



Is China Bluffing?

Description

USA/Asian Conference May Offer Opportunity for DÃ©tent

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Screen grab from a footage released by the PCG shows a China coast guard ship firing its water cannon on one of the Philippine supply boats near Ayungin

America has a Mutual Defense Agreement with Philippines requiring USA to come to Philippines aide in case of attack. But despite characteristic recent bluster from President **Joe Biden**, vulnerable allies such as the Philippines need ever more reassurance of USA commitment at this time.

It is entirely reasonable for all Asian allies of USA to be worried about overstretch of defense resourcesâ??considering hostile engagements in Ukraine and Israel since President **Donald Trump** left officeâ??causing regional adversaries in Asia to increasingly test commitments.

Trumpâ??s administration increased the frequency of freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea. In June 2020, US Ambassador to the United Nations **Kelly Craft** sent a letter to the U.N. secretary general explaining the US position on Chinaâ??s *excessive maritime claims*. On 14 July 2020, US Secretary of State **Mike Pompeo** declared Chinaâ??s claims and coercions of parts of the

South China Sea *completely unlawful*. On 26 August 2020, the US sanctioned individuals and 24 Chinese companies linked to construction and militarization of the artificial islands.

[1]Wikipedia, Disputes in the South China Sea

Philippines is Alaskaâ??s best friend in the world.

By contrast, Pres. Bidenâ??s disastrous exit from Afghanistan signaled to the world that USA foreign policy is rudderless. China is now provoking most of its neighbors in Asia and sowing doubt about U.S. reliability.

This writer has a front-row seat.



American Resolve or Bluster?

In late October, President Biden was forced to warn China not to attack the Philippines after Beijing initiated a series of dangerous maritime incidents that escalated tensions in the South China Sea. China has continued this behavior, most recently again firing water canon streams at the smaller PH ships October 10, near disputed islands long claimed by Philippines where an outpost is maintained needing regular resupply.

From **Foreign Policy**: *Rising tensions in the South China Sea have focused in particular on Philippine attempts to resupply the BRP **Sierra Madre**, a World War II-era ship deliberately grounded on Second Thomas Shoal in 1999. Manila maintains a garrison of Marines on the rusting vessel to underline its sovereignty over an area that lies within the Philippinesâ??s internationally recognized exclusive economic zone but which China claims as historically Chinese.*

*Further: For its part, Beijingâ??s behavior reflects unhappiness over Philippine President **Ferdinand Marcos Jr.** and his moves to draw closer to Washington, effectively abandoning the pro-Beijing policies of his predecessor, **Rodrigo Duterte**. In February, Marcos greenlit plans to give the United States access to four military bases in the Philippines. In April, Manila and Washington staged their largest-*

ever joint military exercises. Shortly after the base deal, Chinese President **Xi Jinping** assailed the United States for pursuing a policy of “containment, encirclement, and suppression of China” a process in which he now sees Manila playing an increasingly important role.

All of this creates dilemmas for the United States! Doing too little to support its allies in Asia undermines credibility and deterrence. Doing too much allows Beijing to portray Washington as a destabilizing and threatening force in the region.

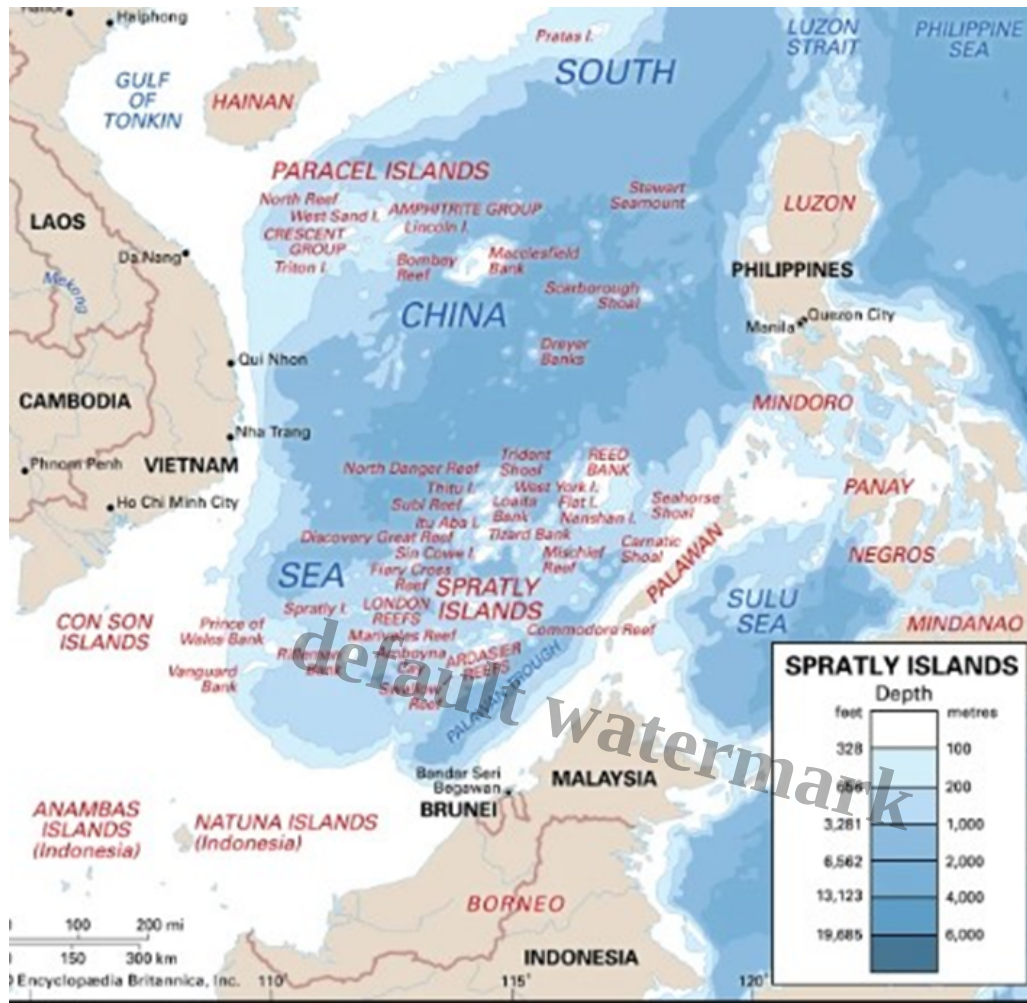
[2] With Two Wars Raging, China Tests America in Asia, **Foreign Policy**



A protester holds a placard outside the Chinese Embassy in Manila on Aug. 11. JES AZNAR/GETTY IMAGES

From the Australian publication theinterpreter: Chinese state-run media accuse Manila’s supply and coast guard ships of **trespassing** in their resupply efforts, marking this the [third](#) such event in the past five weeks in which China’s coast guard [water-cannoned](#) a Philippine military supply boat.

China knows these are international waterways. USA and coalition partners will maintain them as navigable waterways by force if necessary.



Encyclopædia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Spratly-Islands#/media/1/561209/203067> Access Date: November 14, 2023

China blames USA of instigating trouble, warning leadership in Manila that Washington, Tokyo and Canberra were *not simply supporting the Philippines* but intended to use Philippines for *cannon fodder*.

NOTE: The *cannon* are nuclear missiles in Alaskaâ;



Translated Chinese Caption: Recently, two Philippine supply ships and two coast guard ships illegally intruded into the waters adjacent to Renâ??ai Reef in Chinaâ??s Nansha Islands. The Chinese Coast Guard implemented necessary control in accordance with the law and blocked Philippine ships carrying illegal building materials. However, the United States, thousands of miles away, took the opportunity to intervene and quickly issued a statement publicly â??supportingâ?• the Philippines. Some analysts pointed out that the United Statesâ?? â??supportâ?• for the Philippines is just to use the Philippines as a weapon to share the cost of containing China. <https://www.sohu.com/>

From **the interpreter:** Many analysts believe that Manilaâ??s pronouncements about confrontation are â??gesturesâ?• rather than real attempts to challenge China, mostly because the geopolitical and economic costs of doing so would be too grave for the Philippines. Beijing remains Manilaâ??s top trade partner and import supplier.

PH Appeasement or Just Path of Least Resistance?

Further: *The Philippines's decision to skip last month's joint military exercise with the United States, Australia and Japan in the South China Sea is seen as a way of avoiding conflict with China. Manila's National Defense Secretary **Gilbert Teodoro's** refusal to cooperate with Taiwan on security issues has similarly been viewed as the country's continued adherence to the One-China policy. Despite his harsh remarks on Beijing, some Chinese international relations experts are optimistic about the appointment of **Teodoro Locsin** as Manila's Special Envoy to China as he has not only favoured cooperation with Beijing but been critical of the West. His appointment is thus read as Manila's attempt to stabilize ties with Beijing. However, others are clearly disappointed with the choice.*

[3]How China sees its conflict with the Philippines, Lowy Institute, **theinterpreter** Sept. 20, 2023 (Australia)

Fair Enough, China Knows How to Bluster, too.

The United States defense commitment to the Philippines is ironclad, Biden said. Any attack on Filipino aircraft, vessels, or armed forces will invoke our mutual defense treaty.

Philippines is not looking for a fight. In fact many Chinese people live in Philippines in harmony. An arbitration decision in 2016 confirmed Philippines's right to the disputed islands but China is becoming increasingly belligerent about ownership of the entire South China Sea.

[4]Alaska joins Philippines-China Love/hate relationship, DONN LISTON



China has been supercharging its military for years and is preparing its people for war. America is not. The American people, who take their magical lives for granted, may be in for a tormenting shock. Pictured: DF-17 hypersonic missiles at a military parade in Beijing, China, on October 1, 2019. (Photo by Kevin Frayer/Getty Images)

Some Still Remember

The major Indo-Pacific phase of WWII happened only after the European theater was secured and Japan had already taken Philippines. In war, timing is everything. Some speculate China is moving to intimidate its neighbors because USA has a known corrupt and incompetent president Biden. The scandals of deals with Chins between son **Hunter Biden** while his father was vice-president of USA are now well-known and show disregard for the rule of law.

When this writer flew to Manila, PH from Anchorage, AK I stopped 10 hours in Taipei, Taiwan for a final leg connecting flight. Hundreds of flights to and from USA go there weekly. Taiwan is of course another flashpoint in the China/USA relationship. The distance from Taipei to Manila is about the same distance as Fairbanks to Juneau, 721 miles.

Is China *Baiting* USA through Philippines?

The CCG's hostile actions in Ayungin Shoal *are inconsistent with international law and follow a pattern of Beijing's dangerous operational behavior in the South China Sea*, according to US State Department spokesman **Matthew Miller**.

He said the US recognizes the 2016 international tribunal's decision invalidating China's sweeping claims over the South China Sea, including Ayungin Shoal, as he urged China to *respect the high seas freedoms of navigation guaranteed to all States under international law* and the **UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.

[5]Philippines Star

As a First-World nation that stood shoulder-to-shoulder with USA in WWII, Philippines has established its own **National Security Policy 2023-2028**, which China isn't too happy about. As a manufacturing powerhouse of the world China produces mostly crap it has copied from other innovative producers. Under President XI China has orchestrated bait-and-switch programs to build overpriced infrastructure projects of low quality to entrap poor neighbor countries in debt. **Alaska should build a greater trade relationship with Philippines instead of with China, currently Alaska's largest trading partner.**

Manila describes the danger of conflict in the Taiwan Strait as a ["major security concern"](#) in its newly published [National Security Policy](#).

[6] PH National Security Policy

Meanwhile USA is hosting an international APEC conference including China in San Francisco, CA



This Asian-Pacific Economic Conference is part of **US Department of State** program for Diplomacy through Business cooperation.

Promotional talking point: *Through APEC, the United States seeks to advance a free, fair, and open economic policy agenda that benefits U.S. workers, businesses, and families.* The 21 APEC member

economies account for nearly 40 percent of the global population, or nearly 3 billion people, and nearly 50 percent of global trade.â



What is actually happening: APEC is a discussion forum, where political and business leaders come to talk with each other and to announce deals and initiatives and so on. Lots of important things are happening here. But by far the most important â and the thing that everyone is talking about â is the dÃ©tente between the U.S. and China. Xi and Biden are actually going to meet face to face on Wednesday, and Treasury Secretary **Janet Yellen** will meet with Chinaâs Vice Premier **He Lifeng**. The two countries are expected to announce a series of cooperative initiatives, including a joint effort to crack down on the fentanyl trade and the reopening of military-to-military communications.

[*]Donât expect too much from the U.S.-China dÃ©tente

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. is set to attend the APEC Leadersâ Summit in San Francisco November 15-17. You have to wonder whether China President XI will care what **Bongbong** has to sayâor whether Marcos will call Chinaâs bluff.

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[3]How China sees its conflict with the Philippines, Lowy Institute (Australia)
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[4]Alaska joins Philippines-China Love/hate relationship, DONN LISTON
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[7]Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation

**[8] Donâ??t expect too much from the U.S.-
China detente**

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PostCards from Philippines (What I did this Winter!)



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