



5th State of the Presidency
Center for People Empowerment in Governance (CenPEG)
July 20, 2013, 9 a.m. – 12: 30 p.m.
University Hotel, UP Diliman, Quezon City

Like a U.S. Drone: A Perspective on P-Noy's Foreign Policy

Prof. Roland G. Simbulan
Vice Chair, CenPEG

It has been alleged that our post-war and post-independence foreign policy has continued to be dictated by PAX AMERICANA, not by our own assessment of our needs. The behavior and actions of the P-Noy administration during the past three years do not seem to deviate from this pattern.

Since he took over office in 2010, the President has placed foreign policy in the hands of Albert del Rosario and security policy with Voltaire Gazmin, both considered to be very close to Washington circles. Lately, they have been arrogating foreign policy and security policy formulation from the President, and have acted as articulators and spokespersons of Washington and Pentagon in Malacanang.

P-Noy's foreign policy highlights a restoration of U.S. military forces in the Philippines. Not only that. On a strategic level, this foreign policy has adjusted itself to be beyond being a supporting column of Pentagon policy in the Asia-Pacific. It has become like a drone, directed by Washington and Pentagon for surveillance and as an attack dog to those who challenge U.S. hegemony in the Asia Pacific region.

Non-alignment in an emerging multi-polar world should be the formal policy position of the Philippines. In international co-operation, we should look to medium term and even strategic goals of regional security with ASEAN as the vessel. This significant regional collective body should not be downplayed.

If our economic policies set the blueprint of our foreign policy, then we should seek constructivism in our relations with immediate neighbors like China. The reality of the global economy of China should clear the heads of those who are advocating confrontation and war to resolve territorial and maritime disputes. Narrow nationalism should not be the hallmark in engaging a welter of issues as for example territorial claims. We should recognize the ASEAN-style conflict mediation which has kept neighbors from war, starting with the resolution of the conflict between former Kampuchea, which led to the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from that country.

We should be consistent with our counter-hegemonic position. We should not resist not just the hegemony of one emerging global power, and at the same time inconsistently welcome and give in and surrender ourselves to the current superpower, the United States. The latter rides roughshod on our shores and whose troops with their presence and facilities violate our laws and the Philippine Constitution. We should stand up to ANY superpower that violates our national sovereignty and tramples on the dignity of our people and nation.



There is a growing perception among Southeast Asian countries that the Philippine government is the representative of U.S. and even the Japanese government, especially when it openly invites more U.S. military forces and even Japanese military forces on Philippine territory.

The Philippine government's invitation to U.S. and Japanese military forces to use Philippine bases can only stir up Chinese nationalism and give popular support to Chinese hard-liners in the People's Liberation Army. Even within ASEAN, we do not seem to be sensitive to the fact that a resurgent Japanese military in Southeast Asia is not entirely welcome because of the region's experience under the occupation of the Japanese Imperial Army during World War II. China suffered the most during World War II, where many cities especially the entire city of Nanjing which was razed to the ground and its people suffered one of the worst massacres in Asia by the invading Japanese Imperial Army.

Trumpeting the U.S.' Asian pivot and "rebalancing" to counter China in our territorial and maritime disputes with this rich neighbor, using the cold war paradigm will not hold water anymore. Globalization has taken over the Cold War so much so that the economies of China and the U.S. are so integrated and interdependent in the present world. China is now the factory of the U.S. economy, while the U.S. is one of the largest markets for China's exports. So are most ASEAN economies with China, that disengaging would be disadvantageous for both parties.

And when the controllers and bosses in Washington and the Pentagon do not move to direct the drone, we do not move on our own, as when we could not even defend our citizens and people in Sabah when they were just claiming what is legally Philippine territory.

In sum, Philippine foreign policy has not only been U.S. drone-driven. It has acted like a drone controlled by both Washington and the Pentagon. ##