

## INTERVIEW

# Discussion with Philippines Secretary of National Defense

*EIR Asia Editor, Michael Billington interviews the Secretary of National Defense of the Philippines, Maj. General Delfin Lorenzana. Their conversation took place on March 1, 2019.*

**Michael Billington:** Hello, General. How are you?

**Delfin Lorenzana:** Hi, Mike, I'm fine, thank you.

**Billington:** Good to see you again.

**Lorenzana:** First, I'm sorry to hear that Lyn passed away.

**Billington:** Yes, it's a great loss. I think our enemies will be even more fearful of him in death than when he was alive, because his ideas are still there. We have had powerful, wonderful messages from all over the world about how he inspired people, and nations, through ideas which will never die. It's an interesting time.

**Lorenzana:** I remember with fondness my meeting with him in Leesburg.

**Billington:** Round Hill, at his home. I'll ask you to comment on your thoughts about Mr. LaRouche at the end.

**Lorenzana:** OK.

**Billington:** It's great to see you again after such a long time since your time in the United States—13 years I believe ...



Philippine News Agency/Joey O. Razon

*Delfin Lorenzana, Secretary of the National Defense of the Philippines.*

**Lorenzana:** 14 years actually.

### Experiences with Duterte

**Billington:** You served as military attaché at the Philippine Embassy in Washington, and then as head of Veterans Affairs. Now you are the Secretary of National Defense for the Philippines. I know you were appointed soon after Mr. [Rodrigo] Duterte was elected President in 2016, but that you had previous experience with Duterte when he was Mayor of Davao. Could you say a few words about that?

**Lorenzana:** Yes, we first met when I was appointed as a battalion commander of the 2nd Scout Ranger Battalion in Davao, in 1987. Mr. Duterte was the vice mayor then. It was next year, 1988, that he ran for mayor and won. We worked together, closely, for the next two years, in clearing the city of the NPA [New People's Army—the armed wing of the Communist Party], which was in the city.

**Billington:** You were dealing then both with communist and Islamic terrorists, right?

**Lorenzana:** Not at that time. Islamic radicalism was not present in 1987, mostly bandits and communist insurgency.

**Billington:** I know that President Duterte has, both politically and militarily, maintained the historic relations of the Philippines with the United States. However, he had earlier quite openly rejected the policies of President

Obama, who wanted a confrontation with Russia and China. You've been engaged in some of the military diplomacy with Russia and China, since President Duterte came in.

**Lorenzana:** Yes. For the longest time we were dealing only with the United States and its allies—Australia, Japan, and South Korea—all the countries here that had close relations with the United States, only to find out that China and Russia were also very eager to develop relations with us. So, when President Duterte became President, he visited Beijing, and then Moscow, and directed me to visit those countries again, and meet with the defense ministers of China and Russia. We found out that we have a lot of things in common—fighting terrorism, keeping our countries safe, and they were in fact willing to help us develop our own defense capability.

**Billington:** As I recall, under the Obama Administration, the United States was offering military equipment that was more appropriate for fighting China, rather than for fighting terrorism. Is that correct?

**Lorenzana:** (laughs) We did not think of it that way. I wasn't the Secretary then, but I think that we are trying to develop our defense capability.

**Billington:** How have your relations with the United States developed, both politically and militarily, under Presidents Duterte and Donald Trump. How have they evolved?

**Lorenzana:** The relationship is still very strong, Mike. The EDCA [Enhanced Defense Coop-



*Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte has established friendly relations with Russia's President Vladimir Putin ...*



*... and China's President Xi Jinping, while maintaining close ties with the U.S.*

eration Agreement, signed in 2014] is moving along. We just inaugurated the first EDCA facilities at Basa Air Base in central Luzon. I think the next one will be on Palawan Island, facing the South China Sea. EDCA is a follow on to the Visiting Forces Agreement that we signed with the United States in 1998.

### The Mutual Defense Treaty, and China

**Billington:** I understand that you have recently called for a re-evaluation, or a review of the U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty signed in 1951.

**Lorenzana:** Yes, I think that Treaty should have been reviewed when the U.S. left its bases in the Philippines, in 1991, because the parameters of our defense have dramatically changed without the security umbrella of the United States. There are ambiguities we would like to clear up, like which part of the Philippines do they mean when they say “metropolitan Philippines”—does it include some of the shoals and islands that we also claim in the South China Sea?

Now, we still believe that the United States left the Chinese free to do whatever they wanted in 1995, when they, the Chinese,



*President Duterte rejected President Obama's demand for confrontation with China.*

started to occupy Mischief Reef in our 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone [EEZ]. And now that reef is a developed island, an artificial island, with a 3.5-km runway and a lot of facilities. Not only that, China also has facilities on Subi Reef, which is outside our 200-mile EEZ, but it is in viewing distance (14 nautical miles) from another one of our islands, Pag-asa, and it also has a 3-km runway, and is also developed.

So we believe that the ambiguity of the Treaty, I think, left the United States to interpret it the way it wanted to—had they stopped the Chinese at the start in 1995, then we wouldn't have this problem now in the South China Sea, Mike. That's what we believe here in the Philippines.

**Billington:** I would suppose that that question in your mind is that if there were a conflict with China over these islands, whether the treaty would necessitate the United States defending the Philippines. Is that correct?

**Lorenzana:** Yes. The statement of American officials, when they said they do not meddle in territorial disputes, that pretty much gave the Chinese blanket authority to do what they wanted to do in the South China Sea.

**Billington:** There is a second issue you have identified about the Treaty. In the case of a military conflict between the United States and China, would the Philippines be required by the Treaty to join the United States against China?

**Lorenzana:** Yes.

**Billington:** And you don't think that is appropriate for the current relations. Is that right?

**Lorenzana:** Yes. The Treaty will kick in, immediately, because the Treaty calls for one to help the other if the other is attacked, in the Pacific, or any of their ships are attacked, we are involved. Now the problem here, Mike, is that we are within striking distance of Chinese medium range missiles. If U.S. forces would be stationed here, if there is a conflict between the United States and China, then we are a fair target by the Chinese.



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*Mischief Reef, within the Philippine 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone, but occupied by China since 1995.*

**Billington:** Do you think this can be reformed, or revised, in the Mutual Defense Treaty?

**Lorenzana:** We'll see, because we'll also have to listen to the other side, what they propose on the table when we have this formal review.

### **Sovereignty, Terrorism, and Economic Development**

**Billington:** I understand the concern about the sovereignty over these islands. On the other hand I understand that you and President Duterte are trying to work with China on joint development programs for the regions that are contested between the two countries.

**Lorenzana:** Yes, but not me, Mike. It's the Departments of Energy and Foreign Affairs who are trying to ink some kind of agreement on joint development of gas and oil extraction. I think it would work. At present we have a gas field at Malampaya (about 80km NE from El Nido in Palawan Island), operated by the Shell Corporation, and the sharing is 60-40—60% for the Philippines and 40% for Shell. I think the Chinese are also amenable to that kind of sharing, so it will work fine, it will be acceptable to us.

**Billington:** What kind of military aid have you been receiving from China and from Russia? Has it been significant?

**Lorenzana:** Not too significant, but at the height of

the Marawi siege [the five-month battle with ISIS and Abu Sayyaf Islamic terrorists who seized the town of Marawi in Mindanao], China delivered 10,000 rifles, mostly M16s and a couple of million rounds, and about 60 sniper rifles, and they also delivered four fast boats to be used in the South. Russia also delivered 5,000 rifles to us, also M16 compatible, and gave us, I think, 20 big military trucks—also to help us in our fight against the terrorists. That’s about it, Mike. That’s not very significant—very small compared to what we are now receiving from the United States.

**Billington:** The United States also supported that effort in Marawi, right?

**Lorenzana:** Yes, there are still U.S. Special Forces in Zamboanga City—that’s a city in Mindanao, not too far from Marawi. Immediately after the start of the fighting, the United States sent an intelligence team and some drones to help us in Marawi.

**Billington:** Was there any cooperation or contact between the United States, Russia, and China in all of this, or was it completely separate?

**Lorenzana:** Separate, Mike, because no Chinese or Russian troops came in to help us, only troops from the United States. The Australians came to help, they sent two of their P-3 Orion surveillance planes.

### **Progress in the War on Drugs**

**Billington:** The other big fight you have in the Philippines is the war on drugs. As you know, President Duterte’s war on drugs has brought a lot of very, very strong criticism from some in the United States—but not from President Trump, who has supported the fight. And even though the United States is suffering the worst drug crisis in the history of our nation, still people complain about what they consider to be authoritarian policies in dealing with the drug crisis in the Philippines.

So I wonder how you think this war on drugs is going, where it’s heading, and how you deal with some of the British and U.S. criticism, and complaints from international human rights types.

**Lorenzana:** Well, I think it is normal for them to criticize anybody that doesn’t fit their idea of civilized society.

**Billington:** Indeed!

**Lorenzana:** I think we are succeeding in our fight against illegal drugs. There are still a lot of drugs going around the country, because we have a very porous border. Lately our military and fishermen have been fishing bricks of cocaine and meth in the shores of Mindanao, meaning that these drugs are no longer coming in through customs, through containers, but dropped in the sea to be retrieved by their local contacts in the Philippines. That is one of our main efforts now, is to prevent the entry of drugs into the Philippines.

**Billington:** Has the Philippines been a trans-shipment point for drugs into the United States?

**Lorenzana:** They say it is. Some of the cocaine and heroin that come from Asia, especially from the Golden Triangle of Burma, Laos, and Cambodia are coming in here and being trans-shipped anywhere else in the world. But that news came to us a couple of years back, and we aren’t seeing anything like that anymore. But we believe we are still a transshipment point for drugs going into the United States, and also Europe.

### **Build-Build-Build, and the Belt & Road**

**Billington:** As you know, we have been very much involved, Mr. and Mrs. LaRouche, in the development of the idea of the New Silk Road, which especially under Xi Jinping, has become a major international development project, of a scale that is unprecedented in history. I know President Duterte has his Build-Build-Build policy for developing infrastructure and wants to cooperate with China on the Belt and Road. How is that going so far?

**Lorenzana:** Our president’s Build-Build-Build program could be complementary to the program of the Belt and Road Initiative. We are on board, we’ve signed on to the BRI. We’ll see how this will play out in the future.

**Billington:** The Philippines could very well become a hub of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

**Lorenzana:** Yes, very much, we are smack in the center of the trade routes. We will be there.

## The Citizen National Guard

**Billington:** I know that you spoke at the founding convention of the Citizen National Guard [CNG].

**Lorenzana:** Yes.

**Billington:** The CNG was organized by our friend Butch Valdes, who is also the head of the Philippine LaRouche Society.

**Lorenzana:** Yes.

**Billington:** What is your sense of the purpose and the goals of that organization?

**Lorenzana:** I think it is a very good organization. They have lofty ideals and objectives. All they have to do is propagate these ideas all over the country to generate more membership. From there, we can actually pursue some of the plans for the country. It's actually an organization to support the development of the nation. I support that. I am a member of that organization.

## The Philippines as an East/West Bridge

**Billington:** We look at the Belt and Road as a means for breaking down the division between East and West through development corridors, not only in Asia but in the whole world. Besides great development projects, the idea is to create a new paradigm for mankind, which is based not on East vs. West, British imperial divisions of the world, but one where people look at the common aims of mankind.

I think you know that Mr. LaRouche always saw the Philippines as playing a very crucial role in this, because, in a sense, it has one leg in the East and one leg in the West. You have very negative aspects of the impact of the Spanish and American colonial eras, but you have also the positive aspects in terms of assimilating cultures of both East and West. In that sense, as a nation, the Philippines serves as a bridge, despite the adage of the British writer, Rudyard Kipling who asserted, "East is East, and West is West and never the twain shall meet."

How do you actually unite these two parts of the world? What are your thoughts on this?

**Lorenzana:** I think there was actually some push-back on the Belt and Road of the Chinese, but there are so many countries that have signed in to it. There are



criticisms in the papers that the Belt and Road Initiative of the Chinese is hitting some snags, because of suspicions that China is trying to subvert nations by providing soft loans, like in Djibouti and in Sri Lanka. I think that has a negative effect on the minds of people on what this BRI is all about. There is also [talk about] a "debt trap" that is coming out now. I don't know who is disseminating this in the media, but this is having a negative effect, somewhat, on the BRI.

But the way I look at the BRI, it is good, because if you connect the Indochinese Peninsula to Asia, to China then going on to Europe, you open up a lot of roads, other than the Malacca Straits and the Strait of Hormuz. I think that is good, Mike. We support that.

## Win-Win

**Billington:** This brings up another question. I know what you mean by the mass publicity in the West about "debt trap," the Belt and Road is a new imperial plan to take over the world militarily by the Chinese, and so on. We know this to be false. Mr. and Mrs. LaRouche have been involved with the Chinese in planning this from the beginning, and they have this "win-win" idea, to benefit China and benefit everyone else as well.

The BRI is quite the opposite of what was being done by the West for many, many years, which was that they simply refused to invest in infrastructure in the Third World. They would take their raw materials, but they weren't interested in building railroads, or power facilities. So the BRI is looked at by the developing nations in Africa and South America and Southeast Asia as an opportunity to eliminate poverty in their countries the same way the Chinese have done in theirs.

**Lorenzana:** Yes.

## Relations with the U.S., China, India, Russia

**Billington:** But it brings up the question, in the United States—and I don't want to ask you to comment on the internal policies in the United States, but I think you know that President Trump is on the verge of signing a very positive trade deal with China. He praises China as a great country, he wants to be friends with China and Xi Jinping, and yet at the same time his Vice President and some of his Cabinet ministers are preaching that China is the new devil that wants to take over the world and take away everything from the United States. Various heads of state have commented on the difference between President Trump and many of the people around him.

How does that affect your relations with the United States and with Russia and China, whom Trump insists we should be friends with, while others say that those two countries are our enemy?

**Lorenzana:** I know what you mean. I was there when Vice President Pence spoke at the ASEAN Summit. He represented President Trump last November in Singapore. Those were biting words by the Vice President towards China. But it doesn't affect our avowed independent foreign policy by our President. He keeps saying that we are friends to all, enemies to no one. That is why it's about time to closely engage the two superpowers in this region, China and Russia. And also India. I have been to India and they are very much willing to engage us here in Southeast Asia.

**Billington:** Is India also engaging in military affairs with the Philippines?

**Lorenzana:** They want to. We are looking at some of their hardware, to be bought by us. Our navy has been there already. We might buy some from them. And also Turkey. I went to Turkey as well, and they are so willing to come here, and put up some of their defense



PPD/King Rodriguez

*President Duterte and Secretary Lorenzana consulting at a military event in Malacanán.*

industries here in the Philippines. We want to engage everyone.

**Billington:** Yesterday, in the United States, there was a meeting of leading people, including former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright; former NATO Secretary General, Rasmussen, and Rep. Adam Schiff, the congressman who is most vociferous in denouncing Russia and denouncing President Trump as a tool of Russia.

**Lorenzana:** Yes, I know him.

**Billington:** These people said at this conference that there is now the greatest threat to democracy since the rise of fascism in the 1930s coming from the new authoritarian governments, naming Turkey, the Philippines ...

**Lorenzana:** Ha ha!

**Billington:** ... Russia, China, of course. It is their idea that nationalist governments which look to building their nations in collaboration with all other countries, as you say, that this is somehow a danger to western democracy, that is, what they consider to be democracy. I'll allow you to respond to Madeline Albright and Adam Schiff.

## We Don't Listen to Fake News

**Lorenzana:** We don't mind, we don't listen to those words, Mike, we have our own understanding of the interests of our country and we will follow it. We have listened to those words before, and they didn't get us anywhere. We are on the right track now with President Duterte.

**Billington:** I would support that, and I know that Mr. and Mrs. LaRouche do as well. On Philippine history, with the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos, he and his wife Imelda at the time had a similar view of wanting to develop the industrial infrastructure. They had big industrial projects and self-sufficiency plans in agriculture, and also wanted to establish friendly relations with China, even when at that time, China was considered even more of a communist outpost. But they tried to establish relations with China, Iran and others. I think this is one of the reasons that they were targeted by the neoconservative movement at that time.

**Lorenzana:** Exactly!

## U.S. Overthrew Marcos, and Now Maduro?

**Billington:** George Schultz and others ran the overthrow of the Philippine government. Would you concur with that?

**Lorenzana:** Yes, I believe that in the overthrow of Marcos the United States had a big role. I have seen a video of Marcos when he went to the U.S., I think in 1981 or 1982. During the Q&A, the Mutual Defense Treaty [MDT] came up—at that early time Marcos was already saying that we should take a look at this MDT, because he said the MDT was ratified by the Philippine Senate when it had only an executive signature from the U.S. President. He said, if something happened in the South China Sea—that early, Mike, in 1981, 82—if something happened in the South China Sea, the U.S. [President] would still need to go to your Senate, while we are dying here. That's exactly what he said. I'd like to review it again, because I'd like to show to the people here that the idea of reviewing the MDT is not new, it has been broached since the time of Marcos.



Public Domain/Dino Bartomucci

*Former President Ferdinand Marcos in 1982, with then U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz, who orchestrated the “color revolution” that deposed him.*

**Billington:** There was the creation of a color revolution sponsored by foreign interests, which openly supported this, then argued that this was a reason for the United States to become involved.

I'm sure you are aware that what is taking place in Venezuela right now is very similar to the way that Marcos was overthrown.

My view is that one of the most important things Trump has said as President is that the invasion of Iraq was an absolute disaster.

**Lorenzana:** Yes.

## ... And Made Middle East a War Zone

**Billington:** ... turning the entire Middle East into a war zone with terrorist organizations, using arms from the United States, intended to overthrow people the U.S. considered dictators.

**Lorenzana:** I was the Defense attaché in the U.S. when Iraq was attacked in 2003. I had arrived in Aug. 2002. Before the attack was launched, I think a week before, all the defense attachés were called to the Pentagon, and were given a briefing on the impending operation. Someone asked after the briefing, “What will they do after they've won, after they defeated the Iraqi Republican Guards, what will they do?” And that's the problem. There was no exit strategy nor any strategy to hold on to the country. And American troops are still there. How many years?

**Billington:** There is still chaos in Libya, Iraq. They tried in Syria.

**Lorenzana:** And I think the United States wanted to remove the Syrian President Assad.

**Billington:** I don't think so. I don't think President Trump will allow that. When he announced the pullout of the troops ...

**Lorenzana:** I was talking about Obama. [President Barack] Obama wanted to remove Assad.

**Billington:** Yes, I'm sorry, that's true. We mobilized opposition to that, and many in the military had by that time learned the lesson of the disaster in Iraq and Libya and basically said no to Obama. Through fake news, Assad was accused of using chemical weapons, which was simply a lie orchestrated by the British White Helmets, to make it look like the Syrian Arab Armed Forces were doing that.

Unfortunately this is happening now in Venezuela, creating incidents in which the hope is that somebody gets killed, and use that to justify a military intervention. I bring this up because I think that Duterte also represents a nationalist leader—actually I think much better than [Nicolás] Maduro ever has been—but in the case of the Philippines you have a much more forceful and creative leader.

### Is Duterte Next?

Is there a concern that you might see this neoconservative crowd in the West try to intervene against President Duterte?

**Lorenzana:** Yes, we are afraid of that, Mike. We have been cautioned by our friends that the neocons might try to take out the President. Even President Duterte talked about that several times in his public speeches. They are watching what our President does, that if he does things that align with their interests, as the neocons see it, or if President Duterte gets closer with the Chinese, Russia and India. But China said



PPD/King Rodriguez

*President Duterte in 2016, with Delfin Lorenzana on his left, giving his signature "fist" salute, in 2016.*

they don't want a military alliance with anybody. They want to have trade relations with everybody. They want to help people to improve themselves so that we can trade. I think that is what the Chinese are saying.

### Can the 'Big Four' Come Together?

**Billington:** You mentioned China, Russia and India, that you have been involved with. I think you know that Mr. LaRouche refers to what he calls the "Four Powers," that is, Russia, China, India, along with the United States representing European culture, the four great cultures of Eurasia, with Europe in total chaos now.

If these four nations came together, this would give them the necessary strength to replace the bankrupt financial system with something along the lines of the Alexander Hamilton policies, the Franklin Roosevelt policies, the best of the American System historically. Again I see the role of the Philippines as crucial, being friends of Russia, China, India and the U.S., a link, a bridge, bringing these cultures together to achieve a new paradigm. Not war and depression as we see around the globe today, but one that is based on taking the New Silk Road idea and a new financial system based on development, to bring the world together around the common aims of mankind.



**Lorenzana:** Our problem now, Mike, is that we are looking at post Duterte, when a new President comes in. We don't know if that President will be pursuing the same ideas that our President is doing now. But let's see. Hopefully we can get another Duterte, so that we can continue the programs that he started.

**Billington:** Let me close by asking—you said that you were aware that Mr. LaRouche passed away on Feb. 12. You had the opportunity many times during your 14 years in Washington to meet Mr. LaRouche. I wonder how you see his impact on yourself, your nation and the world.

### Lyndon LaRouche

**Lorenzana:** Yes, Mike, I had a one-on-one with you and Mr. LaRouche in 2003 at his home in Virginia, and so many times I would listen to his speeches in Washington, D.C. I think his ideas will live on. He worked for cooperation among nations, to uplift the lives of all people of the world. That's why he went around, speaking in Europe, in Asia, all over the world.

Unfortunately, some of his ideas did not match the

ideas of some people in the States, that's why he was in hot water for a while. They could put him in prison, but they could not stop his ideas from spreading. So I am very sad that he passed away, but I believe his ideas will live on, through you, through the *EIR*, propagating them.

**Billington:** Anything else you'd like to say to those around the world who follow us?

**Lorenzana:** Yes, my message to the world is let's continue to cooperate. This divide, East and West, "Evil Empire," and all those words that divide should be stopped, and let us cooperate.

I was talking to some of my friends a couple of days back. We were looking at the amount of money we spend on defense. Look at this money, which could be used to develop our land and our people, that should be more beneficial to future generations. But here we are, in an arms race. I think we should stop this once and for all and start developing our countries. That's my message.

**Billington:** Thank you very much.

NEW RELEASE, **Volume II**

## The New Silk Road Becomes the World Land-Bridge:

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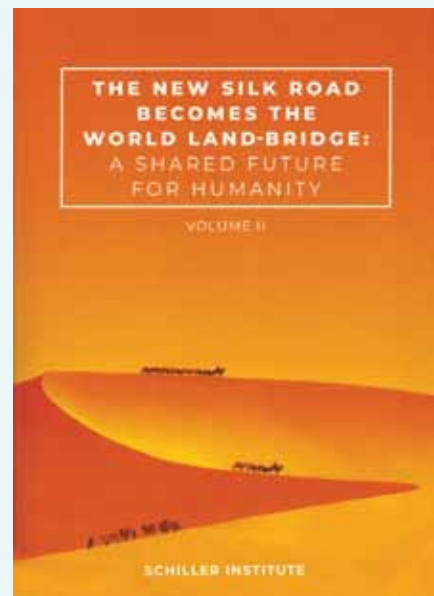
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