

# Philippines: Laban ng Masa's 2022 foreign policy agenda

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**Opinion: a short review of the foreign policy agenda presented in the “Laban ng Masa's 25-Point Program for the 2022 Elections”.**

The recently publicized “Laban ng Masa's 25-Point Program for the 2022 Elections” clearly and sharply articulates an innovative foreign policy agenda for the Philippines beyond the coming year. Among the three distinct political alignments vying for national political offices in next year's general elections—President Duterte's PDP-Laban-based alliance, 1Sambayan, and Laban ng Masa—it appears that the latter coalition now has a confidently assertive and well-thought-out global policy direction to progressively guide the Philippine state and our peoples on the world stage.

This is highly important for the Philippine electorate to both critically value and support, because of the currently disruptive nature and destabilizing dynamics of the post-pandemic world order. Laban ng Masa's platform principally states that it shall “Formulate a truly independent and internationalist foreign policy” in response to the many external challenges and threats facing the country. This stands in utter contrast to the existing reactionary and pro-imperialist positions of the elite-based trapo parties. Thus, LnM hopes to be able to newly redirect the general course of Philippine external relations on the basis of winning the 2022 national elections.

Laban ng Masa's declared program is essentially focused on advancing much-needed systemic change via structurally transformative policy reforms in a comprehensive manner. The program states that, “When the insurrection of the electorate brings the common opposition candidate for president to victory in 2022, LnM will push for the immediate formation of a National Council of Progressive Filipinos to coordinate executive, legislative, and mass movement efforts.” To implement these priority measures, LnM would “begin the transition to a democratic socialist system.”

As a mass movement-based socialist political center, LnM aims to firmly advance an alternative foreign policy path that emphasizes key principles of non-alignment in world affairs: “Ending the Visiting Forces Agreement and the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (Edca) with the US, rejecting the expansionist and sphere-of-influence claims of big powers like China and the US in the greater South China Sea, negotiating a mutually beneficial agreement with neighboring countries for a commons-based development and utilization of natural resources in disputed areas, pushing demilitarization of the region, and strictly enforcing and demanding recognition by all nuclear powers of the 1995 Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons-Free Treaty.”

Likewise, LnM's stated agenda in foreign affairs asserts that it shall “lead in forming an alliance of governments in the global South to oppose the encroachments of the US, China, and other dominant powers while making use of their competition to widen the political and economic space for maneuver of developing countries.” This emphatic assertion highlights LnM's anti-imperialist stance due to its opposition to both American imperialism and Chinese social imperialism, the two great power blocs that are intensifying their contention over vast realms of the Asia-Indo-Pacific,

especially in Southeast Asia.

Laban ng Masa absolutely believes in the need to vitally uphold and practice the principles of internationalist solidarity. It holds the view that a truly independent and democratic Philippines must continually build and develop relationships with people's movements, mass organizations, national liberation forces, and other non-state actors worldwide. It is a basic socialist precept to establish even closer unities with such people's organizations since they represent the majority of the world's populace. Moreover, the globally exploited working class masses and oppressed nations form and reflect the popular social base of state entities across the globe. LnM's global outlook is exemplified by a progressively democratic, socially just, and peacefully cooperative orientation to ably lead our country's foreign relations forward.

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