



## **A DAMAGED PRESIDENCY, A BESIEGED ADMINISTRATION**

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*Abstract*

### **A FOREIGN POLICY NOT OUR OWN: Four Years into the BS Aquino Administration**

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Commemorating Apolinario Mabini's 150th birth anniversary this July 23 is an opportunity to reflect on the direction of the foreign policy of our nation under the four years of the BS Aquino administration. For Mabini was the first secretary of foreign affairs of our country who, because of his unyielding struggle against Spanish colonialism and U.S. imperialism, has become a symbol of genuine self-determination, independence, and the defense of our national sovereignty. Mabini would put to shame his successors especially the incumbent one at the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Foreign policy is the most powerful instrument for a government determined to develop and secure its territory. In our relations with the Big Powers, we must know about them, and learn from them so we can effectively deal with them. We must be careful not to become pawns of either side in their struggle for hegemony.

Where should we stand in these big-power quarrels? We must, in accordance with the 1987 Constitution, defend our sovereignty and territorial integrity from all big powers seeking hegemony and control over the West Philippine Sea. We have the following options:

1. Being a junior partner/follower of one of the competing powers which will make our country a possible target of attack in a future conflict;
2. We can embark on an independent, patriotic posture. This means not allowing ourselves to be employed or used as a pawn in this big power struggle for resources in the region. This means asserting and resisting actual violations of Philippine sovereignty and territorial integrity committed by Chinese and U.S. forces. This includes punishing all those who commit environmental destruction of Philippine waters and our seabed resources, pursuing crimes committed by Chinese poachers and encroachment inside our territory, including crimes committed by U.S. soldiers who violate our laws.

I argue that the best option is an INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY, a policy that extends friendship to all and enmity to none, a policy that gives primacy to our national interests independent of the conflict between Big Powers, a policy that above all, refocuses our attention and effort on the most urgent issue, which is accelerated economic growth and the elimination of poverty, on which all other sources of national strength depend. Relations with other countries should utilize trade, economic relations, investments, loans cultural and people to people exchanges to support domestic policies that will really enhance agricultural development and genuine industrialization.