Good morning teacher and classmates. I am Kelven, and today I will be sharing about how Singapore must be ready to act if its national interests are threatened.

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The case study I have chosen is about Palau challenging China, and my chosen principle is “We must not become a vassal state”.

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Firstly, I would first like to give a brief introduction about Palau. Palau is a group of islands located southeast of the Philippines and relies on tourism to sustain its economy. In 2015, it saw its highest number of Chinese tourists of around 91 thousand.

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However, since Palau recognises Taiwan as sovereign and supports them, China stopped selling tour packages which led to a 22.7% drop in Chinese tourists. This caused a severe economic crisis in Palau.

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Why did China do this? China sold tour packages to Palau as a “carrot on a stick” plan to get them to switch sides.

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Despite this, Palau remained steadfast in their position and continued to support Taiwan.

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How does this apply to Singapore? As current Minister of Foreign Affairs Vivian Balakrishnan once said, “Whether we are dealing with a key security and economic partner or a large neighbour, Singapore has always stood firm when it comes to our own vital national interests, particularly where it impacts on sovereignty, security and the rule of law”.

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A vassal state can be defined as “a state with varying degrees of independence in its internal affairs but dominated by another state in its foreign affairs and potentially wholly subject to the dominating state”

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Currently in the world, there are growing tensions with USA and China. Both invest in foreign countries, offering protection and swaying others to their side. Singapore has received investments from both countries, but it did not choose a side and remained neutral.

Going back to Palau, they continued supporting Taiwan despite pressure from the Chinese. Like them, Singapore must not give in to foreign threats and must be ready to act if our national interests are threatened.

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I end my speech with a quote, “In the absence of justice, what is sovereignty but organised robbery”.

Thank you for listening.