

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE

PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK

SPEECH OF

PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE

**AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE FORUM OF THE VALDAI
INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSION CLUB**

“WORLD ORDER SEEN FROM THE EAST”

[Delivered at the 1389 Polyana Hotel Valdai Hall in Sochi, Russia | 03
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President Putin; Heads of States; the Valdai Discussion Club; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen:

Good afternoon.

For over two decades after the end of the Cold War, Philippine foreign policy hardly evolved. Russia, for instance, remained on the margins of our diplomacy.

I viewed this as an oversight of strategic proportion. A result of bureaucratic inertia. A symptom of blind attachment to bygone views and assumptions. And a massive failure to grasp change and seize new opportunities.

The Filipino nation, of course, deserve better.

Thus, when I assumed the presidency in 2016, I vowed to correct this. In 2017, I visited Russia for the first time. Although it was cut short, I believe it led to meaningful and historic developments in our relations.

When I say it was cut short, I had to go home because the Marawi, a city in Mindanao in the Philippines was a brewing, evolving into an endless violence.

We intend to stay [on] this path and that is why I am very glad to be here for the second time. I thank President Putin for the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to a robust and comprehensive Philippines-Russia partnership.

I am also grateful to the Valdai Discussion Club for this honor to speak before you on a topic of great importance to us – that of order and change in world politics.

I'm talking about fairness and equality [for] a stable global order.

The liberal global order built after the Second World War was the *Pax Americana* – appears to be under challenge. As the 21st century unfolds, the legitimacy of this order is increasingly questioned, its appeal weakened, and its hold over countries diminished.

I see two key factors that could explain this situation.

First is the combination of exceptionalism and double standards that we have seen time and time again and again from the beginning of the very vanguards of this current order.

The great Russian novelist Lev Tolstoy wrote: "*All happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.*" This is the same line for nations. Developing countries like the Philippines, with our own histories, face different challenges and in our problems that would require different sets of solutions.

Yet, some so-called friends act like they know the answers to our problems and impervious to our [specificities] socio-economic and political conditions.

They create rules and norms for almost everyone, and some refuse to be bound by the same. Think of the UNCLOS, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and even the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

They weaponize human rights oblivious to its damaging consequences to the very people they seek to protect. Just look at the chaos and instability that ensued in Libya and Iraq following military interventions.

Closer [to] home, some of our partners have hurled unfair criticisms against my Government about perceived excesses in our fight against drugs.

They see what they want to see to justify their preconceived notions, and not trying to understand that what truly is happening is there in my country.

Is this how friends treat each other?

We have seen them backtrack from defense contracts over baseless apprehensions that we would use arms to violate human rights. Yet, you see the same countries supplying high-end weaponry to parties whose actual human rights record leaves so much to be desired.

But we only seek to protect our republic [from] those who wish to tear it apart. We only seek to curb criminality that corrodes the very structure of government. We only seek to build a credible defense against those who might be tempted to violate our territorial integrity.

Is this not something that all nations are entitled to? Is this not what democratically elected governments are mandated to do?

By their acts, they weaken my Government's ability to protect law-abiding citizens from the outlaws.

They limit our capacity to stop the vicious cycle of internal conflict and underdevelopment.

And they clip our wings making it more difficult for us to effect meaningful change for our people.

Now let me ask you this. In what universe is this right, justifiable, or fair? Nowhere but in the self-contained bubbles of some societies that had the luxury of developing first.

We are tired of the misguided and self-serving crusades of the few. It is time that they are challenged.

Let me be very clear – I am not against the United States and or the West. The US is a close friend of the Philippines – in fact, our only treaty ally. We have deep ties with the American people, forged by shared history and nourished by common values. America certainly can offer so much more [to] the world.

Let me stress I am not against liberalism. In politics as in the economy, liberalism, to my mind, creates the best pathways to a just and fair society. For a thriving democracy like the Philippines, there is simply no other better alternative to a philosophy that puts premium on the freedom and dignity of the individual.

Our issue is not the current global order, but rather the actions of certain actors that violate the very principles that underpin this order.

The Philippines does not ask for special treatment nor favors from its partners. It does not seek exemption from the norms and principles that have kept the peace in our world for decades.

What we seek- as I assume what the Russian people and all nations also desire - is fairness, equality, and mutual respect. We want a strengthened rules-based order where countries, big or small, are treated the same. We want unimpeded freedom – guaranteed by our constitution - to exercise our right to govern ourselves as a people and as we saw it fit. And we want friends and partners to respect our independence to make sovereign decisions just as we respect theirs.

The principles of respect for state sovereignty, non-intervention, and peaceful resolution of disputes must be upheld at all times, otherwise the order unravels.

This is crucial especially now with the rise of new powers and the relative decline of the old.

The [geopolitical] shift is the second challenge [to] the current global order.

In the remaining three years of my term, we will likewise expand the horizon of Philippine diplomacy by deepening our engagement in Latin America, Africa, and Central Asia.

It is also high time that the Philippines looked at the Middle East with fresh eyes going beyond oil and Overseas Filipino Workers.

As one of the fastest growing economies in the world, the Philippines will assume our twin responsibility of sustaining the growth of our people, while helping other developing countries in their own [journey] to progress.

We will strengthen our economic ties with these regions, opening new markets and with it the free exchange of ideas, technology, and innovation.

For I want the Filipino people to broaden their worldwide view, to be enriched by the cultures and intellectual traditions of the old civilizations of the Americas, Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East.

Indeed, parochialism and isolationism have no place in a world that is getting smaller and smaller by the day. We have to embrace our shared destiny if we are to overcome the existential challenges of our time.

But make no mistake. While we recognize [the interdependence] of nations, we hold fiercely sacrosanct our own independence.

Openness to cooperation without precondition is the answer to the serious threats we face today – from terrorism to climate change, from migration issues to refugee crisis, and from new pandemics to looming shortages of vital resources.

These are multi-dimensional problems that cut across issues of national identity, human rights, development, and sovereignty.

Clearly we have no choice. We have to act together to survive and prosper together.

So instead of using these issues as tools to maintain the status quo – to make the rich richer and the poor poorer – as some wealthy nations are won't to do, we have to help each other.

If we pursue genuine cooperation, we need [not] choose between sustaining development and protecting [the] environment,

Between promoting diversity and maintaining national identities,

Or between upholding human rights and preserving local social order.

Balancing these seemingly contradictory goals is the fundamental challenge of our time.

In this context, our United Nations must step up and reinvigorate global efforts toward creative solutions commensurate to the complexity of our [common] problems. But it must do [so] while upholding the principles and ideals – that all nations – and not only individuals – hold dear.

This is also the opportune time for us in the Global South – those who choose to be non-aligned – to ensure that we remain relevant. More than making our voices heard on issues that deeply affect [us], we must act together.

Your Majesty, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

We [all] have a stake in a stable global order.

In this period of flux, it is important that we expand our notion of “our selves” to include others;

That we choose the enduring power of persuasion over coercion; [and]

That we follow the path of peace in order to achieve our shared and noble aspirations [for] our peoples.

We only wish peace for all mankind.

Thank you. *[applause]*

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