

Ambassador Zhao Jianhua Meets the Philippine Media

On June 5th 2015, H.E. Zhao Jianhua, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the Republic of the Philippines invited Philippine media to his residence, briefed them on China-Philippines relations, and answered questions on South China Sea, freedom of navigation and regional security issues. The following is the full text of the briefing and Q&A:

Zhao: 40 years have passed since our two countries established diplomatic relations. So these days I've been reflecting on how I can comment on the 40 years of the diplomatic relations. I think there are 3 key words. First is peaceful, second is friendly, and the third is cooperative. If you look back at the development of our bilateral relationship for the past 40 years, you can see that it has been developing continuously, until now we have come across some difficulties. But by and large, I would say our bilateral relations have been good. I can give you several examples to support my comment. One is people-to-people contact and friendship is deeply rooted. I've been here for one and a half years, while I noticed that the majority of the Filipino people are very friendly to the Chinese people. I think vice versa, the Chinese people are also friendly to the Filipinos. And secondly, the bilateral trade volume has reached over 44.4 billion US Dollars. Last year, it gained a nearly 17% increase. If we plus Mainland China and Hong Kong, China is the NO.1 trading partner of the Philippines. And thirdly, although we have seen slight decline in the number of tourists from China to the Philippines, last year the number still registered at 430,000. And there is great potential for more Chinese tourists to come into the Philippines. So by and large I would say the 40 years of the relationship is good, and still I see its greater potential in the future despite the difficulties we have.

I think it is in the interest of both China and the Philippines to focus on the shared interests and the common ground between our two countries. The prime task for both governments is to focus on economic and social developments, for which our peoples, the ordinary working class will benefit. You know China has become a economic giant. In terms of the GDP, we are No. 2 in the world now, and we are developing at a rate of 7% growth annually. Some people say China's development has slowed down, from double digits to one digit. But if you consider even 7% of economic growth each year, that still means a 700 billion US

Dollars growth. That's somewhat a number parallel to the GDPs of several Western European countries. Since the basic number is big, we are not seeking a fast economic growth. Instead, we are seeking the quality of the economic growth. So there's great potential for China's economic development, also for enhancing economic and trade relations between our two countries. Sooner or later, the Mainland China will become the No. 1 trading partner of the Philippines. And as far as investment concerned, we have been encouraging Chinese enterprises to come to the Philippines to invest. You know China is good at infrastructural projects, and so far, as I observe, the Philippines is suffering from the bottleneck of infrastructural projects. That's the area with the greatest investment potential. And thirdly, the outbound tourists from China to other countries in the world has exceeded 100 million. I can give you examples. To the Thailand each year we have 4 million Chinese tourists, to Malaysia 4 million, to Indonesia is around 1 million. Those numbers are still increasing. But here in the Philippines, we only have 430,000. You can just imagine, in the future if there are 2 million or 4 million China tourists coming to the Philippines, how big contribution these Chinese tourists will make to the development of the Philippine economy. So those are the areas I think we have great cooperation potentials. That's why I'm quite optimistic about the future of our bilateral relations.

We do have problems, difficulties, I mean disputes in the South China Sea. The disputes have been there for decades. China's position on these disputes has been clear and consistent. China has indisputable sovereignty over Nansha Islands and adjacent waters. And in the meantime, it has always been China's policy to settle these disputes through peaceful negotiations. The policy is here today and will remain unchanged in the future. Some people tend to think that China is thinking about military solution. I can say those people are too imaginative. Let me tell you why. First, China is concentrating on its own reforms, so that we can upgrade our economic structure, provide even better life to the over 1.3 billion people. This is the concentration and primary task of China. The major reasons for China to develop so fast over the past nearly 40 years are not only those reform measures we have implemented, but also the stable and peaceful regional environment we have been benefiting from. It's not in China's interest at all to disrupt this favorable stable environment. Second, South China Sea has been serving as a very important sea-line of navigation and transportation, not only for other countries but mostly for China itself. Nearly 60% of goods imported to and exported from China have been going through South China Sea. More importantly, nearly 80% of oil and gas China has been importing from other parts of the world are going through South China Sea. In this sense, it is the lifeline for China's economic growth. And third, no country in this region would like to see instability or even conflict in South China Sea. China will not go against

the common will of our neighboring countries to do such a thing. So it is in China's interest as well as in our neighbors' interest to keep South China Sea a sea of peace, a sea of cooperation and a sea of friendship. We would like to continue our policy for peaceful settlement of the disputes we have, not only with the Philippines but also with other claimants in South China Sea. This policy will remain unchanged. We would like to see the Philippine side to come back to the negotiation table. The door for bilateral negotiation is open and will remain open, until we come together and find a peaceful solution to those disputes. Let me say that don't worry, China will not fight a war against the Philippines. China will not seek any kind of military solution to the disputes.

So for the next 40 years of bilateral relations, I'm not talking about 4 years, I'm talking about 40 years, we need to think very hard, given the current difficult circumstances, what China and the Philippines should do in order to bring our bilateral relationship into a better and more prosperous future? While we are thinking about these issues, we should bear in mind the common interests of the peoples of our two countries. If you can take a serious attitude and think hard about what kind of relationship we should have in the next 40 years, I think we can sooner or later realize that only by sitting together, by talking to each other, by cooperating with each other can we ensure a better future of our bilateral relations.

So that's what I would like to say, and I am pleased to answer your questions.

Q: Ambassador, I think the main source of the recent contention has to do with the reclamation project in South China Sea, and I think your idea about resume talks and find peaceful settlements will be welcomed. Would China be willing to consider, for example, holding the reclamation project to show the gesture of your good will to the Philippine side in order to resume bilateral talks?

Zhao: Well, the project is going on. First of all, let me make it clear, from our perspective, what we are doing falls totally within our territory. We have the right to build facilities. We have the right to improve the living and working conditions of the people stationed on these islands and reefs. Secondly, given the lesson we have learned from the disappearing of the MH370, we have come to realize that, on the vast ocean, it is really essential for us to set up facilities which can provide services of search and rescue. So it is China's wish that in the future, if it is necessary, we can open these facilities to our neighboring countries, including the Philippines, and to the international community in conducting search and rescue, scientific research and environment protection. In the meantime, the aim of the reclamation is to ensure navigation safety. You know there

are so many ships going through South China Sea. With these facilities we can provide services not only to the ships from China, but also to the ships from other countries. So it is a matter meant to provide services.

Of course, from our official position, we have the right to protect our sovereignty. But it is not primarily for military purpose. On the contrary, some other country try to come back to the Philippines, by asking more than two military bases for them to redeploy the most advanced troops in the world. They have also announced publicly that 60% of their navy and air forces would be deployed in this region, particularly in the Philippines. So who is militarizing the region? I don't have to point it out.

Q: What is the best way to make the Philippines and China talk again? Has the invitation been formally extended to the Government? Does the Philippine side have any response?

Zhao: As a matter of fact, before the Philippine side filed the arbitration case, the channels for bilateral consultation were open, and were working. To our surprise, with the decision to file the arbitration case, the Philippine side claimed that the bilateral negotiations were useless, because after so many years of talks and so many rounds of negotiations, nothing has been produced. In accordance with the requirement of the Tribunal, one of the pre-conditions to file the arbitration case is that you have exhausted all bilateral means. By filing the arbitration case, the Philippine side has suddenly closed all the bilateral channels of communications and negotiation. So we have no way to negotiate. About how we can resume the bilateral? I think the Filipino side has to rethink the filing of arbitration case.

You may know we have had territorial disputes with Vietnam, but China and Vietnam successfully concluded an agreement on land border. You know how long it took us to negotiate? It's more than half of a century. You may know China shares border with Russia for over 4000 kilometers, but China and Russia successfully concluded a treaty on the land border issue. You know how many years it took? It's over 40 years. Issues concerning sovereignty and sovereign rights have always been very sensitive. To be frank, it's not easy for any side to back down, we understand that. We hope the Philippine side can also understand it requires patience, wisdom, and the sense of responsibility to reach a peaceful solution which is agreeable to both sides. This is a common practice in the international community.

All major territorial issues can be settled through bilateral negotiations. And there are some people who say China is a big country, we are the smaller one. How can we sit together with the big one to negotiate equally? I think it is not logical at all. United States is the biggest country

in terms of power. But the Philippines has concluded many agreements with the US. Can we say the agreements are all unequal because the Philippines is smaller? Apart from the United States, the Philippines has also negotiated with Indonesia for over 20 years and concluded an agreement on maritime boundary. Is that also an unequal agreement as far as the Philippines' concerned? Why when it comes to disputes with China, someone will say as China is big, the Philippines does not have equality to negotiate with China? What kind of logic it is? It is double standards.

And people would say that the arbitration case is a better option, why China is not participating in the arbitration case? Let me take the opportunity to make it clear. As a party to the UNCLOS, China has the right not to accept and participate in the arbitration. If you look at Article 298 of the UNCLOS, you will find it gives a party the right not to accept arbitration. China is not the only country to do this. 34 other countries, including the United Kingdom, Australia, Thailand, South Korea, all announced that in accordance with Article 298, they do not accept arbitration. So it's China's legal right not to accept any kind of arbitration as described in the UNCLOS under article 298.

China would not accept arbitration case filed by the Philippines. Neither will China accept any arbitration case filed by any other country. It does not mean that China has no legal basis to support our sovereignty claim in the South China Sea. It's our legal rights not to accept arbitration.

I can give you three reasons. The first is that, given what China has experienced for the past over 100 years when we were invaded and bullied by the western powers, independence, self reliance, and issues of sovereignty are so dear to the heart of the Chinese people. We can not let other people to decide our territorial issues. Ours is ours. Second, according to our experience I mentioned earlier, when it come to border disputes or land disputes with other countries, the best and the most practical settlement is through bilateral negotiations. Only by bilateral negotiations shall we reach a solution mutually acceptable, mutually binding and durable. Thirdly, when it comes to interpretation of international laws, including UNCLOS, people have different understandings. There is no unified standards to apply some of the articles of the whole law into a specific issue. So we are not sure if there is a unified international interpretation. You know the world sometimes does not have a fair interpretation when it comes to issues concerning China. So these are the additional reasons why we have reservation with regard to the arbitration and UNCLOS.

Q: President Aquino made remarks comparing China to Nazi during his visit to Japan. What's your opinion?

Zhao: Actually, 1.3 billion Chinese People are angry and outraged by the remarks. In my view, the remarks are totally unacceptable and irresponsible. The Filipino people still have very vivid memory of which country invaded and brutally occupied the Philippines during the Second World War. They should also have a good memory of how many people were massacred by the Japanese Nazis. How many women and girls were forced into being comfort women by the Japanese military. So if we say there is any Nazi in Asia, that is the Japanese Nazi.

Throughout over 1000 years' interactions between the Chinese and Philippines, China has always been a peaceful and friendly partner. China has never colonize the Philippines and never invaded the Philippines. So how can you say China is a Nazi? In addition, it is very ironic for the remarks to be made in Japan. Given the history that Japan invaded not only China, but also the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries, you know Chinese people have been very very sensitive about the Japanese attitudes towards their history of aggression. There are still people in Japan, including those important officials, who deny the atrocities and crimes they committed during the Second World War. And it is outrageous to make the remarks in front of the Japanese to accuse Chinese as Nazi. It seriously hurt the feelings of 1.3 billion people. I think anyone including those people who remember the atrocities committed by the Japanese during the Second World War in the Philippines must also have been hurt.

We do have our problems, difficulties and differences over some of the islands and reefs in the South China Sea. But this requires calm and reasonable diplomatic measures to deal with. You should not use those sensational and evil words to describe a country, who fought together with the Philippine people and the United States against the Japanese aggression. We can deal with the disputes directly in a calm manner but you don't have to hurt the feelings of the Chinese people. You don't have to hurt the feelings of the victims of the Japanese aggression in Asian countries, including the Philippines itself. So that is why I said I am saddened and angered by those remarks. Mature diplomacy requires basic protocols, and requires people to be calm and reasonable, no matter how difficult and how sensitive the differences are. I don't think it is a proper remark. Actually the remarks hurt the feelings of 1.3 billion Chinese people. If you understand Chinese language, you can read through all the Chinese publications and see how they are reacting to the remarks. I hope that this kind of remarks will not be repeated.

Q: Is China filing complains to the Philippines on the remarks made by President Aquino?

Zhao: I think our spokesperson of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China

has expressed our outrage and strong dissatisfaction over the remarks. I haven't heard any following measures but I will not exclude following measures given the serious nature of the remarks.

Q: How do you see that a lot of the Filipinos, even the majority of the public do not understand that President Aquino's remarks are sensitive and they don't know how much the Chinese people are hurt?

Zhao: This year is the 70th anniversary of the victory of the Second World War. The Chinese side will hold a national ceremony to commemorate the victory over Japanese aggression. I have talked to some of the officials of DFA of the Philippines and they told me they also plan to host several ceremonies or activities to commemorate the victory over the Japanese during the Second World War. It means that some of the Filipinos still remember that part of history. But to be frank, as far as history concerns, I don't think some of the agencies and some of the Philippine departments did a good job in terms of collecting the documents to remember exactly what happened. I remember that one philosopher said, if you do not remember history, history repeats itself. So we need to take history as a mirror, to reflect what we have suffered, what we have achieved in the past, and take them as indications for the future. I've noticed that the relationship between Japan and the Philippines has been developing. This is something between Japan and the Philippines. But I wish this kind of bilateral relations could be conducive to regional stability and prosperity. And this kind of relationship should not be developed at the expense of any third party. I think this also goes with other bilateral relations between the Philippines and other countries.

Q: How does China see the regional freedom of navigation?

Zhao: In our view, there has never been any problem in terms of freedom of navigation in the South China Sea despite the disputes over Nansha Islands, which you call Spratly Islands. Even today, even right now ships are going through South China Sea in a very safe manner. There are no problems in the free navigation in the South China Sea and there will be no problems in the future as far as China is concerned. China is the last country who wants to see any instability over the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. It is not in China's interests at all. Why do some countries always use the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea as an excuse to criticize China? Have you ever thought about it? As far as the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea is concerned, I think people should know which country is most capable of disrupting or even cutting off the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. It is natural for some people to worry about this when that country announced to deploy 60% of its navy and air forces to the Pacific, particularly in the Philippines. That is a kind of threat to freedom of navigation as far as

China concerned, given the fact that the US, if I may say, is the most powerful nation in terms of the navy and air force equipment. So we would like to work with ASEAN members to safeguard the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea continuously. The Chinese side will avoid doing anything that is harmful to the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea and will firmly oppose to any attempt to disrupt freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

Q: What if US deploys other planes and ships to the South China Sea?

Zhao: I think there's a difference between freedom of navigation and infringement upon other country's sovereignty. Freedom of navigation means that commercial ships and even military ships can pass through without threats to any country's sovereignty or sovereign rights. You can not use the excuse of freedom of navigation to intrude or infringe upon other countries' sovereignty or sovereign rights. It is against the international law. China has ratified the UNCLOS and so did the Philippines. And that country has not ratified it at all. Why? Because there are articles in the UNCLOS that they think will prohibit them from doing what they want to do. So freedom of navigation and infringement upon other country's sovereignty are entirely different matters. We can not confuse these two.

Q: How will China and the Philippines come over the challenge considering President Aquino's strategy to invite the US and other countries to step in Asia?

Zhao: That's something I feel very challenging as Chinese ambassador here. But what I am trying to do is to consolidate friendship among our two peoples to promote bilateral trade and investment relations, to enhance cultural exchanges and to promote cooperation in the area of tourism. You might have heard the view that people should not fail to see the forest for trees. We do have problems and disputes in the South China Sea, but that is only a tiny part compared to the overall relationship. For anyone who is responsible, who have sense of responsibility for the future of our bilateral relations, the entire bilateral relationship should not be held as a hostage by the single issue. So I hope more and more people will share my view, when we are dealing with our differences, we need to focus on the shared interest, on the common ground. In that way, we can create better atmosphere and conditions for a peaceful settlement of the disputes. I do not expect the disputes between our two countries to be settled overnight. There is no silver bullet, but once we start the process of bilateral negotiations, I think we can negotiate in a calm and quiet manner. In the meantime, we will promote even more cooperation in areas of shared interests. That is how our bilateral relations should go in the future. I don't know whether I have answered your question or not.

Any more questions?

Q: In order to move forward, we should make the first move in terms of endorsing a negotiation. Were there any efforts from both ends to start such negotiation?

Zhao: China has always been making efforts to resume, to reopen our bilateral channels. But some people in the Philippines are afraid if they open the bilateral channels, it will weaken the case of arbitration at the tribunal, because the precondition for filing the arbitration is that bilateral means have been exhausted. But we are still making efforts to resume our bilateral negotiation and talks. I hope the time is now, even today.

Q: Ambassador, you said there is no precondition now for resuming bilateral talks, no condition attached. But it was mentioned by some Chinese officials that one precondition is dropping of the arbitration case before bilateral negotiations start.

Zhao: No, there is no such precondition, because as a matter of fact, we have already announced we will not accept or participate in the arbitration. So the result of the arbitration is not binding as our side is concerned. This is the legal right of China. We have not used dropping of the case as a precondition for resumption of bilateral talks. It seems that the Philippine side itself shut the door in order to secure that they have a strong position at the tribunal.

Q: what do you think the US will do to help the Philippines in this problem?

Zhao: Are you sure the US is helping you? Some people say that the US is the big help for the Philippines. But our experience is the US is very pragmatic. Let me first of all share some of my views on the bilateral relationship between China and US. The bilateral trade volume has exceeded 500 billion US dollars annually. China is the largest creditor of the US, who holds 1.23 trillion US treasury bonds. So the bilateral relations have a very solid economic and commercial base, which both sides have benefited tremendously. Apart from that, both China and United States are permanent members of UN Security Council. We shared lots of common interests in terms of regional and global issues, such as climate change, anti-terrorism, and drug trafficking. It requires both sides to work together to deal with those regional and global issues. And thirdly, we do have differences over certain issues, including the issues in the South China Sea. But I think both sides, particularly both leaderships, have a clear understanding that our common interests far outweigh our differences.

It is not, as you said, worthwhile to jeopardize such important bilateral relations over a specific issue. It will be illusionary to think that someone can drag the United States into a military conflict with China. The cost is too big. And it also would be illusionary for some people to think they are able to divide Asian countries into different blocs, fighting against each other. The general trend in this region is that everybody is for stability, everybody is trying to develop their economy. The world and this region have become so integrated and dependent on each other. Any conflict, any instability would cost heavily, in terms of economic or national development. So it is a common aspiration of all countries in this region to see peace and stability, development and prosperity. It will be against the common aspiration if anybody wants to divide this region into different blocs. Cold war mentality is outdated. It will never work. And there is a risk for some people to think there will be a military solution to the disputes we have in the South China Sea. It would be risky and even stupid to think by ganging up with some people who have big guns can they force China into surrendering its national sovereignty and sovereign rights. China may be weaker compared to the United States and some other countries in terms of military equipments and capabilities. But our determination is not weak. It is as firm as rock. If anyone who actually starts a military conflict, he will be recorded in human history as a criminal, because that will bring not only disasters but also catastrophes, not only to this region but to the whole world. Let's give up all those unrealistic ideas. Let's come back to the negotiating table and have a peaceful solution. If we can not settle it now, we can be patient to discuss and negotiate for another 100 years. But make sure those disputes do not prevent from developing our common interests. That is the only option.

Q: Have you made the offer of bilateral negotiation to Aquino administration?

Zhao: The offer has been there, though the Chinese people are still angry about the remarks. Our position has been clearly stated to the Philippine side. The door to the bilateral negotiation is wide open. You are most welcomed any time when you want to return.

Q: It looks like the Philippines and Japan are preparing for military solution. For example, just this morning, President Aquino announced that the Philippines and Japan started to discuss the Visiting Force Agreement. Yesterday, they had signed joint declaration which initiated discussion on transfer of military equipment.

Zhao: Let me put it in this way, no country should allow itself to be a cat's paw of others, and no country can use other countries as cat's paws. Every country in this region or in this world has its own interest to consider. As I said earlier, we are not opposed to the normal development

of bilateral relationship between the Philippines and Japan. But I would like to emphasize again this kind of relationship should not be developed at the expense of a third country, namely China. It would be risky to think of ganging up other countries to settle the problems. It can only lead to further escalation and possibility of military conflict in this region. And no one is going to win. Everybody is going to lose in terms of precious stability and peace, in terms of precious opportunity for development, in terms of precious human lives. That is something China will do everything to avoid. And we hope other countries, including the Philippines, will do the same thing.

Q: The Philippines, the US and Japan are taking part in the South China Sea issue. Their relations are getting closer and closer. What will this result to peace and development?

Zhao: As I said, military alliances or military blocs will not be conducive to the peaceful development in the region, and to the peaceful solution to the disputes we have. We have two words in English: “action” and “reaction”, and there is another word “interaction”. So if you choose the action, you choose the consequences of the action. China will certainly resolutely defend its sovereignty and sovereign rights. We have been doing this ever since the People's Republic of China was founded. If you look at the history of the PRC, you will clearly find that no country can contain China. Because China is not an aggressor. China has always been sticking to the path of peaceful development, to the path of cooperation with other countries. So there is nothing wrong with China. So sooner or later, as a matter of fact most of the countries in the world have come to realize that China is a force for peace, for stability. When it comes to our sovereignty and sovereign rights, we will not resort to military solution, but we will get prepared in case others resort to military solution. We've got to make sure China can protect itself.

Q: One more question about the AIIB. There is new comment from President Aquino. In the past it has been very eager to join AIIB. But yesterday, there were some changes. As President Aquino said we are still studying to join the AIIB. He even talked before that the loan the Philippines get from China was neither helpful nor friendly.

Zhao: Well it's the Philippines' right to decide whether to join or not. If the Philippine side decides to finally be a founding member, it is most welcomed. But if the Philippine side decides not to join, let me say frankly, we have nothing to lose. The AIIB is meant to help countries in this region to develop infrastructures. It is the initiative that would benefit all countries in this region and beyond. You may have noticed there are so many countries which would like to become founding members of the AIIB. I think it would be in the interests of the Philippines to join the

AIIB for its future economic development, particularly for the development of infrastructural projects badly needed in this country. China wouldn't force the Philippines to join. It's the Philippines' decision and its choice.

At the very beginning, there are countries who are suspicious, who even try to prevent China from establishing the AIIB. But the fact is that they failed. It has demonstrated that majority of the countries in this region and countries in other regions have come to realize that China's initiative is for the common good. There are all together 800 billion US dollars shortage of fund for infrastructure development in Asia. The World Bank, IMF and ADB combined can not fill this gap. But most of the developing countries in this region are suffering from the bottlenecks of insufficient and inefficient infrastructure. So it is China that proposes to set up this fund and makes the greatest contribution to the set up of this Bank. And China will contribute immensely in the future.

Does China have any interest in setting up this AIIB? Yes. We have a large foreign reserves. We need to use some of them to develop infrastructure and linkages with our neighboring countries. So that will be easier for China's goods, people and capital to move to other markets in neighboring countries. And vice versa. It will be much easier for other countries to engage in trade and investment with China. Well it is in China's interests, but we are not pursuing our interests at the expense of our neighboring countries. We are trying to work out a win-win situation. And that is the only way forward. We are not forcing any country to open its market to receive Chinese products. It is something that has been done on a voluntary basis. We are very happy to see so many countries responded so positively. And the AIIB is going to be operational by the end of this year. I hope this will benefit all participants and members, particularly in this area. If I say the region doesn't need military bases, it indeed needs investments and infrastructure projects.

I was told a story by a Chinese Filipino. He ordered some Christmas gifts for this year but he has to keep them for the next Christmas. You know why? Because of the port congestion. It was delayed well after the Christmas. So there is an urgent need for the Philippines to develop its infrastructure. But anyway, it's up to the Philippine side to decide.

Q:Can I ask a following question? You mentioned the structures you built in the South China Seas are opening up for cooperation with countries including the Philippines. But how can you reassure the Philippines of that intent when the Philippine fishermen on TV were water cannoned? I mean given the history, how do you reassure the people this offer that you stated?

Zhao: Well, let me clear the fact about the water cannon. There are so many media reports covering this. China uses water cannon in a very restrictive manner. The water cannon was used, I should say. But when they used it, I was told they tried not to target directly on the fishermen or even important part of the boat. Just used it as a warning. You know our position in terms of sovereignty in the South China Sea. The facilities are built to accommodate our fishermen, to conduct cooperation with other third parties. There should be a recognition of our jurisdiction over these maritime features. We wouldn't like anyone to send a delegation to these facilities, saying it's their land. But by announcing these facilities for civilian purposes, we just want to make it clear that it's not going to be used for military purposes primarily. I think this message is clear. So don't worry about that.

Q: You have a very challenging job, Ambassador.

Zhao: Yes, but anyway, I am familiar with the Philippines. I was working at the Asian Department for many years. There was a period of time I was dealing with bilateral relations with the Philippines. As an ambassador, my mission is not for conflict. My mission is for peace and cooperation. This is a very good interaction between me and local media. I hope we can have this kind of media briefing periodically so you can better understand our position and our views. And through you, I hope all our Filipino friends can further promote and contribute to the improvement of our bilateral relations. Thank you!