

The history of the Republic of the Philippines and that of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) are intertwined. The important events marking the passage of the years at the Department are also milestones in the rise of the Philippines as an independent nation.

Over one hundred years ago, the DFA had its auspicious beginnings when President Emilio Aguinaldo appointed Apolinario Mabini as the Republic's first Secretary of Foreign Affairs on 23 June 1898, eleven days after the declaration of Philippine independence at Kawit, Cavite. The DFA was among the first government departments created following the establishment of the First Philippine Republic. Realizing the need for international recognition of the new government, Aguinaldo assigned Mabini the difficult task of establishing diplomatic relations with friendly countries. Members of the Hong Kong Junta, a group of Filipino exiles in Hong Kong, served as the country's envoys for this purpose.

The Philippines underwent colonial rule under the United States from 1898 to 1946, and Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1944. The country regained independence, including full control of foreign affairs and diplomatic matters, on 4 July 1946. Commonwealth Act No. 732 was passed creating the Department of Foreign Affairs. Shortly thereafter, President Manuel Roxas issued on September 16 of that year Executive Order No. 18 providing for the organization and operation of the DFA and the Foreign Service. The main tasks of the DFA then were to assist in post-war rehabilitation, formulate policies for investment promotion, and establish diplomatic relations with other countries.

The DFA led in the conclusion of the RP-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty, as well as in the Laurel-Langley Agreement, thus paving the way for a balanced yet robust trade and military relations with the United States.

The DFA had a heyday during the post-war years, with its increased participation in the international arena. It became a founding member of the United Nations and one of the drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It helped forge the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The country was also an early proponent of decolonization and global disarmament. The Philippines' dynamic participation in global matters culminated in Carlos P. Romulo's election as the first Asian President of the UN General Assembly in 1952. At that time, the international environment began to change, requiring that new thrusts and priorities in Philippine foreign policy be determined. During the Cold War era, against the backdrop of the Korean War and rising communism in China, the Philippines pursued an increasing internationalist foreign policy.

Realizing the importance of foreign relations, President Elpidio Quirino in June 1952 pushed for

the passage of the Foreign Service Act of 1952, embodied in Republic Act No. 708. During the post-war period, the DFA focused on institution building, closer engagement with Asian neighbors, and increasing Philippine global linkages. In 1953, Secretary Raul S. Manglapus instituted the Foreign Affairs Officers examination (now Foreign Service Officers examination) to professionalize the Foreign Service and improve the recruitment and selection of new FSOs.

The Marcos years, from 1965 to 1986, were marked by policy innovations and then difficulties brought about by the excesses of the martial law regime. President Ferdinand Marcos redefined foreign policy as the safeguarding of territorial integrity and national dignity, and emphasized increased regional cooperation and collaboration. He stressed "Asianness" and pursued a policy of constructive unity and co-existence with other Asian states, regardless of ideological persuasion. In 1967, the Philippines launched a new initiative to form a regional association with other Southeast Asian countries called the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The Philippines also normalized economic and diplomatic ties with China and the USSR, which President Marcos visited in 1975 and 1976, respectively. The Philippines also opened embassies in the eastern bloc countries, as well as a separate mission to the European Common Market in Brussels.

Throughout the 1970s, the DFA pursued the promotion of trade and investments, played an active role in hosting international meetings, and participated in the meetings of the Non-Aligned Movement. The Foreign Service Institute was created in 1976 to provide in-house training to Foreign Service personnel.

The EDSA Revolution in 1986 saw the re-establishment of a democratic government under President Corazon Aquino. During this period, the DFA once again pursued development diplomacy, in the active pursuit of opportunities abroad in the vital areas of trade, investment, finance, technology and aid. The Philippines became one of the founding members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in November 1989, and an active player in regional efforts to establish the ASEAN Free Trade Area. In the 1990s, more diplomatic missions were established in the Middle East to improve existing ties with Arab states and to respond to the growing needs of Overseas Filipino workers in the region.

In 1991, heeding the growing nationalist sentiments among the public, the Philippine Senate voted against the extension of the RP-U.S. Military Bases Agreement, thus putting to a close the decades-old presence of the U.S. military at Subic Bay and Clark Field. Also in 1991, President Aquino signed into law the new Foreign Service Act of 1991 (R.A. 7157), which reorganized the Department along geographic lines and strengthened the Foreign Service. It instituted a Career Minister Eligibility Examination as a requirement for promotion of senior

FSOs to the rank of Career Ministers, thereby ensuring the professional selection of those who would eventually rise to the level of career ambassadors.

The Ramos administration from July 1992 to June 1998 defined the four core priorities of Philippine foreign policy namely: the enhancement of national security, promotion of economic diplomacy, protection of overseas Filipino workers and Filipino nationals abroad, and the projection of a good image of the country abroad.

President Ramos boosted foreign trade, investments and official development assistance to the Philippines through his state visits and summit meetings. In 1996, the Philippines successfully hosted the APEC Leaders' Summit, which resulted in the Manila Action Plan for APEC 1996 (MAPA '96).

The Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (R.A. 8042) provided a framework for stronger protection of Filipino workers abroad, with the creation of the Legal Assistance Fund and the Assistance-to-Nationals Fund, and the designation in the DFA of a Legal Assistant for Migrant Workers' Affairs, with the rank of Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs.

Among the other significant events in foreign affairs during the Ramos years were: the adoption by ASEAN in 1992, upon Philippine initiative, of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea aimed at confidence-building and avoidance of conflict among claimant states; the establishment of the Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Philippines (BIMP)-East Asia Growth area in 1994; the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994 as the only multilateral security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region conducted at the government level; and the signing between the Philippine Government and the Moro National Liberation Front on 2 September 1996 of the Mindanao Peace Agreement.

The DFA, during the Estrada administration, hosted the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in July 1998, and undertook confidence-building measures with China over the South China Sea issue. President Estrada strengthened bilateral ties with neighboring countries with visits to Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan and South Korea. The DFA played a major role in the forging of a Visiting Forces Agreement with the United States, which was concurred in the Senate in 1999. The country also sent a delegation of 108 observers to the Indonesian parliamentary elections, and engaged in cooperative activities in the areas of security, defense, combating transnational crimes, economy, culture, and the protection of OFWs and Filipinos abroad.

At the start of its administration in 2001, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo pursued foreign policy based on nine realities: (*see Philippine Foreign Policy*).

Ø **First**, the dynamics of relations between China, Japan and the United States determine the security situation and economic evolution of East Asia.

Ø **Second**, Philippine foreign policy decisions are, increasingly, being made in the context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Ø **Third**, Europe will continue to play a significant role in promoting international prosperity and stability.

Ø **Fourth**, the international Islamic community remains crucial to the country's search for lasting and permanent peace in Mindanao.

Ø **Fifth**, inter-regional organizations will become increasingly influential in the global context.

Ø **Sixth**, the protection of the environment, natural resources and maritime territory.

Ø **Seventh**, the drive for foreign markets and foreign direct investments will form a focal concern of economic diplomacy efforts.

Ø **Eighth**, international tourism will be a major driver of national growth.

Ø **Ninth**, overseas Filipinos play a critical role in the country's economic and social stability.

The DFA is also guided by the three fundamental pillars of Philippine foreign policy. These are:

1. Preservation and enhancement of **national security**;
2. Promotion and attainment of **economic security**;
3. Protection of the rights and promotion of the **welfare and interest of Filipinos overseas**.

As we enter the decade starting 2010, the DFA welcomes the challenges and opportunities it will face in the service of the Filipino people in an increasingly globalized world.