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THE SHANGRI-LA DIALOGUE

KEYNOTE ADDRESS Q&A

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SIR JOHN CHIPMAN

EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, IISS

FERDINAND R MARCOS, JR

PRESIDENT, PHILIPPINES

Sir John Chipman, Executive Chairman, IISS

Thank you very much for an inspiring address. You have been kind enough to take perhaps two or three questions, so I will scan the room and see if an arm is raised, or a hand, or another gesture. There we are. If you were to stand up, sir, a microphone will come to you. May I remind you that we need a question, and take no more than 60 seconds if you can, as will your successor.

Speaker

Thank you very much, Chair, for giving me this wonderful chance to ask a question to the President. Mr President, I noticed in your speech you mentioned many times about ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] centrality. A review of the TAC [Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia], which your father signed, does show the bond of ASEAN. I think the ASEAN centrality is very important, but we cannot take it for granted. It comes from the ASEAN Way, three principles: first, mutual respect; second, consensus building; third, considering other parties' comfort level. In other words, to put it simply, we can summarise it as three 'nos': no intervention, and no use of force, and no hyping up hotspots. It is only because of these principles, strictly followed by ASEAN members and other stakeholders, that we have ensured that ASEAN and East Asia at large are at long-lasting peace since the end of the colonial rules in history. So we cherish it a lot. I fully agree with you. I support the centrality of ASEAN and even some professor like [inaudible], he suggests ASEAN deserves to be awarded a Nobel Peace Prize. I agree with him.

Sir John Chipman, Executive Chairman, IISS

Thank you very much. I think your question is, do you agree with me? So, President Marcos, please. Thank you very much.

Speaker

Yes, my question is, President, in the eyes of the international community, some of your Philippines behaviour in recent times does not seem like it really considered other parties' comfort level, and there is a risk of ruining the regional long-earned, long-lasting peace since the end of the colonial history. What is your comment on that? Thank you very much.

Ferdinand R Marcos Jr, President, Philippines

Well, I cannot imagine what you must be referring to. If the reference or the allusion is to the Philippines somehow tearing apart what we have agreed on with ASEAN in terms of ASEAN centrality, quite the contrary. I think, if you examine more closely the remarks that I just made, I precisely focused on ASEAN centrality, and the principles that I laid down, that are involved in the concept of ASEAN centrality, are some things that we must use to guide us. And if we have been distracted in the past years or so, then it is time for us to return and remember once again what ASEAN was created for. And that is to create an aggregation of nations that have very many common interests and partnerships within that multilateral organisation, that can help each other and help the region. And so the Philippines still remains true to the principles that were established and upon which ASEAN was born.

And I think, as I said, many of these things we no longer speak of today, but we must, because they are as relevant today as they ever were. Perhaps even more so, because the global situation is a great deal more complicated than it used to be before. I would even go as far as to say there is no such thing as a regional issue any longer. We have all experienced the unexpected effects of the war in Ukraine, of the conflict in the Middle East. And when we talk about the South China Sea, we have to also remember that the South China Sea is the passageway for half of the world's trade, and therefore the peace and stability of the South China Sea and the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea is a world issue. And that is what I am proposing. I am saying that yes, it is a regional issue, but we must examine and be part of the discussion. We must include all parties in the discussion because now it is not just ASEAN

member states who are stakeholders. And it is quite easy to see that it is in fact the entire world that has become stakeholders in the peace and stability of our region.

Sir John Chipman, Executive Chairman, IISS

Thank you. I will take one question. Yes, you, sir, with your hand up. If you stand up it might attract magnetically a microphone towards you. Thank you very much. And immediately after your question, once you have identified yourself, I will ask a third person for the final question and the President will take both. Thank you, sir.

Demetri Sevastopulo, US–China Correspondent, *Financial Times*

Thank you, John. It's Demetri Sevastopulo from the Irish delegation of two people, another small country. President Marcos, I am going to ask you a very direct question, if you don't mind, which is: if Chinese coastguard water cannons killed a Filipino sailor, would that cross a red line? And then can you also give us a sense of, what are the actions that would trigger a request from Manila to Washington to invoke the US–Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty? Thank you.

Sir John Chipman, Executive Chairman, IISS

And I will ask as the last question Justin Baquisal, if you could stand. I know you have sought the floor. And if a microphone were to come to you. You are right over there. Thank you. And the President will then answer both questions. Thank you. You are one of our Young Leaders from ASEAN, so please go ahead.

Justin Baquisal, Resident National Security Analyst, FACTS Asia

Magandang gabi, Mr President; good evening, Mr President. My question relates to your vision for the force posture of the Philippines by the end of your term. The Philippines has always discussed that the defence of our national territory is primarily our responsibility under the unilateral defence plan. So, what specific force packages are you eyeing, particularly in the next coming years? And what exactly are we to expect after Horizon 3 or the AFP [Armed Forces of the Philippines] modernisation programme? Thank you.

Ferdinand R Marcos, President, Philippines

Thank you. Well, what the gentleman is referring to, the Horizon 3 acquisition programme, is the acquisition programme that our Department of National Defense has just completed. Then we are presently in the process of finding suppliers for all the different requirements that we have to build up our capabilities in the Armed Forces of the Philippines. And we are hoping that these acts are just deterrence. And, as they say, to work for peace, prepare for war. And it is an unfortunate truth, and that is why we have undertaken this long term. It has been going on for many years now, this long-term plan of increasing the capabilities of our military and our civilians, such as the Coast Guard in the Philippines.

To go back to the first question, what would happen if there was an incident that ended up killing a Filipino serviceman, be they a coastguard or in the military and part of the navy? Well, that would certainly increase the level of response. And if, by a wilful act, not only a Filipino serviceman but even a Filipino citizen, is killed by a wilful act, that is, I think, very, very close to what we define as an act of war, and therefore we will respond accordingly. And our treaty partners, I believe, also hold that same standard for when the joint action will be undertaken in support of any such incident in the Philippines. We already have suffered injury, but thank God we have not yet gotten to the point where any of our participants, civilian or otherwise, have been killed. But once we get to that point, certainly we would have crossed the Rubicon. Certainly crossed the Rubicon. Is that a red line? Almost certainly it is going to be a red line.

Sir John Chipman, Executive Chairman, IISS

Mr President, you have helped us to set the agenda. You have provoked our thinking. You have spurred us to action. That is the keynote speech that we needed. That is the keynote speech that we got. You have sung for your supper; I think it is time for you to enjoy it. Thank you, sir.

Ferdinand R Marcos, President, Philippines

Thank you. Thank you very much.