

**ARCHIPELAGIC PHILIPPINES:
NATIONAL & GLOBAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF THE SOUTH
CHINA SEA
& THE WEST PHILIPPINE SEA**

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25 OCTOBER 2021

I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN ALL THE PREVIOUS SPEAKERS IN EXTENDING THANKS TO CELIA LAMKIN AND THE NATIONAL YOUTH MOVEMENT FOR THE WEST PHILIPPINE SEA FOR ORGANIZING THIS EVENT. THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE ON A VERY IMPORTANT NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND GLOBAL ISSUE THAT THE PHILIPPINES, THE REGION AND THE WORLD NOW FACE ON THE SOUTH CHINA SEA.

INDEED, CHINA'S EXPANSIONIST POLICY AND CREEPING ASSERTION IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA HAS NOT ONLY IMPACTED THE PHILIPPINES BUT THE ENTIRE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION AS WELL. IT HAS ALSO SENT CHILLING EFFECTS TO OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD. THE WORLD HAS SUDDENLY AWAKENED TO THE REALITY THAT WHATEVER CHINA CAN DO IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA, IT CAN ALSO DO ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD.

THIS CAN BE SEEN IN TERMS OF CHINA'S AGGRESSIVE ADVENTURISM IN SENKAKU ISLANDS WITH JAPAN, ITS REPORTED ATTEMPTS TO INTERFERE IN THE DOMESTIC AFFAIRS OF AUSTRALIA, AND ITS RECENT MASSIVE INCURSIONS ON THE AIR DEFENSE IDENTIFICATION ZONE (ADIZ) OF TAIWAN. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HAS FINALLY COME TO THE REALIZATION THAT IT CANNOT REMAIN PASSIVE AND APATHETIC TO CHINA'S AGGRESSIVE ASSERTION IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA.

IN THE CASE OF THE PHILIPPINES, SOUTH CHINA SEA IS NOT ONLY IMPORTANT, BUT IT IS ALSO AN EXISTENTIAL QUESTION FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

FIRST, THE PHILIPPINES IS AN ARCHIPELAGIC STATE AND AN ARCHIPELAGO COMPOSED OF MORE THAN 7,100 ISLANDS AND A LONG COASTLINE THAT IS MORE THAN 31,800 KM. IT IS ALSO A QUINTESSENTIAL COASTAL STATE SINCE 62 OF ITS 71 PROVINCES ARE SITUATED LESS THAN 100 KM FROM THE COAST. THIS MEANS THAT ITS POPULATION OF MORE THAN 110 MILLION FILIPINOS ARE HIGHLY DEPENDENT ON THE SEA RESOURCES FOR THEIR SUSTENANCE.

SECOND, THE PHILIPPINES IS GEO-STRATEGICALLY LOCATED AT THE HEART OF SOUTHEAST ASIA. IT IS SURROUNDED BY THREE PROMINENT WATERS: THE PACIFIC OCEAN ON THE EAST, THE SOUTH CHINA SEA ON THE WEST AND NORTH, AND CELEBES SEA ON THE SOUTH. IN THE CONTEXT OF CHINA'S QUEST FOR STRATEGIC PARITY WITH THE UNITED STATES, THE PHILIPPINES HAS BECOME A MAJOR CHOKe POINT, OR WALL OR GATEKEEPER FOR CHINESE NUCLEAR SUBMARINES INTO THE PACIFIC OCEAN WHERE THEY CAN POSE A MORE LETHAL THREAT TO THE US MAINLAND IN TERMS OF THEIR SUBMARINE-LAUNCH OF INTERMEDIATE NUCLEAR MISSILES. THUS, WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, THE ARCHIPELAGO WILL ALWAYS BE A MAGNET FOR CHINESE SPECIAL INTEREST BECAUSE OF THESE STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS.

THIRD, THE PHILIPPINES IS AT THE CROSSROAD OF MAJOR INTERNATIONAL NAVIGATIONAL ROUTES.

MORE THAN HALF OF THE WORLD'S TANKERS – ESTIMATED TO CONTAIN 353.42 THOUSAND BARRELS OF

OIL – PASS EVERY YEAR THROUGH THE STRAITS OF MALACCA AND SINGAPORE AND SUNDA AND LOMBOK STRAITS, WITH MAJORITY CONTINUING ON TO THE SOUTH CHINA SEA. ROUGHLY 40 TO 60 PERCENT OF GLOBAL TRADE ALSO PASS THROUGH THE SOUTH CHINA SEA. ANY DISRUPTION IN THE FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA WILL HAVE SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS IN TERMS OF GLOBAL TRADE. FOR A COUNTRY LIKE THE PHILIPPINES WHOSE ECONOMY IS CLOSELY INTERLINKED WITH GLOBAL ECONOMICS THROUGH TRADE AND INVESTMENT, SUCH DISRUPTION MAY EVEN BE CATASTROPHIC.

FOURTH, THE WATERS SOUTHWEST OF THE PHILIPPINES IS A HOTBED OF GEOLOGICAL RESOURCES AND ACTIVITY. THERE IS A HIGH POTENTIAL FOR THE AREA TO YIELD OIL AND NATURAL GAS. FOR A COUNTRY LIKE THE PHILIPPINES, WHICH DEPENDS TO A LARGE DEGREE ON IMPORTED FOSSIL FUEL FOR ITS POWER NEEDS, ITS CONTINENTAL SHELF IN THE WEST PHILIPPINE SEA (WPS) PORTION OF THE SOUTH CHINA SEA INCLUDING RECTO BANK IS CRITICAL.

WE HAVE TO BE ABLE TO ACCESS, EXPLORE AND EXPLOIT THE RESOURCES – LIVING AND NON-LIVING – IN THE WEST PHILIPPINE SEA FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL FILIPINOS, FREE FROM ANY FOREIGN INTERFERENCE OR INTERVENTION.

FIFTH, THE PHILIPPINES IS THE “CENTER OF CENTER OF MARINE BIODIVERSITY,” HAVING THE HIGHEST IN THE WORLD. THE CORAL TRIANGLE WHICH IS COMPOSED OF SEVERAL COUNTRIES INCLUDING THE PHILIPPINES, INDONESIA, EAST TIMOR AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE CENTER OF MARINE BIODIVERSITY. AND AT THE CENTER OF THIS CENTER IS THE PHILIPPINES. THE PHILIPPINES HOSTS A GREATER PART OF THE CORAL TRIANGLE, WHICH IS AN OCEAN SPACE AS HAVING THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY. IN THIS TIME WHEN THE WORLD’S CLIMATE CHANGE IS SEVERELY IMPACTING HUMANS, IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE PHILIPPINES IN COORDINATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO PROTECT, CONSERVE AND MANAGE WELL ITS MARINE ENVIRONMENT.

UNFORTUNATELY, CHINA'S UNREGULATED FISHING AND MASSIVE ARTIFICIAL ISLAND ACTIVITIES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA DESTROYING HECTARES OF CORAL REEFS IN THE KALAYAAN ISLAND GROUPS HAVE SEVERELY THREATENED THE ECOLOGICAL BALANCE IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA THAT MAY TAKE MANY YEARS TO RECOVER.

IN SUM, THE WEST PHILIPPINE SEA AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA IS CRITICAL FOR MANY FILIPINOS WHO RELY ON THE SEA FOR THEIR LIVELIHOOD. ASIDE FROM FISH, OIL AND NATURAL GAS, IT MAY BE NOTED THAT AQUACULTURE AND SEAWEED FARMING ARE ALSO IMPORTANT. THEY ARE IN FACT LEADING INDUSTRIES IN THE PHILIPPINES AS THEY ARE IN MANY DEVELOPED & DEVELOPING ECONOMIES. MARINE BIODIVERSITY IS LIKEWISE IMPORTANT FOR PHARMACEUTICALS.

ONE MAY ALSO WISH TO TAKE NOTE OF AN OBSERVATION MADE BY JUSTICE ANTONIO CARPIO THAT THE ACTUAL SIZE OF THE WEST PHILIPPINE SEA WITH THE

200 NM EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE (EEZ) AND THE 200 NM CONTINENTAL SHELF (CS) COMBINED SHOULD BE MUCH LARGER THAN THE LAND AREA OF THE PHILIPPINES.

THAT SAID, ONE COULD CONSIDER THAT THE EXTERNAL THREAT FACING THE PHILIPPINES IN ITS WEST PHILIPPINE SEA WOULD BE MUCH LARGER AND WIDER THAN ANY EXTERNAL THREAT FACED BY THE PHILIPPINES SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

IT IS PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THESE REASONS, WHICH I CALL AS STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES THAT THE PHILIPPINES WENT INTO ARBITRATION IN 2013. IT WAS IMPORTANT TO PROTECT THESE INTERESTS NOT ONLY FOR THE SAKE OF ALL FILIPINOS BUT ALSO OF THE ENTIRE HUMANITY.

SINCE THE ARBITRAL TRIBUNAL HAS ALREADY CLARIFIED IN A VERY DECISIVE WAY THE SOUTH CHINA SEA INTO WHAT IS OURS AND WHAT IS NOT CHINA'S, IT IS NOW IMPERATIVE AND URGENT TO MOVE WITHOUT HASTE INTO THE DIRECTION OF HOW TO PUT THE 2016 RULING

FROM A CONCEPTUAL RULE OF LAW INTO ACTUAL NORMS,
FROM LIP SERVICE INTO ACTUAL PRACTICE.

ONE CRITICAL ACTION THAT COULD BE TAKEN TO PUT
THIS INTO EFFECT IS THE ACTUAL CONDUCT OF REGULAR
JOINT PATROLS BY THE PHILIPPINES AND THE UNITED
STATES IN THE WEST PHILIPPINE SEA UNDER THE
PHILIPPINE-US MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY.

WHEN WE HAVE A NEW PRESIDENT IN 2022, THEN WE CAN
EXECUTE ALL THAT WE NEED TO DO. **END**