

Former PFVR, Dean Mike Luz, honorable members of the Philippine government, distinguished guests from the diplomatic corps, business, academe, media, civil society and former senior government officials:

Good morning! In behalf of the collaborating organizations and the Secretariat that made today's forum possible, thank you for being here. Today, we will discuss geopolitics.

Briefly, geopolitics is the study of the effects of geography on international politics and international relations. It is multidisciplinary in scope, and includes all aspects of the social sciences--with particular emphasis on diplomacy, political science and law.

Nowhere is geopolitics more pronounced than in Southeast Asia where the world's top 3 powers are engaged for influence and control of the region, for better or for worse, namely: the United States, China and Japan. This is where hard power, soft power and smart power converge.

Central to our forum today is China - now the world's second

most powerful economy and a rapidly rising military power - that has bewildered its neighbors, stretching from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific.

China's hard drive in recent years toward superpower status has triggered a regional arms race and a realignment of America's military forces, resulting in its gradual "pivot" to Asia. The insecurity stemming from its much-criticized behavior is also causing a rebalancing of investments at a time when its economy, fiscal situation and development-impacted communities are facing mounting challenges.

The complex web of relationships, and the sum total of our experiences that continually affect those relationships, drew us to name our forum "Understanding 21st Century China: All under Heaven?" Allow me to explain.

It perplexes us that in this century when interdependence, collaboration and cooperation should be the basis of the new world order, China's behavior seems a throwback to a bygone era of confrontation and armed conflict. Or is it really bygone? A cursory scan of the Web gives a glimpse of what "All under Heaven" means that could possibly explain the unfolding developments since the mid-90's.

"Tianxia (tien-hsia, literally "under heaven") is a phrase in the Chinese language, and an ancient Chinese cultural concept, that denotes either the entire geographical world or the metaphysical realm of mortals, or one that is associated with political sovereignty.

Tianxia connotes the geographical space or area divinely bequeathed to the Emperor by universal and well-defined principles of order. The Imperial court held the center of this land called *Huaxia*. It then went concentrically outward to major and minor officials down to the common citizens and, finally, ending with the fringe "barbarians".

The center of this worldview was not exclusionary. Ethnic minorities and other races that accepted the Emperor's mandate were themselves received and included into the *Tianxia*. (In today's language they would likely be referred to as vassals.) Pundits refer to it as the "The Middle Kingdom Syndrome."

The Emperor, having received the Mandate of Heaven, would nominally be the world's ruler. In areas of the known world that were not under the Emperor's control, Chinese political theory propounds that the rulers of those areas derived their power from the Emperor."

Here in the Philippines, China's *tianxia* has stirred a hornet's nest, the rising of patriotic fervor, a gradual awakening to what nationhood requires to safeguard the national interest, and a long, hard look at our neighbor to the north. Although our countries have had centuries of amity and trade, China has recently displayed disturbing geopolitical deportment.

To help us better understand why and, more important, what to do to manage our bilateral relationship in the decades to come, our three (3) distinguished speakers will expound on China's geopolitics, political trajectory, economy, demographics and socio-cultural conditions. Former Pres. Fidel V. Ramos, and former Chair of the Boao Forum, will later join the panel's deliberations and will give the closing remarks after the Q&A.

We thank AIM for providing us the venue, the Secretariat for their excellent arrangements as usual, and our collaborating partners, namely: the Office of the National Security Adviser; AIM Policy Center; RPDEV; Shell Philippines; Management Association of the Phils; Employers Confederation of the Philippines; Asia Society; the alumni associations of Harvard Kennedy School of Government and Tufts School of Diplomacy; and the Former Senior Government Officials

(better known as FSGO).

Last, but certainly not least, we deeply thank our highly regarded guest speakers today:

- Former Pres. Ramos
- Beijing U Prof Marwyn Samuels
- ADB economist Liping Zheng
- China expert Chito Sta Romana

and, and our distinguished panel of reactors:

- Fred Pascual, UP President;
- Alfonso Siy, President of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
- Wilson Lee Flores, Philippine Star columnist

for accepting our invitation to share their precious time, knowledge and insights. Hopefully, what we learn today will help lead to a better relationship at some point in the future between two sovereign countries based on mutual respect, friendship and across-the-board cooperation.

In the wake of recent news about the filing of our “memorial” in The Hague and the most recent incident in Ayungin, I shall

end on this universally appealing quote from Albert Einstein:

“The world is a dangerous place to live; not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don’t do anything about it.

You may come to the moment when you will have to fight, with all the odds against you, and only a precarious chance of survival.

There may even be a worse case. You may have to fight when there is no hope of victory, because it is better to perish than to live as slaves.”

Thank you and Mabuhay!