

Chapter 2

Japan-Philippine maritime alliances: Influences on global labor-management dialogue

Izumi Chibana¹

Abstract

Preventing and mitigating human error is crucial to ensuring safe vessel operations in the maritime industry. This chapter delves into the strategic partnership between Japan and the Philippines to develop skilled seafarers. There are two important aspects to the Japan-Philippines partnership: Japan's growing demand for seafarers as its population ages and declines, and the Philippines' long-standing labor export policy, particularly in the supply of skilled seafarers. These factors coincide in their common goal of strengthening maritime labor standards and developing competent maritime professionals. This chapter also details the evolution of the maritime partnership between Japan and the Philippines, in addition to its evolution into an umbrella framework involving various stakeholders, including Japanese merchant shipping companies, Philippine maritime training institutions, and maritime labor unions. At the heart of this cooperation are maritime industry trade unions such as JSU and PSU, and maritime-related organizations such as IMMAJ and PJMCC. The partnership, which will be comprised mainly of these organizations, will extend to cooperation in seafarer education and training, and will play a pivotal role in establishing a solid framework for a continuous and stable supply of Filipino seafarers and will serve as a cornerstone for global labor-management negotiations in the shipping industry.

Keywords: labor management, All Japan Seamen's Union (JSU), Associated Maritime Officer's and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP), Philippine Seafarer's Union (PSU), International Mariners Management Association of Japan (IMMAJ), Philippine-Japan Manning Consultative Council (PJMCC)

¹ A researcher, Bangkok Research Center, Institute of Developing Economies (IDE-JETRO). The prospectives and opinions within this paper are solely those of the author and should not be construed as representing the official stance of the organization to which the author belongs.

I. Introduction

In January 2017, the port of Tomakomai in Hokkaido, Japan, witnessed a tragic incident when a cargo vessel capsized during mooring, resulting in the death of two crew members. This event highlighted the intrinsic dangers of maritime activities and emphasized the crucial responsibilities borne by those in command of such vessels. At the center of this unfortunate incident was the ship's captain, a Filipino national, who faced legal proceedings, underscoring the need for strict adherence to safety protocols and maritime navigation regulations. This episode was not isolated in its impact or nature. In June of the same year, a catastrophic collision occurred off the Izu Peninsula between the U.S. Navy destroyer Fitzgerald, equipped with the Aegis Combat System, and the Philippine-registered container ship ACX Crystal. The collision caused the loss of seven crew members on the Fitzgerald, leaving a profound mark on naval history. The involvement of Filipino seafarers in both the Tomakomai incident and the ACX Crystal collision underscores their significant and widespread contribution to global maritime operations.

The swift rise of Filipino seafarers in the international maritime sector stems from the demographic challenges facing maritime nations, notably the dual pressures of declining birth rates and aging populations. These demographic shifts have generated a surge in demand for skilled maritime workers, positioning Filipino seafarers as a critical component of the global merchant marine workforce. Their importance extends beyond operational support, enhancing the safety, efficiency, and reliability of international shipping while playing a vital role in the intricate workings of global trade. In this context, Filipino seafarers are becoming indispensable to the world's commercial fleet operations, crucial for strengthening the vitality and sustainability of the international shipping industry. This trend signifies a profound shift in the global maritime labor market, where Filipino seafarers stand not just as participants but as essential contributors in ensuring the smooth execution of maritime operations. Their influence transcends national borders, embodying the spirit and expertise of international collaboration vital for the growth and enduring success of the global maritime sector. The ascendancy of Filipino seafarers on the global stage can be attributed to the demographic challenges confronting maritime nations, notably the dual pressures of diminishing birthrates and an aging populace. These shifts have precipitated a heightened demand for proficient maritime personnel, thereby establishing Filipino seafarers as a pivotal element within the global merchant marine workforce. The significance of Filipino seafarers extends beyond their operational contributions to the international maritime sector. They play a crucial role in augmenting the safety, efficiency, and reliability of global shipping channels, contributing

significantly to the intricate mechanisms of international commerce. In this context, Filipino seafarers are becoming indispensable to the operations of the world's commercial fleets, increasingly vital for enhancing the robustness and continuity of the international shipping industry. This evolving scenario is indicative of a profound transformation in the dynamics of the worldwide maritime labor market. Filipino seafarers stand not merely as participants but as essential contributors, pivotal in facilitating the smooth execution of maritime operations. It could be said that their influence extends across national boundaries, epitomizing the essence and expertise of international collaboration crucial for the growth and enduring success of the global maritime sector.

The global maritime regulatory framework, orchestrated by leading international organizations such as the International Maritime Organization (hereinafter referred to as IMO) and the International Labour Organization (hereinafter referred to as ILO), introduces a spectrum of intricate challenges and opportunities for developing nations, notably the Philippines. This regulatory landscape plays a pivotal role in defining the standards and practices of global maritime operations, thereby significantly influencing the strategic orientation and developmental agendas of maritime-engaged nations. In an effort to navigate this complex regulatory milieu, the Philippines has recently embarked on initiatives aimed at elevating the quality of its maritime workforce, inclusive of seafarers, alongside the educational benchmarks of its maritime training establishments. These endeavors form a critical component of a wider national agenda aimed at bolstering the policy framework and infrastructural capabilities within the maritime labor domain. A particular focus is placed on adhering to and upholding the principles of the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (hereinafter referred to as STCW) Convention.² The STCW Convention is instrumental in setting forth global norms for the training and certification of seafarers, underscoring the imperative for elevated standards in maritime education, safety, and professionalism. The Philippine government's proactive measures demonstrate its commitment to exceeding the stringent criteria set by the global maritime community. By investing in the skill enhancement of its seafarers and fortifying the maritime education and training infrastructure, the Philippines is determined to maintain its competitive stance in the international maritime labor arena. This strategy includes integrating advanced training methodologies, embracing best practices in maritime pedagogy, and cultivating a regulatory environment that fosters the advancement of maritime professionals. In collaboration with industry stakeholders, the

² More information can be found at <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/HumanElement/Pages/STCW-Convention.aspx> accessed on 23 November 2023.

Philippine government is also modernizing its maritime infrastructure and revising regulatory policies. This comprehensive strategy aims not only to meet the immediate needs of the maritime sector but also to anticipate and address future challenges and opportunities, ensuring the enduring viability of the Philippine maritime workforce amidst evolving global standards and expectations. Through these dedicated efforts, the Philippines aspires to solidify its status as a leading provider of highly skilled, competent, and globally competitive seafarers, thereby significantly contributing to the safety, efficiency, and sustainability of international maritime commerce and navigation.

The Philippines' role as a global supplier of maritime workers rests on government policies, private sector vitality, and compliance with international maritime standards. This chapter aims to explore the strategic initiatives that the Philippines has undertaken to capitalize on global labor market trends, address challenges, and enhance its position in the international maritime domain. By examining the synergy of these key elements, this report seeks to identify strategic measures that the Philippines can take to skillfully navigate the evolving supply and demand dynamics of the maritime workforce and ensure its continued excellence and sustainability in the global maritime sector. Through this analysis, our goal is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Philippines' critical influence on the future trajectory of the global shipping industry and to offer a meaningful perspective on the discourse surrounding maritime labor dynamics.

II. Research method

A. Prior studies concerning Filipino seafarers

The Philippines plays a pivotal role in global labor migration, with Filipino nationals working in a wide range of industries throughout the world. As a result, the Philippines has been a focus of migration research, particularly in fields where Filipinos have a significant presence, such as nursing, domestic work, and caregiving. These fields have received widespread academic attention because of the Philippines' role in meeting the global demand for labor. However, despite the significant contribution that Filipino seafarers make to international maritime labor, relatively little research has been conducted on Filipino seafarers. This gap may be due to the unique employment status of seafarers and their relatively harsh maritime environment, which is far removed from the usual subjects of research on labor and migration. Furthermore, the transitory nature of seafarers' employment and the fact that their contracts usually terminate upon their return to their home countries also pose challenges to traditional migration theory classifications.

Nevertheless, several scholars have delved into the field, offering valuable insights into the lives of Filipino seafarers and the challenges they face. Among them is Fajardo's (2011) *Ethnography of the Sea*, which uses an anthropological perspective to explore the daily lives of seafarers working on cargo ships. McKay's (2007) and McKay and Lucero-Prisno III's (2012) studies on "masculinity" delve into how the occupation of seafarer shapes the gender identities and perceptions of Filipino seafarers. The study sheds light on the stark contrast between the revered status of seafarers as family and national heroes and the difficult and subordinate position of seafarers in the global maritime industry, where they face discrimination based on race and class. Similarly, Choy's (2003) study of Filipino nurses working abroad complements these findings by examining how gender expectations and professional roles intersect in the context of labor migration. The remarkable social dynamism of the popularity of Filipino seafarers as marriage partners for Filipino nurses working abroad suggests a complex interplay between the professional paths and private lives of Filipino migrants. Despite these contributions, limited research has focused on the role of the maritime sector, particularly international shipping, in the broader discourse on the Philippine economy and its overseas workforce. Professor Maragtas S.V. Amante of the University of the Philippines (2003, 2005, 2014) provides valuable insights into the discourse on labor economics and migration by identifying the legal and economic aspects of the employment of Filipino seafarers. His research emphasizes the need for a nuanced understanding of the roles, challenges, and contributions of Filipino seafarers and calls for greater academic engagement with this important but underrepresented segment of the Filipino labor diaspora.

Since the 1990s, the introduction of a mixed seafarer system consisting of Japanese and Filipino seafarers in Japanese shipping companies has prompted various scholars to study the situation, training methods, and policy frameworks surrounding Filipino seafarers in the Philippines. These studies have had a significant impact on the maritime sector, shedding light on both the business and regulatory environment. Books by captains like Ohno (2000, 2002), who have direct experience working with Filipino seafarers, have been a valuable source of information, facilitating the integration of Filipino seafarers into the Japanese fleet and highlighting their professional and personal environment. Comprehensive reports by authoritative institutions such as the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT, 2011), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Maritime Industry Research Institute, and the Japan Maritime Center (Nomura, 2014; 2015; 2017; 2018) provide extensive reviews on the seafarer system. However, while these studies provide a detailed snapshot of the general

situation during their respective periods of study, they often fail to capture the depth and historical evolution of the seafarer system and the medium- and long-term trends shaping its trajectory. In particular, Amante (2023) and Chibana (2023a, 2023b) examine the efforts and challenges facing Filipino seafarers in becoming the world's largest supplier of maritime workers in 2021 and highlight the strategic efforts and obstacles to maintaining this critical supply chain as global demand and regulations evolve. The study highlights the strategic efforts and obstacles to maintaining this critical supply chain in the face of evolving global demand and regulations. In addition, Abila and Acejo (2021) focuses on mental health concerns specific to the maritime profession, characterized by stressors unique to seafarers. Overall, these studies attempt to provide a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted issues faced by Filipino seafarers and the need for continued research to address the dynamic challenges of maritime labor and to ensure the welfare and efficiency of this important workforce.

B. Basic framework

The analysis of Filipino seafarers unfolds across two distinct yet interconnected dimensions: their roles as "migrant workers" and as "maritime personnel." This distinction is critical to understanding the multifaceted nature of overseas employment in the maritime sector, where maritime administration, maritime law, and overseas employment law are intricately interwoven. Key components of this analysis include the promotion of overseas employment, the protection of workers, and the specific regulatory framework applicable to seafarers. This report focuses primarily on seafarers working on ocean-going merchant vessels, deliberately excluding those employed on fishing vessels, domestic ships, and naval vessels. Ocean-going seafarers represent a unique subgroup within the broader maritime labor market, defined by the globalized dynamics of the ocean shipping industry.

Several factors distinguish ocean-going seafarers from their counterparts in other maritime sectors. First, the qualifications and competencies required of seafarers on ocean merchant vessels are stringent and must adhere to international standards. Second, their employment conditions and working environment are shaped by global collective bargaining processes and agreements, which set specific standards and guidelines for the sector. Third, these factors ensure that wages for ocean-going seafarers are generally higher than those for seafarers engaged in coastal or other maritime-related work. This report endeavors to provide a comprehensive analysis of the factors enabling Filipino seafarers to secure and sustain a competitive edge in the global shipping industry despite a complex regulatory and business environment. While this chapter focuses mainly on

ocean-going merchant seafarers, it also recognizes that certain aspects of labor laws and regulations, seafarer training processes, and trade union membership may apply broadly to the seafaring profession. Therefore, this chapter will, in some contexts, discuss seafarers in a broader sense. Terminology for seafarers has been standardized according to international conventions, with both Japan and the Philippines adhering to these norms in their legal definitions and classifications. Japan's Seafarers Law (Mariners Act, Act No. 100 of 1947)³ establishes this legal framework, defining "seafarer" to include masters, crew members, and reserve crew members aboard Japanese or specified foreign vessels. Furthermore, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism called the MLIT classifies seafarers as "staff" and "members of the department" to clarify their roles aboard ships. In Philippine law, the shift in terminology from "seafarer" to "seaman" since the 1978 STCW Convention reflects the trend toward standardizing maritime terminology. Acknowledging the historical and legal nuances of the term, this report adopts "seafarer" as an umbrella term encompassing all relevant personnel. Additionally, this chapter recognizes the range of legal terms used in Philippine law across various historical periods, from laws enacted under U.S. rule to Commonwealth law, post-independence laws, and Batas Pambansa under the Marcos administration including the special context of a presidential decree under martial law. A nuanced understanding of these legislative terms is essential for accurately interpreting the legal framework governing Filipino seafarers, reflecting the complexity and dynamism of maritime law and labor regulation within the global maritime employment context.⁴

³ For further information, please refer to the website of

<https://www.tb.mlit.go.jp/kyushu/senpakutouken/pdf/bunyabetu-4-siryou-seninhou.pdf> (in Japanese) accessed on 30 November 2023.

⁴ It is essential to note that ships, like people, have nationality and are subject to the laws and protections of the country in which they are registered. A flag-of-convenience ship is a ship registered in a country different from that of the ship's de facto owner. After the oil shocks of the 1970s, many shipping companies began to use the flag-of-convenience system to reduce costs. The rise of Filipino seafarers in the world's major shipping countries can be attributed to the introduction of this system, which was driven by the need for shipping companies to cut costs.

III. Japanese merchant marine and Filipino seafarers

A. Global supply of seafarers

The maritime sector is integral to the global logistics framework, and the international labor market within this powerhouse industry necessitates a consistent focus on attracting and retaining a skilled workforce. As the demand for maritime personnel fluctuates with global needs in cargo shipping and cruise line operations, major shipping companies must remain vigilant to shifts in maritime demand and operational capacity, adapting accordingly. As highlighted by the IMO Standards for the STCW Convention, disparities in seafarer qualifications and training systems across the globe underscore the need for uniform international regulations. Establishing such standards is crucial for ensuring a steady flow of properly trained maritime workers, thereby guaranteeing the safe operation of ships within this framework. Careers at sea are uniquely influenced by the terms of employment and remuneration offered. International dialogue aimed at harmonizing working conditions and salaries for seafarers is critical for attracting and retaining a quality workforce, particularly as the maritime industry's emphasis shifts from quantity to quality personnel. Additionally, the maritime industry is in the midst of a revolutionary phase characterized by significant technological advances and a move toward automation. These advancements are transforming labor requirements in the sector and, consequently, the traditional maritime job paradigm.

Table 2.1 Estimated five largest seafarer supply countries (2021)

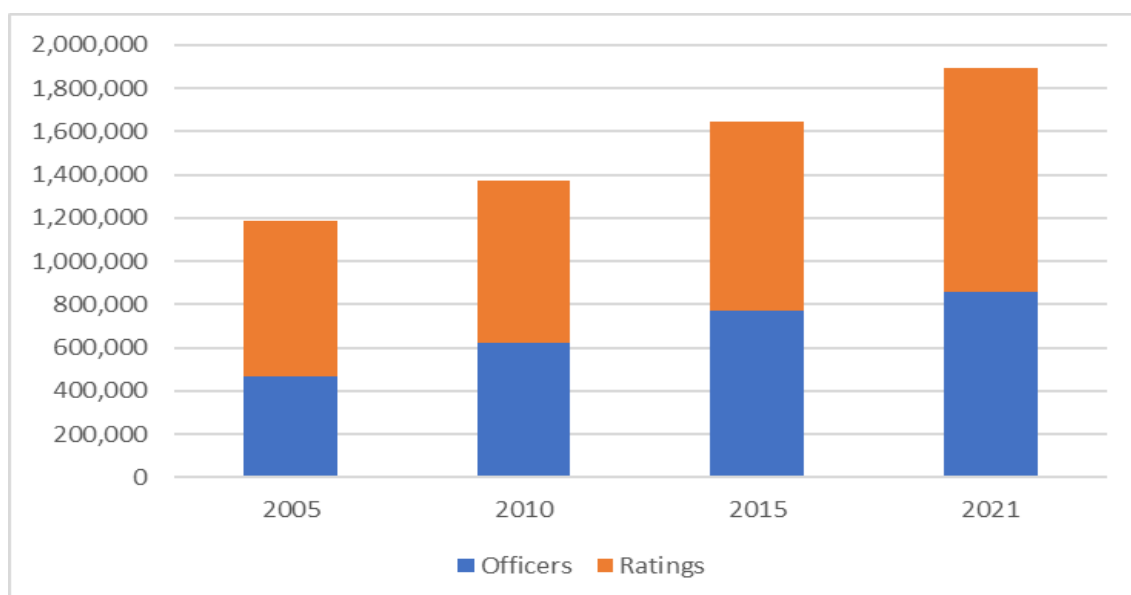
	All seafarers	Officers	Ratings
1	Philippines	Philippines	Philippines
2	Russian Federation	Russian Federation	Russian Federation
3	Indonesia	China	Indonesia
4	China	India	China
5	India	Indonesia	India

Source: BIMCO (2021)

A critical aspect of the global maritime industry is its workforce. As highlighted in Table 2.1, a substantial portion of seafarers hail from a select group of Asian nations, primarily the Philippines, China, India, and Indonesia. This concentration of manpower has a significant influence on the global maritime labor market, shaping a complex dynamic of supply and demand. This asymmetric distribution presents a multifaceted scenario. On the one hand, it offers an opportunity for these supplier nations to capitalize on the growing demand for maritime labor. By investing in proper training and education

programs, they can equip their citizens with the necessary skills and qualifications to excel in this dynamic field. Maritime nations with sophisticated sectors, particularly in Europe and Japan, recognize the need to closely monitor global trends in the supply and demand of maritime labor. These countries are actively developing policies and strategies to promote the long-term viability and safety of the maritime industry, including efforts focused on workforce development, acceptance of technological advances, and the promotion of international cooperation to meet evolving demands in the global maritime landscape.

Figure 2.1 Estimated global supply of seafarers 2005-2021



Source: Created by the author from BIMCO 2015 & 2021

The Baltic International Maritime Council (hereinafter referred to as BIMCO) reports for 2015 and 2021 provide comprehensive documentation of estimated global seafarer supply between 2005 and 2021, as detailed in Table 2.1. This growth is estimated to be from approximately 1.2 million in 2005 to roughly 1.9 million in 2021. The expansion of maritime operations and the corresponding growth in seafarer demand reflect this trend. However, this growth faced unprecedented challenges with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which imposed severe restrictions on international travel and the movement of individuals across borders. This global health crisis inevitably impacted the movement and availability of seafarers, creating potential constraints on the expansion of the seafarer supply chain. Despite these obstacles, an interesting trend emerged: increased logistics activity led to a surge in demand for seafarers. The shift to

remote work during the pandemic and the resulting reliance on logistics intensified the need for efficient maritime logistics, thereby increasing the demand for skilled seafarers to support the rapidly growing logistics and shipping sector. In summary, the pandemic acted as a catalyst, highlighting the critical role of seafarers in maintaining global supply chains. The resilience of the maritime industry in such adversity reaffirms the importance of strategic planning and policy development to ensure sustainable growth and stability in the global seafarer workforce.

**Table 2.2 Proportion of Filipino seafarers in the global maritime workforce:
focus on officers**

Year	Global supply	Philippine supply	Philippine share from global supply
2018	646,100	74,000	11.45%
2019	640,380	75,000	11.71%
2020	635,300	73,600	11.59%
2021	630,400	73,000	11.58%

Source: NMP Philippine Maritime Manpower Factbook (2020 and 2021)

Filipino seafarers have become a dominant force in the international maritime industry, standing out in particular for their expertise in ship handling and navigational skills. The presence of Filipino seafarers stands out among executive seafarers worldwide, accounting for about a quarter of this important profession. As a result, the Philippines has established itself as a major source of maritime leaders on a global scale. According to projections by the Maritime Industry Authority, the number of seafarers in the Philippines was expected to exceed 489,000 by 2022. This continued growth trajectory confirms the significant contribution Filipino seafarers are making to the global maritime sector. Their competitiveness stems from their multifaceted skills. Technical proficiency, unwavering work ethic and the ability to adapt to diverse environments are the hallmarks of Filipino seafarers. In addition, fluency in English, the lingua franca of the shipping industry, enables them to seamlessly integrate into the industry's multicultural environment. As a result, seafarers' professional horizons are broadened, opening up a wide range of employment possibilities.

Table 2.3 Number of processed and deployed Filipino seafarers

Year	Processed seafarers	Deployed seafarers
2019	561,803	505,759
2020	351,531	270,022
2021	434,961	394,984
2022	546,498	492,494
2023	620,756	578,626
Grand Total	2,515,549	2,241,885

Source: Interview at ITF Seafarers

The resilience and resourcefulness of Filipino seafarers during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly on passenger vessels, is commendable. Their contributions during this challenging period reflected their unwavering spirit and generosity, leaving a significant impact on the international maritime community. A notable example was on the Diamond Princess passenger ship during the initial COVID-19 outbreak in Japan.⁵ Filipino seafarers exhibited exceptional hospitality and played a crucial role in providing care and support to passengers, offering both spiritual comfort and physical assistance with their congenial and selfless behavior. Filipino seafarers play a vital role in the maritime sector, with their warmth and interpersonal harmony contributing not only to operational efficiency but also underpinning a workforce where mutual support is essential. Their ability to support one another in the face of adversity positions them as key elements of teamwork on board, fostering a maritime ethic of mutual aid and enabling the completion of long, arduous days at sea.

B. Japanese merchant fleet dependence on foreign seafarers

The Japanese merchant fleet's reliance on foreign seafarers, including Filipinos, is rooted in a complex blend of economic, social, and legal considerations. This dependency is evident in the fleet's evolving composition, shaped by global economic disruptions like the oil crisis and subsequent global recessions. These upheavals compelled shipping companies to minimize operational expenses, leading to a rise in foreign-flagged vessels within the fleet. This strategic shift, which has significantly reduced the number of Japanese seafarers, has also brought several advantages to the

⁵ More information can be found at <https://www.rappler.com/nation/252384-filipinos-on-japan-cruise-ship-infected-with-coronavirus-will-not-be-repatriated-yet/> accessed on 23 November 2023.

Japanese shipping sector. Deregulation and tax incentives for ocean-going vessels have reduced operating costs, enabling the survival of the Japanese merchant fleet in the highly competitive international shipping sector. A crucial aspect of the use of foreign-flagged vessels is their significant impact on labor cost containment. Historically, strict regulations required Japanese-flagged vessels to employ only Japanese nationals, resulting in relatively high labor costs. However, shifting to foreign-registered vessels enabled the employment of foreign seafarers with the requisite technical expertise who command lower wages than Japanese seafarers. This strategic approach has emerged as an essential mechanism for sustainable development in the Japanese maritime industry amid global competitive pressures. The integration of foreign seafarers into the Japanese maritime workforce through the use of foreign-flagged vessels has become a widely adopted strategy to adapt to transformations in the global economy, reflecting a pragmatic response to the interplay of global economic challenges, regulatory frameworks, and cost-efficiency demands.

Table 2.4 Japanese Controlled Vessels (1970-2020)

	Japanese ships		Flag-of-Convenience Ships		Japanese Fleet Total	
	Number of Ships	Gross Ton (,000)	Number of Ships	Gross Ton (,000)	Number of Ships	Gross Ton (,000)
1970	1,508	21,185	462	7,030	1,970	28,215
1980	1,176	34,240	1,329	30,987	2,505	65,227
1990	449	20,406	1,543	36,910	1,992	57,316
2000	134	10,098	1,905	59,040	2,039	69,138
2010	123	9,739	2,623	108,289	2,746	118,028
2011	143	11,320	2,672	109,150	2,815	120,470
2015	215	17,206	2,192	99,121	2,407	116,327
2020	270	23,408	1,970	94,309	2,240	117,717

Source: Japan Shipowners' Association Statistical Handbook (2021)

The increasing utilization of Filipino seafarers in Japan's merchant fleet, coupled with the growing use of mixed crews involving foreign seafarers, stems from the Philippines' large population, national character, and advanced maritime skills cultivated through specialized training programs. In 2021, the Philippines emerged as one of the world's foremost suppliers of maritime labor, a result of years of experience and efforts to expand its maritime administration. Japanese shipping companies, facing a shortage of seafarers due to declining birth rates and an aging population, are leveraging Filipino

seafarers to develop an efficient, globally competitive business. Additionally, as the demand for foreign seafarers, including Filipinos, has increased, compliance with international standards—such as those set by the ILO which has also grown in importance. Adherence to these standards has significantly contributed to the maritime industry's safety and operational efficiency, ensuring that seafarers are employed under conditions that protect their rights and welfare, respect their dignity, and promote their professional development. The involvement of Filipino seafarers in Japan's maritime activities represents a strategic response to the dynamic challenges and opportunities of the international maritime landscape. It also reflects a deliberate effort by Japanese shipping companies to leverage global talent and strengthen operational capabilities while contributing to the broader goals of enhancing industry standards and improving seafarer welfare in global shipping.

Table 2.5 Number of Japanese seafarers engaged in ocean shipping

Year	Number of Ocean Sailor
1974	56,833
1980	38,425
1990	10,084
2000	5,030
2009	2,187
2010	2,306
2018	2,093
2020	2,200
2021	2,165
2022	2,062

Source: Prepared by the author with data from Japan Shipowners’ Association Statistical Handbook (2022) and the web site at https://www.mlit.go.jp/maritime/maritime_tk4_000016.html (accessed on 30 December 2023)

Table 2.5 illustrates the historical evolution of Japanese seafarer statistics, particularly following the international currency restructuring undertaken by the G7 countries via the Plaza Accord in 1985. The period was marked by significant exchange rate fluctuations and soaring oil prices, both of which increased operating costs in the shipping sector and placed a considerable financial burden on Japanese shipping companies. The strategic pivot to integrating national seafarers into the workforce was introduced to address the challenges posed by the global economy at the time. As a result, this transition facilitated the reduction of surplus national seafarers and the inclusion of a

more global and diverse workforce. This significant shift in employment dynamics has led to a notable decline in interest in the shipping industry among young Japanese. Consequently, the number of Japanese seafarers involved in international shipping has significantly decreased, and Japanese shipping companies now aim to employ seafarers of various nationalities, including Chinese, Burmese, and Vietnamese. However, Filipino seafarers, who are accustomed to working overseas for long periods and possess strong English skills, remain the most active. Regarding the employment and working conditions of seafarers in the international merchant shipping industry, data from 2009 indicate that there were 2,012 vessels, operated by 95 companies, that conformed to the standards set by the International Business Forum for Seafarers (hereinafter referred to as IBF). The crew composition on these vessels was notably diverse, with Filipinos accounting for 72.38%, followed by Indians (7.7%), Chinese (5.51%), and Burmese (4.92%) (Manji, 2009). These statistics highlight the broad range of nationalities present in the global shipping workforce and illuminate the recruitment challenges confronting Japanese shipping companies. Furthermore, they underscore the need for adaptive strategies to effectively manage international labor mobility and maintain competitiveness within the global maritime industry, balancing operational cost-efficiency with the development of a skilled and diverse seafaring workforce.

IV. Globalizing Labor-Management Bargaining

A. Principal Actors in Global Labor and Management Negotiations

With the inevitable reliance on large numbers of foreign seafarers, the next critical challenge is to establish an international framework that guarantees their labor rights. The global seafarer labor market demands a common understanding of skills and standards across borders, and this principle extends to labor-management negotiations. In the context of Filipino seafarers and the Japanese merchant fleet, the intricacy of cross-border collective bargaining and the resulting labor-management agreements play a pivotal role in shaping various facets of seafarers' employment and working conditions. This complex negotiation occurs on two levels. The first phase involves global labor-management negotiations, defined by discussions between the International Transport Workers' Federation (hereinafter referred to as ITF) and the International Maritime Employers' Council (hereinafter referred to as IMEC), two of the world's largest labor unions. These negotiations take place within the framework of the International Bargaining Forum (IBF), established in May 2003 through an agreement between the ITF, IMEC, and the

International Maritime Employers' Association (hereinafter referred to as IMMAJ). The forum negotiates on behalf of seafarers working on vessels owned by shipping companies participating in the IBF agreement and develops standards and guidelines governing the employment of seafarers globally. The second phase comprises direct labor negotiations between Japan and the Philippines, specifically focusing on employment and working conditions for Filipino seafarers on Japanese-flagged vessels. This framework encompasses a tripartite bargaining process involving seafarers' unions, shipping companies, and manning agencies in Japan and the Philippines, and aligns with broader global labor negotiations. Collective bargaining agreements established within this bilateral framework have become an integral part of employment contracts between Filipino seafarers and their employers, including shipping lines and manning agencies.

To fully understand this negotiation framework, it is important to recognize the role of industrial trade unions in representing seafarers' interests. In Japan, the All Japan Seamen's Union (hereinafter referred to as JSU), established in 1945, functions as an industrial trade union advocating for seafarers employed on Japanese ships and in Japanese ports. Historically resistant to the employment of foreign seafarers, the JSU has adapted to the evolving demographic landscape of maritime labor. With the decline of Japanese seafarers on foreign-flagged vessels, the JSU has nuanced its position by classifying foreign seafarers not residing in Japan as "non-resident special union members." This classification enables the JSU to extend its advocacy efforts to improve working conditions, negotiate agreements, address grievances, and undertake other union activities for this segment of the workforce. The framework for industrial collective agreements between the JSU and the Foreign Labour Department of the Japan Shipowners' Association, historically significant for ocean-going vessels, has now shifted to the jurisdiction of the IBF. In the Philippines, negotiations regarding the working conditions of Filipino seafarers on Japanese vessels involve multiple seafarers' unions, reflecting the diverse representation within the maritime labor sector. Despite the lack of a unified seafarers' union in the Philippines, organizations such as the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (hereinafter referred to as AMOSUP) and the Philippine Seafarers' Union (hereinafter referred to as PSU) participate in these negotiations. The working conditions for Filipino seafarers on Japanese vessels, or those managed by Japanese shipping companies, are comprehensively regulated by collective bargaining agreements negotiated among the IMMAJ, the JSU, the AMOSUP, the PSU,

and other relevant seafarers' unions. These agreements encapsulate the concerted efforts to harmonize labor standards and practices within the international maritime industry, reflecting a commitment to fostering equitable and sustainable working environments for seafarers worldwide.

B. Constructing an ecosystem for seafarer development

Global labor negotiations encompass a broad spectrum of objectives that extend beyond the mere negotiation of collective bargaining agreements. These discussions are crucial in securing the financial and technical resources necessary for the advancement and well-being of workers, as illustrated by the efforts of the AMOSUP. As the premier seafarers' union in the Philippines, AMOSUP has been instrumental in fostering collaboration between the labor and management sectors in both Japan and the Philippines, leading to significant support for Filipino seafarers. This partnership has enabled the establishment of critical infrastructure and services for seafarers, including hospitals and lodging facilities. Moreover, AMOSUP has extended its scope to include seafarer education by founding a maritime university.

The foundation of the AMOSUP can be traced back to the efforts of Gregorio S. Oca, who, after serving as a merchant ship captain, established AMOUP in 1960 under the Philippine Transport General Workers' Organization called PTGWO. Captain Oca's leadership marked the beginning of collective bargaining efforts with shipping companies. In a strategic move to consolidate strength, AMOSUP merged with the Associated Seamen's Union of the Philippines, founded by Brother Donato Alarcon, in 1970, leading to the formation of the current AMOSUP. The union gained international recognition from the ITF in 1972. Beginning in 1988, AMOSUP began securing agreements with shipping companies and related organizations in Japan and Norway, progressively extending these agreements to major maritime nations by 1992, and further including Philippine ships, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Belgium in 1998. AMOSUP has been a pioneer in promoting seafarer welfare through various initiatives. In 1974, it launched the Family Medical and Dental Program for seafarers and their families. This was complemented by the establishment of the Roberto S. Oca Workers' Clinic, which evolved into the first seafarers' hospital in 1986 after its designation as a tertiary hospital in 1980. The same year saw the initiation of the Welfare and Mutual Benefit Plan, offering support for death, disability, and other emergencies for union members and their dependents. Additionally, AMOSUP introduced lodging facilities for union members through the Sailor's Home. The expansion of AMOSUP's mission to include seafarer

training and education marked a significant milestone, highlighted by the creation of a fund in agreement with the JSU in 1988. This led to the establishment of the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) in 1998 and the acquisition of the Japanese training ship *Seiun Maru I* in 1994, later renamed *T/S Kapitan Felix Oca*. Collaborative efforts continued, culminating in the donation of a new ship by the JSU in 2018, christened *Gregorio Oca*. The Philippine-Japan Manning Consultative Council, Inc. called the PJMCC, a collective of 73 manning agencies deploying Filipino seafarers on Japanese ships, was registered as a non-profit organization in 2002 and plays a crucial role in personnel development. This integrated approach, combined with Japanese shipping companies' eagerness to hire quality seafarers and their efforts to improve employment conditions and benefits for seafarers, created a mutually beneficial environment that nurtures an ecosystem conducive to seafarer development.

V. Concluding note

The reliance of Japan's merchant fleet on foreign crews, particularly Filipino seafarers, stems from a nuanced interplay of economic, social, and legal factors. Consequently, the fleet's structure has undergone significant shifts in response to global economic changes, such as the oil crisis and subsequent global recession. Specifically, these economic shocks compelled major shipping companies to reduce operational costs, leading to a surge in the use of foreign-flagged vessels. The incorporation of these vessels not only drastically reduced the number of Japanese seafarers but also brought significant advantages to the Japanese shipping industry. Regulatory relaxation and tax incentives for ocean-going vessels played a crucial role in reducing operating costs, thereby ensuring the survival of the Japanese merchant fleet in the intensely competitive international shipping sector. A key aspect of foreign-flagged vessels is their notable impact on labor cost reduction. Historically, strict regulations have kept labor costs for Japanese seafarers relatively high, given the nationality clause that restricts Japanese-flagged vessels to employing only Japanese nationals. However, the shift to foreign-flagged vessels, which permits the employment of foreign seafarers with requisite technical skills and lower wages than Japanese seafarers, has emerged as a vital mechanism for sustainable development in the Japanese maritime industry amid global competitive pressures. This strategic approach has become essential for the sustainable growth of the Japanese shipping industry. Integrating foreign seafarers into the Japanese maritime workforce through foreign-flagged vessels has been widely recognized as a strategic response to the evolving global economy, reflecting a pragmatic adaptation to the intricate interplay of

global economic challenges, regulatory frameworks, and cost-efficiency requirements. This reality, where Japan's merchant fleet increasingly relies on foreign seafarers, particularly from the Philippines, not only underscores the demand for labor but also aligns with broader globalization trends in labor-management negotiations.

The growing globalization of labor-management negotiations, driven by international labor mobility, has increased the involvement of key stakeholders in complex negotiations of shared interests. The strategic cooperation between Japan and the Philippines is grounded in mutual understanding, fostering concrete efforts to develop a seafarer deployment ecosystem that supports the maritime sector's growth and sustainability. These efforts aim to establish the groundwork for a stable supply of skilled seafarers to meet global demand and contribute to the maritime industry's sustainable development. The partnership between Japan's merchant fleet and Filipino seafarers is rooted in a shared sense of purpose and responsibility, including efforts to enhance seafarer training quality, ensure welfare benefits, and harmonize international standards to meet the maritime sector's evolving needs. Meanwhile, the Philippines has seized the opportunity, with encouragement from major shipping nations, to reform its seafarer workforce, addressing challenges, enhancing quality, and capitalizing on available opportunities. The Japan-Philippines maritime alliance stands as a notable example of how to address contemporary challenges in the shipping industry, achieving safe, efficient, and sustainable cooperation through innovative initiatives and a steadfast commitment to shared goals. However, the evolution and execution of national policies and laws concerning seafarer supply require careful monitoring, as it will not be easy for the Philippines to remain the world's largest supplier of seafarers indefinitely and will need to continue to work hard to maintain its position.

References

- Abila, Sanley Salvacion and Ilis Lavallo Acejo, 2021. "Mental Health of Filipino Seafarers and its implications for seafarers' education" in *International Maritime Health*, 72 (3), pp. 183-192.
- Amante, Maragtas S.V. 2003. *Philippine Global Seafarers: A Profile*, Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC), Cardiff: Cardiff University accessed on 28 December 2023 at http://www.academia.edu/24543822/Philippine_Global_Seafarers_A_Profile

- _____ 2005. "Philippine Global Seafarers: Ethnicity and Identity in Ships with Multinational Crews," MINDAYAWAN Journal of Culture Society, Vol.2, pp. 1-23 accessed on 28 December 2023 at http://www.academia.edu/35216333/Philippine_Global_Seafarers_Ethnicity_and_Identity_in_Ships_With_Multinational_Crews
- _____ 2014. "Industrial Democracy in the Rough Sea: The Case of Philippine Seafarers," *IRRA 56TH ANNUAL PROCEEDINGS*, pp. 81-89 at <https://lerawebillinois.web.illinois.edu/index.php/LERAMR/article/view/1384/1369> accessed on 28 December 2023.
- _____ 2023. "Maritime Labor Convention 2006 and Subsequent Amendments: Tripartism in Philippine Ratification and Institutional Capacity Building" in *Challenges and Conditions for Sustainable Seafarer Supply: A Case of the Philippines*, BRC Report No.32, Bangkok: Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization, pp. 1-37.
- AMOSUP (Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines) 2011. *AMOSUP at 50*, Manila: AMOSUP.
- Berg, H.P., 2013. "Human Factor's and Safety Culture in Maritime Safety" in *the International Journal on Maritime Navigation and Safety of Sea Transportation*, Volume 7, Number 3, September 2013, accessed on 30 November 2023 at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/270519611_Human_Factors_and_Safety_Culture_in_Maritime_Safety_revise
- BIMCO/ICS 2015. *Manpower Report: The Global Supply of Seafarers in 2015*, London: Maritime International Secretariat Services, Inc.
- _____ 2021. *Manpower Report: The Global Supply of Seafarers in 2021*, London: Maritime International Secretariat Services, Inc.
- Chibana, Izumi 2014. "Labor Outbound Policy and Law in the Philippines: Experience and Prospects of East Asia's Largest Sending Country," in Miwa Yamada (ed.), *Legal System of Migrant Workers in East Asia: Toward Building Common Ground between Sending and Receiving Countries*, Chiba: Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization, pp. 107-140 (in Japanese).
- _____ 2023a. "Challenges and Initiatives for Developing Sustainable Filipino Seafarers Supply" in *Challenges and Conditions for Sustainable Seafarer Supply: A Case of the Philippines*, BRC Report No.32, Bangkok: Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization, pp. 38-63.
- _____ 2023b. "Filipino Seafarers in the Global Labor Market: Compliance and Quality Standards" in *Challenges and Conditions for Sustainable Seafarer Supply*:

- A Case of the Philippines*, BRC Report No.32, Bangkok: Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization, pp. 64-89.
- Chibana, Izumi, and Shinya Imaizumi 2019. "Law and Politics in the Contemporary Philippines: 30 Years after Redemocratization," Chiba: Institute of Developing Economies, Japan External Trade Organization (in Japanese).
- Choy, Catherine Ceniza 2003. *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History*, Quezon: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Fajardo, Kale Bantigue 2011. *Filipino Crosscurrents: Oceanographies of Seafaring, Masculinities, and Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Japan Shipowners' Association, 2021. *Japan Shipowners' Association Statistical Handbook*, Tokyo: Japanese Shipowners' Association.
- _____. 2022. *Japan Shipowners' Association Statistical Handbook*, Tokyo: Japanese Shipowners' Association.
- Lillie, Nathan 2006. *A Global Union for Global Workers: Collecting Bargaining and Regulatory Politics in Maritime Shipping*, London: Routledge.
- Manji, Takao 2009. "Introduction to the Activities of the International Labour Association for Seafarers", *Opinion, the Japanese Shipowners' Association* at https://www.jsanet.or.jp/opinion/2009/opinion_200911.html accessed on 27 December 2023.
- McKay, Steven C., 2007. "Filipino Sea Men: Identity and Masculinity in a Global Labor Niche," in Rhacel S. Parreñas and Lok C. D. Siu eds., *Asian Diasporas: New Formations, New Conceptions*, California: Stanford University Press, pp. 63-83.
- McKay, Steven C., and Don Eliseo Lucero-Prisno III 2012. "Masculinities Afloat: Filipino Seafarers and the Situational Performance of Manhood," in Michele Ford and Lenore Lyons eds., *Men and Masculinities in Southeast Asia*, London: Routledge.
- Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) 2011. *Philippines Transport Situation*, at <http://www.mlit.go.jp/common/000184892.pdf> accessed on 17 December 2023.
- National Maritime Polytechnic, 2020 & 2021. *NMP Philippine Maritime manpower Factbook 2020 & 2021* at <https://research.nmp.gov.ph/completed-research/120> accessed on 30 November 2023.
- Nomura, Setsuo 2014. "Trends in Seafarer Education in the Philippines," at KAIUN, <http://www.jpma.or.jp/research/pdf/360.pdf> (in Japanese) accessed on 22 December 2023.

- _____ 2015. "Reform of the Seafarer Education and Maritime Qualification System in the Philippines -- Second Attempt," KAIUN accessed on 22 December 2023 at <http://www.jpmac.or.jp/research/pdf/405.pdf> (in Japanese)
- _____ 2017. "Foreign Seafarer Approval System - Towards Renewal of Accreditation of Institution Approved Schools," The Japan Maritime Daily, accessed on 22 December 2023 at <http://www.jpmac.or.jp/research/pdf/475.pdf> (in Japanese)
- _____ 2018. "Implementation of the STCW Convention in the Philippines and Belgium's Efforts," Nippon Kaiji Shimbun, accessed on 22 December 2023 at <http://www.jpmac.or.jp/research/pdf/489.pdf> (in Japanese)
- Ohno, Mikio 2000. *Filipino Seafarers and Crisis Management*, Seizando Shoten (in Japanese)
- _____ 2002. *Labor Management of Foreign Seafarers*, Seizando Shoten (in Japanese)