

The Strategic Role of the National Security Council in Advancing Sustainable Relations in the West Philippine Sea

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The West Philippine Sea (WPS) constitutes a strategically vital geopolitical and economic region, rich in natural resources and central to competing territorial claims among several states. These disputes have significantly strained diplomatic relations and posed complex challenges to national security, economic resource management, and sovereignty. Given the WPS's critical maritime location and its essential role in global trade routes, the preservation of peace and stability in the region is of paramount importance. In this context, the National Security Council (NSC) of the Philippines plays a crucial role in addressing these multifaceted challenges by safeguarding national interests while advancing long-term strategies for sustainable peace and international cooperation.

This study seeks to deepen understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding the West Philippine Sea, with particular emphasis on the strategic role of the Philippine NSC in promoting sustainable international relations. It examines how the Philippines, alongside other claimant states, can address ongoing tensions by balancing diplomacy, defense policy, and economic cooperation. Territorial disputes—most notably those involving China—have produced a multifaceted set of

challenges, including competing claims over fisheries, hydrocarbon reserves, marine biodiversity, and the sovereignty of small islands and maritime features. These unresolved conflicts continue to fuel persistent regional tensions, shaping both regional and global diplomatic engagements.

A central focus of the study is the role of technological advancements in strengthening maritime defense and national security in the West Philippine Sea. Developments in surveillance technologies, naval modernization, intelligence capabilities, and the strategic deployment of military assets are examined to assess their impact on maritime security. The study further evaluates the NSC's role in integrating these technological advancements with national defense strategies and regional security objectives, identifying both the strengths of current approaches and areas requiring further improvement.

The economic dimension of the West Philippine Sea is equally critical to this analysis. The region's abundant fisheries, oil, and natural gas resources are vital to the Philippines' long-term economic growth and energy security. This study explores the NSC's role in managing and negotiating access to these resources, particularly within disputed maritime zones. It assesses how strategic alliances, bilateral partnerships, and multilateral negotiations can be leveraged to ensure that economic development objectives align with national interests while contributing to regional stability and conflict mitigation.

Beyond geopolitical and economic considerations, the study also addresses the social and human dimensions of the West Philippine Sea disputes. Coastal communities that depend heavily on marine resources are often the most directly affected by territorial conflicts, facing economic uncertainty, livelihood disruption, and cultural displacement. The study examines the socio-economic and cultural implications of these disputes, as well as their influence on national identity and perceptions of sovereignty. Particular attention is given to the NSC's role in addressing humanitarian and social concerns while maintaining a balance between security imperatives and diplomatic responsibilities.

Overall, this study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the enduring challenges in the West Philippine Sea, emphasizing the strategic role of the National Security Council in shaping a stable and sustainable international framework. By analyzing territorial disputes, technological advancements in maritime defense, economic resource management, and socio-human impacts, the study presents a holistic approach to conflict resolution. Ultimately, it seeks to identify viable pathways for enhanced regional cooperation, strengthened diplomatic relations, and sustainable economic development—offering policy-relevant insights toward long-term peace, stability, and collaborative governance in the region.