

by

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Philippine foreign policy is rooted in the country's core democratic values. These are enshrined in the basic law of the land to reflect our understanding of our place in the global order. The Philippines is a friend to all countries and enemy to none. The country does not seek disputes but it will always protect its interests through peaceful means that follow international law and based on rules that promote the equal rights of all nation-states.

### *The Bases of the Philippine National Interest*

It is our values and principles as a people that define our national interest.

Our Constitution is replete with principles that we must observe in the conduct of our foreign policy. We are required to pursue an independent foreign policy which protects our national sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as promotes the national interest and our right to self-determination. We have as a nation renounced war as an instrument of national policy. We have adopted generally accepted principles of international law as part of the law of the land and we adhere to the policy of peace, equality, justice, freedom, cooperation, and amity with all nations.

Our historical evolution as a nation-state has shaped us as a people. Ours is a history full of lessons that bore into us a deep appreciation and love of democracy and freedom. From our various liberations from our colonial masters to the first EDSA revolution, we have time and again proven our commitment to democracy, human rights, human security and human dignity. Our development as a nation is a testament to our struggles. That is why we as a people have been open and outward-looking, that is, we have always and everywhere identified with people who believe that the international order should be a just one. This order should be based on rules that are fair and protective of the shared interests of humanity.

### *Philippine Core Values in Our Foreign Policy*

The regional and global security and economic environment have been in a continuing state of flux. Only through a reaffirmation of these basic ideals and values will the Philippines be confident in its continuing quest for security in a world that increasingly needs stability. As the world also moves towards an economic order that promotes openness, equity and shared wealth, our democratic values will allow us to take a leading role in ensuring shared prosperity for all countries. We have to be consistent in the application of our core values by ensuring that they are securely embedded in the three pillars of our foreign policy: protecting our national security, enhancing our economic security, and protecting the rights and welfare of all Filipinos overseas.

The Philippines' foreign policy is a reflection of the country's domestic policy. More importantly, our foreign policy is firmly anchored on the principles of democracy, human rights, good governance, and the rule of law. In doing so, the well-being of the Filipino people and society is protected, allowing us to strengthen the foundation of social stability and to enhance the legitimacy of the state.

### *Commitment to Our Democratic Principles*

In this context, the Philippines continues to pursue a foreign policy that is not the product of narrow calculations of national interest nor responsive only to exigent domestic political pressures. A foreign policy based only in satisfying politically expedient concerns weakens our international standing and makes us lose our moral compass.

It is the Filipinos' collective heritage to defend and uphold these universal values that we have institutionalized in our laws and policies. Let us not forget that we started people power in 1986 which precipitated a wave of democratization that challenged authoritarian regimes in other parts of the world. Our actions as a people have consistently affirmed that right is might.

In view of our shared democratic values, the Philippines has always aligned itself with countries that espouse democracy and freedom.

We have therefore committed our country to various international norms and rules. In the region, we were among the founders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) whose mission was to promote a more peaceful, stable, and free Southeast Asia. We have sought to make ASEAN a stronger entity by promoting its centrality in our shared security concerns. Thus the challenges to the security of an ASEAN member-state should become the collective concern of all member-states as well.

The changing nature of the challenges to the international order necessitates an affirmation of the importance of international cooperation. We have to build on our cooperative endeavors to be able to address challenges to our regional security. Threats to maritime security presents such a challenge.

To be able to do so, we need to move beyond our fears and trust in our collective wisdom as reflected in the documents produced in the ASEAN, and the ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the ASEAN Plus One meetings with its Dialogue Partners (China, Japan, Republic of Korea, India, New Zealand, Australia, USA, Russia, Canada, EU), ASEAN Plus Three meeting (China, Japan and Korea), ASEAN Regional Forum, and the East Asia Summit. Through these, regional order can be strengthened and norms and rules of good behavior affirmed for the benefit of all the peoples of Southeast Asia and the wider Asia Pacific region. We appreciate the assurances of states from the Atlantic to the Pacific that they are supporting a region which is rules-based and which follows international law and norms.

While the Philippines is doing its part in promoting the development of a fair and just international order, it needs the greater participation of other stakeholders. People from the academe and civil society are welcome to provide their ideas on how our foreign policy can be further grounded in our core principles. Relevant research, studies and cooperation on DFA efforts to promote our national interests and assist our nationals are necessary as we continuously upgrade our standards to be truly world class. At the same time, our friends from academia and civil society do their roles well when they serve as our national conscience with regard to how we implement our foreign policy.

### *A Principled Foreign Policy in a Multi-Polar World*

The Philippines will seek to ensure that the international system will be just and fair to all states regardless of size and relative power. We want it known to the world that we aspire for a multi-polar world where states act responsibly.

The Philippines must reaffirm its commitment to improving and achieving human security, environmental security, and shared economic prosperity. The Philippines must assiduously work with states in ASEAN and all members of the international community to promote the shared values of democracy and good governance. The Philippines must protect the patrimony of the next generations. By doing so we are reaffirming our adherence to a principled foreign policy.