healthcare Facilities. This bilateral synergy will be further amplified by integrating the gender-responsive water governance frameworks championed in the 2026 UN agendas. Eastern European nations like Poland and Czechia provide blueprints for industrial decarbonization and transitioning away from coal, which is highly relevant to the Philippine energy mix.

Table 5. Filtered Transfer Feasibility Matrix for Group 3: Eastern/Central Transition and Macro-Finance

Source Country	**Specific Initiative**	**Primary Technical Focus**	**Philippine NCCAP Alignment**	**Transferability Rating**
France	AFC CCAP 1&2	Macro-economic policy loans tied to NDC implementation	Cross-cutting (All priorities)	High (Provides immediate national fiscal liquidity).
Belgium	Enable/Global Gateway	Circular economy, climate-smart agriculture	Ecological and Environmental Stability	Medium to High (Requires heavy local technical skills training)
Poland	Just Transition/ GreenEvo	Coal phase-out and green technology acceleration	Climate-Smart Industries	Medium (Highly relevant to PH coal dependence but complex)
Czechia	SWITCH-Asia SMEs	SME green packaging and industrial circularity	Climate-Smart Industries	Medium (Requires significant capacity building for local SMEs)
Slovakia	SlovakAid	Water management and regional disaster response	Human Security	High (Easily channeled into local disaster risk reduction)
Hungary	Water Diplomacy/ WASH	Water sanitation in healthcare facilities	Water Sufficiency	High (Proven bilateral synergy at the UN level)
Romania	Agricultural Resilience	Smart farming and drought-resistant agriculture	Food Security	Medium (Applicable but requires localized crop adaptation)

Bulgaria	RENEWFM (Host)	Cross-border utility-scale solar financing	Sustainable Energy	Low (Mismatched without regional Southeast Asian financing)

Conclusion

The analysis of cross-continental policy transfer between all 27 member states of the European Union and the Philippines reveals that the "implementation gap" is not merely a product of limited funding or technological failure, but a fundamental structural mismatch between European multi-year financial predictability (MFF) and Philippine annual fiscal rigidity (GAA). Through the application of the Filtered Transfer model, this study concludes that hardware-heavy interventions face severe friction because they demand sustained, multi-year domestic subsidies that the Philippine GAA is legally incapable of guaranteeing. Conversely, the most successful transfers occur when EU programs are mapped onto existing Philippine funding mechanisms (like the LDRRMF and the People's Survival Fund), when they rely on knowledge-transfer and grassroots empowerment, or when they utilize macroeconomic debt-swapping and blended finance to engage the private sector. Ultimately, while the European Green Deal provides an essential roadmap, the Philippines must act as a highly selective editor, prioritizing data-driven, nature-based, gender-responsive, and fiscally compatible frameworks that fit within the idiosyncratic architecture of a developing Southeast Asian state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following actions are recommended:

1. **Institutionalize the "Filtered Transfer" Assessment System:** The Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) may mandate a pre-approval feasibility filter for all incoming international climate grants. No foreign physical infrastructure program should be accepted unless the receiving LGU can mathematically prove that the multi-year operational expenditures can be absorbed within their existing CCET baseline.

2. **Leverage the People's Survival Fund (PSF) and Blended Finance:** To overcome the "Resource Mismatch," LGUs may actively tap into the PSF—which approved PHP 579 million in grants in 2023—as a direct counterpart funding mechanism for European adaptation initiatives. Additionally, the national government must expand blended finance structures to incentivize private sector participation in circular economy projects.

3. **Prioritize Archipelagic Micro-Grids:** The Department of Energy **(DOE)** may pivot ODA toward replicating the successful Greek "GR-eco Islands" model, utilizing LGU LDRRMF funds to rapidly decarbonize the off-grid SPUG sector and eliminate wasteful diesel subsidies.

4. **Expand Debt-for-Climate Swaps:** The Department of Finance (DOF) may heavily prioritize debt-for-development swaps with major European creditors (mirroring the Italian AICS model), as this entirely bypasses the revenue-generation constraints of the GAA.

5. **Invest in Human Capital:** To absorb programs like the Belgian and Dutch circular economy initiatives, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and similar non-governmental initiatives may rapidly deploy specialized curriculum modules focused on the maintenance of green technology to prevent foreign aid projects from becoming stranded assets

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