

**Remarks at De La Salle University on Launch
of “South China Sea Arbitration”
By Amb. Albert del Rosario
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It is an honor to be invited to the De La Salle University this afternoon to join in the launching of the South China Sea Arbitration for Understanding the Awards and for Debating with China which is a most important and timely scholarly work authored by Dr. Alfredo Robles, Jr.

Presence of former President B.S. Aquino III

It is an even greater honor to be here in the distinguished presence of former President Benigno S. Aquino III, my great boss, whose staunch and inspiring leadership resulted in an arbitral outcome which benefits not only our countrymen but also the people of so many other nations.

Today, however, belongs to Dr. Robles for his informative, edifying and analytical piece which is a “must read” for all Filipinos who love our country.

It is as well essential reading for all our friends around the world who have manifested interest in the most critical security issue in our region.

About Rule of Law

This very serious and highly researched work being launched today is about the significance and primacy of the rule of law.

In this regard, I have been asked to render a very brief perspective of a reader who found himself amid those who were involved in the South China Sea issue.

Under the president's mandate to defend what is ours, we were ultimately tasked to seek – as a last resort – a lawful and lasting resolution to the South China Sea disputes after all other peaceful means had been fully exhausted.

Standing Against Goliath

Our task was well-defined. It was about pursuing the rule of law that is the great equalizer among states, regardless of size, power and influence.

It was about our beloved country – a developing nation without a strong military – whose people worked diligently to peacefully uphold the rule of law, thus enabling it to stand against a Goliath.

Our arbitral victory was our contribution to the world in helping to promote an international rules-based system towards fostering peace, stability and prosperity for all.

Bribery, Brawn and Bluster

This well-researched writing is about a modern Goliath whose intentions, declarations and actions are to force a doctrine of dominance on our region and beyond.

It is about a Goliath who is pursuing a strategy of employing its own 3 Bs – “Bribery, Brawn and Bluster” to achieve its wrongful objective of demonstrating that might trumps right.

It is furthermore about the Goliath who has rejected and vilified the arbitral outcome that is now an integral part of international law.

After unlawfully constructing and militarizing artificial islands in the SCS, it is about a Goliath who tried to lobby the tribunal. It is the same Goliath who has selectively utilized aspects of international law to its advantage while rejecting those portions which are not.

It is the very same Goliath who accused the former president of ITLOS of political bias simply because he is Japanese.

History Unkind to Goliaths

It is as well about the very Goliath, with its sheer bullying tactics, that reminds us of other Goliaths in the past.

We are also reminded about the lack of kindness that history has shown for similar creations.

Finally, it is about Our Government, and Our Allies, and Our People.

Shelving of Victory

It is about our government's decision to shelve the arbitral victory in order to avoid China's displeasure and ire with the expectation of significant amounts of investments and aid for our Build, Build, Build infrastructure program.

It is about our additional silver platter offerings to Goliath of our country's strategic assets which would effectively result in providing a stronger position of domination against the Filipino people.

Support from Allies

It is about our allies who have decided to enforce the tribunal outcome and uphold the rule of law on their own, disappointingly without the Philippines. For continuing to sail their ships and fly their aircraft in Freedom of Navigation and Overflight Operations, the people of the Philippines salute our friends from the US, Japan, Australia, Great Britain, France and others.

About Who We Are

At day's end, Dr. Alfredo Robles, Jr. has written a book about who we are as Filipinos. Since nearly 9 out of 10 have taken the view that the Philippine government must advance to enforce the tribunal outcome, Filipinos are clearly rejecting the government's actions to shelve the tribunal results.

When confronted by a bullying Goliath, no Filipino would naturally want to be described as a willing victim nor as an abettor.

In terms of allowing our government to acquiesce to the dictates of Goliath, it is about losing entirely what is most important to our people.

It is about the ignominy of losing our self-respect.

Dr. Robles courageously speaks truth to us, and challenges us to stand for this conviction: that at all times right will prevail over might. END

I thank you for your most kind attention.