

## Summary Sovereign Challenge Forum – 5 May 2020

**BrigGen (r) Joseph Medina, Chief Executive Officer, Asia Pacific Strategies and Solutions**

**BLUF: Allies and Partners are key to find our way forward in this challenging environment.**

BrigGen Medina shared a brief of his background to include his distinguished service in the USMC, GE and the Elliott Group. His extensive experience in Asia included projects in India, China and the Philippines.

The new strategic approach embraced by the US lacks the key elements of a Grand Strategy. By comparison, US acts after WWII through the Marshall Plan were an excellent example of Grand Strategy. The Marshall Plan provided funds to rebuild Western Europe in the form of grants NOT to be repaid. Given the conditions of today's economy, BrigGen Medina doesn't suggest the US should try to match China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) one for one; instead, he argues the US should aim to create a factual basis to compare partnering with the US over China. The General opined that the US may have surplus PPE following the novel coronavirus update. If for example, we have an excess of ventilators, we should consider donating them to African countries as a humanitarian gesture and one of the means that counters China's BRI. He added that a downtrend in China's economy may force it to scale back the BRI which consists mainly of loans that can allow it access to a country's ports, bridges, etc., if the receiving nation cannot repay the PRC.

Allies and partners are key. We must be smart where we are spending money. And we should work to include our allies in a Grand Strategy that they can get their people to support.

The INDOPACIFIC lacks a mutual organizing mechanism that could serve a similar function as NATO does in Europe. This type of organization would give greater power to the nations of the Asia Pacific region instead of leaving each nation to respond individually to aggression, which would hold much less meaning. An alliance structure is valuable as it provides a common operating picture for all partners.

Recognize that while some of China's goods have been subpar, not all of their equipment is bad. Compounding the issue, the US raises concerns that it will not honor its commitments. It is critical that we must honor our commitments and be willing to share our partners pain. Not only that, the US needs to increase its training efforts at home and abroad for foreign militaries— this shares our values and norms and spreads our ethos and culture.

Asking our partners to implement high tech systems represents an obstacle. The US must be careful about trying to remake others in our image. Nations should instead reflect their needs and values. This requires that US forces treat partners as partners and that we demonstrate moral courage when reporting to our seniors.