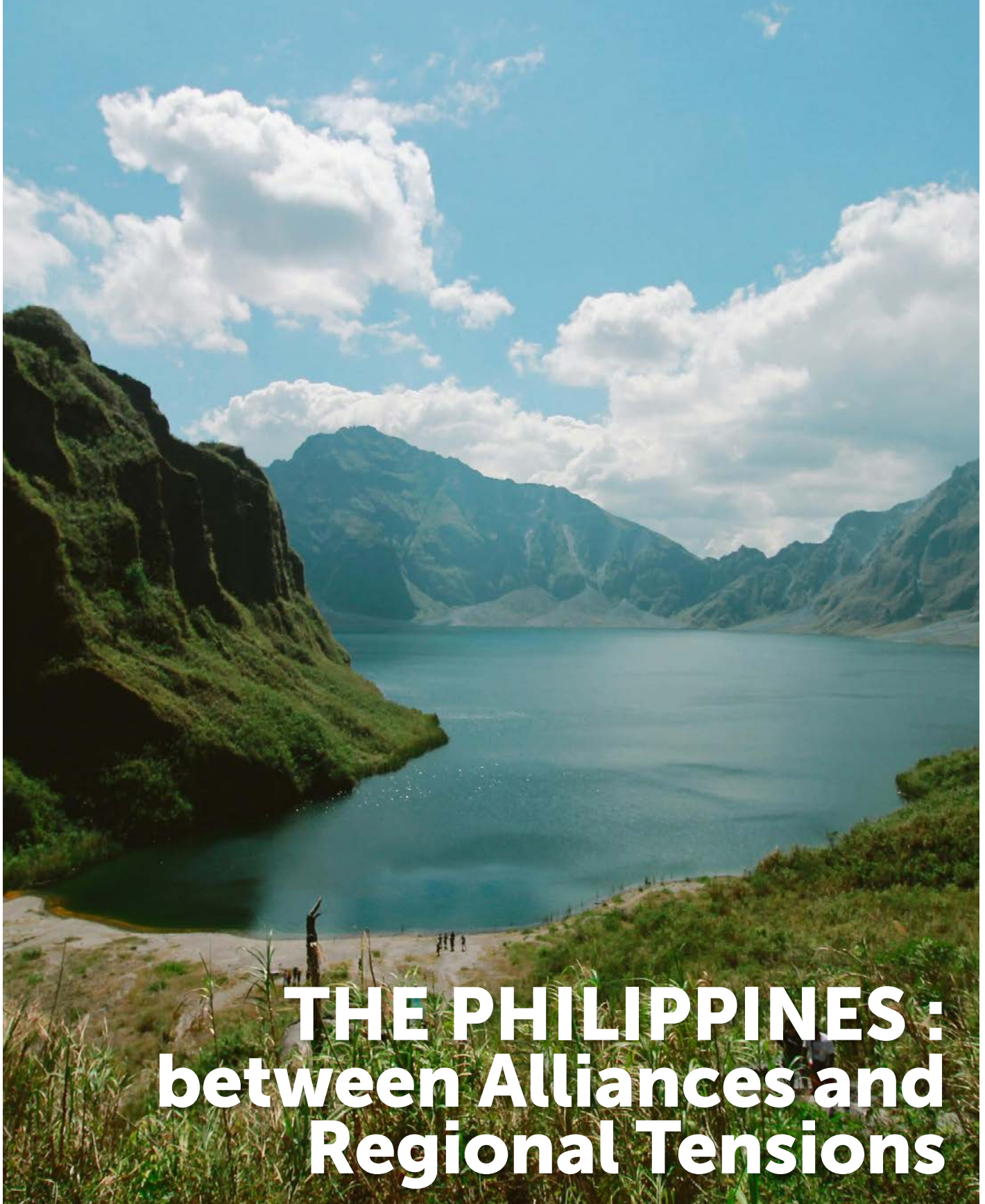


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THE PHILIPPINES : between Alliances and Regional Tensions

genteelhome *A love story*

Love Letter to Filipino Craftsmanship

Under the visionary leadership of Katrina De Leon, founder, genteelhome has been on a mission since 2013: to elevate Filipino design to the global stage. Each bespoke piece is a testament to the artistry and skill of local artisans, with De Leon's signature #MadeWithLove philosophy woven into every detail. « *Transforming a house into a home has always been my dream* ».

But let's be clear—this isn't just about pretty furniture. genteelhome's designs aren't content to simply sit in the corner looking fabulous (though they do that effortlessly); they're storytellers, conversation starters, and heirlooms in the making.

Collaborations That Matter

Here's where it gets even better, genteelhome knows that it takes a village—or, in this case, a team of artisans, designers, and creative collaborators—to bring their vision to life. Whether it's a bespoke chaise lounge that whispers of understated opulence or a curated living space that screams personality, their success is built on partnerships rooted in mutual respect and shared passion.

Furniture That's Functional, Fabulous, and Full of Heart

Whether you're into their off-the-rack collection—a dreamy blend of nostalgia and modernity—or looking to collaborate on a bespoke piece that screams “you,” genteelhome has something for every aesthetic. And if a full-blown interior overhaul is what you're after, their curated spaces service ensures your personality shines through in every detail.



As De Leon proudly declares :

“We are not just creating furniture; we are crafting experiences. Filipino-made furniture deserves recognition, not just abroad but also among our fellow countrymen ».

The Philippines : Between Alliances and Regional Tensions

The Philippines holds a key geopolitical position as it is located between Southeast Asia and China. Its capital, Manila, is equidistant from Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong. This geographical location makes the archipelago attractive, as it lies at the crossroads of some of the world's most strategic maritime routes. The country is made up of over 7,000 islands, making it one of the major pivots of balance—or imbalance—in the South China Sea.

The Philippines perceives its regional environment as a threat to its territorial integrity due to Chinese claims in the South China Sea. Indeed, China has drawn up its so-called «Nine-Dash Line» map that encompasses a large part of the South China Sea, which it uses to justify frequent patrols—sometimes as far as 700 nautical miles from its own shores. This encroaches on the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). In 2016, the country took the case to the International Court in The Hague for violations of the Law of the Sea, which sets the EEZ limit at 200 nautical miles. The court ruled that China's claims in the South China Sea were invalid, stating that the «Nine-Dash Line» had no legal basis. However, China does not acknowledge or comply with this legal ruling issued by the Court.

Since Ferdinand Marcos Jr. came to power in 2022, the Philippines has adopted a firmer stance in its regional diplomacy. After years of ambiguity under Rodrigo Duterte—during which an attempted rapprochement with Beijing yielded little result—the new president has moved closer to the United States, a long-standing ally. By strengthening the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), the U.S. has now gained expanded access to several strategic military bases in the Philippines.⁽¹⁾ This presence clearly aligns with the broader American strategy of containment in response to China's growing ambitions.

However, this alliance with Washington comes at a cost. It has led to a deterioration in relations between the Philippines and China. Beijing has cancelled all local investment projects.⁽²⁾ Tensions with China are intensifying, as evidenced by increasingly frequent maritime incidents around Second Thomas Shoal, where Chinese coast guards have carried out aggressive maneuvers against Philippine vessels.⁽³⁾ In response to these pressures, the Philippines is turning to defensive multilateralism. Defense agreements with Japan, Australia, and India reflect a desire to build a united front against Chinese expansionism. Yet by relying on external powers to ensure its security, the Philippines also faces a strategic dilemma: how can it defend its sovereignty without becoming militarily dependent?

This choice is accompanied by another: the question of economic relations with China. While security concerns are drawing Manila closer to Washington, its economy

remains closely tied to Beijing. China is still a key partner for the Philippines and a potential investor in infrastructure development. Confronted with this dilemma, the Philippines is betting on non-alignment to safeguard its economic interests and ease regional tensions.

Today's Philippines do not want to become a battlefield, nor merely a pawn in the game of great powers. They seek to assert themselves as a sovereign and strategic actor, capable of navigating between protective alliances and threatening tensions. Yet in the South China Sea—now a barometer of global power dynamics—it is becoming increasingly difficult to remain in control of one's course. Raymond Aron captured this dilemma when he wrote: *“To be geographically between two empires often means having to choose between one's dignity and one's security.”*⁽⁴⁾ The modern Philippines embody this dilemma with striking clarity, torn between the desire to exist on their own terms and the need to survive in an increasingly polarized strategic environment.🕸

Douraya Asgaraly

⁽¹⁾ https://www.asianmilitaryreview.com/2024/06/philippines-grants-us-five-more-edca-bases/?utm_source

⁽²⁾ Bilan économique – Monde 2025

⁽³⁾ https://amti.csis.org/tracking-tensions-at-second-thomas-shoal/?utm_source

⁽⁴⁾ Raymond Aron, *Peace and War Between Nations*

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Philippines - Belle côtes

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