

III. Philippine Leaders Take Their Stand Against Obama's Thermonuclear War

Philippines Revolts Against Obama's War on China

Nov. 16 (EIRNS)—A revolutionary change is taking place in the Philippines, threatening to collapse President Obama's mad drive for nuclear confrontation with China. That plan, first launched as Obama's "Pivot to Asia" in 2012, involves shifting expanded naval, air, and land forces to Asia, along with enhanced ballistic missile defense systems, in a ring around China and the Russian Far East.

Most importantly, it includes Obama's plan to re-occupy the Philippines militarily with the most advanced naval, air, and ground forces and military equipment.

Now, faced with Russian President Putin's brilliant flanking action against Obama's war policy in Europe and the Middle East—by waging an effective war on ISIS in cooperation with the Syrian government and others—Obama has responded by focussing with a vengeance on his policy of war against China.

Obama and his subservient President of the Philippines, Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino, are attempting to circumvent the Philippine Constitution, which, since 1991, has explicitly forbidden the presence of any foreign military bases on Philippine soil. Their ploy is to pretend that the new U.S. bases are not bases at all, but will be set up within Philippine military bases, with the Americans declared to be merely "guests."

Aquino further claims that the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) which enables this charade, is not a treaty, but only an "executive agreement," and thus does not require the approval of the Philippine Senate, as required by law for such a treaty.



Xinhua/Rouelle Umali

Philippine President Benigno Aquino (right) greets Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the presidential palace in Manila Nov. 10, 2015.

Fortunately, this scam is falling apart, thanks to a series of actions and interventions by patriots of the Philippines, joined by American patriots who recognize the threat of global thermonuclear war inherent in Obama's confrontation with China. These actions, documented below, include:

- A declaration by Filipinos in Solidarity for Sovereignty (PINAS)—which has also taken the EDCA to the Supreme Court on constitutional grounds—saying that the recent U.S. military provocations against Chinese territories in the South China Sea bring the world to the brink of war, and exemplify why the Philippines must reject the U.S. military occupation.

- A friend of the court (Petition for Intervention) brief by U.S. Senator Mike Gravel (Alaska 1969-81) to the Philippine Supreme Court, arguing on moral, his-

torical, and political grounds that the re-occupation of the Philippines must be stopped.

- A call by Philippine Senator Kit Tatad (1992-2001) for the Philippines to declare official neutrality.

- A dramatic vote in the Philippine Senate on November 9, passing a resolution by a vote of 15-1 that declares that the EDCA is indeed a treaty and must be approved by the Senate. The resolution—brought by Senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago, a presidential candidate for the 2016 election—pre-empted the the Supreme Court, which had leaked that its decision would approve the EDCA and would be released on November 16, the day before President Obama is scheduled to arrive in the Philippines for the annual APEC Summit.

Obama's effort to be ordained the new governor-general of a colonial Philippines has been thwarted, thus far.

Revolt Across Asia

These developments in the Philippines come at a time when the rest of Asia is also reacting against Obama's war drive. A meeting of the defense ministers of the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) plus the United States, China, Japan, and others, on Nov. 13 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, rejected Obama's demand, delivered by U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, that the final communiqué denounce China for "aggression" in the South China Sea. No communiqué was issued as a result.

In fact, China's President Xi Jinping on Nov. 6 visited Vietnam—one of the countries Obama has encouraged to denounce Chinese "aggression" in the South China Sea—and the two nations re-established strong strategic ties. Then Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Manila to prepare for President Xi's visit for the APEC Summit. President Aquino promised that the South China Sea issue would not be on the APEC agenda.

The ASEAN members naturally want to be part of China's New Silk Road projects for real development, rather than Obama's anti-China alliance. But they also increasingly recognize that the militarization of the region is not coming from China, which is only building up islands already under their control, but from Obama, whose plan for at least eight U.S. military bases in the Philippines even includes two in the South

China Sea, on Palawan Island—and they want no part of it.

LaRouche's Role

In several of these developments, friends of Lyndon LaRouche are playing a crucial role. In their own words, here is the documentation of the courageous steps taken by citizens of a small nation to prevent the madness of a global thermonuclear war, and to demand development as the basis for peace.

Is Neutrality an Option for the Philippines?

by Francisco S. Tatad

Nov. 16—The following (edited) op-ed in the Manila Times was written by Francisco "Kit" Tatad, Minister of Public Information under President Ferdinand Marcos from 1969 to 1980, and Senator of the Philippines from 1992 to 2001. Sen. Tatad is a founding member of the National Transformation Council.

The Prospect of War

WASHINGTON, Nov. 13 (EIRNS)—Given the maritime conflict between China and Japan, between China and the Philippines, and America's concern over China's conduct in the disputed areas, armed hostilities could arise between China on the one hand, and the United States and Japan on the other, with the Philippines probably absorbing some of the missiles. This is the fear of some Filipino analysts I have met here.

... The Philippines is not militarily prepared for any war, but by talking like it very badly needs to take on the Asian hegemon, the Aquino regime may have created a situation nobody wants or is ready for. ...

The Idea of Being Neutral

One analyst, who asked that I withhold his name, has proposed one such unthinkable question. Given the growing rivalry between the United States and China, and the distinct possibility that we might get caught in the middle, if and when it explodes into a



Philippine Senator Francisco (Kit) Tatad, addressing a conference of the Save the Nation movement, founded by Philippines LaRouche Society leader Butch Valdes, in April 2013.

violent confrontation, can neutrality be an option for the Philippines? It is not easy to formulate this question, for obvious reasons. Because of our longstanding security alliance with the United States, just to ask the question already carries with it the smell of treason. . . .

Why neutrality? Because the analyst's fear is that an air-sea battle could erupt in our disputed waters, and it would not be easy to remain a non-belligerent then. He does not see hostilities being limited to a small war solely between China and the Philippines on account of their maritime territorial dispute. The issue has been there since the 1950s, and only during the presidency of B.S. Aquino III did it become a serious bilateral problem.

Imagining War

The analyst believes that, were real hostilities to occur, they are more likely to be between the United States and Japan on the one hand, and China on the other, because of the larger question of regional dominance and sphere of influence. As the oldest Asia-Pacific power and the world's only superpower, the United States, with its Seventh Fleet, is not likely to give up its historic role. But China is now a world economic power, and a rising regional military power, and will not want to be elbowed out of its own natural theatre. . . .

Can a country like the Philippines offer a solution? This is what the analyst wanted me to explore. The Philippines is one of China's oldest trading partners, and at the same time, a historic U.S. military and political ally. It should be a friend to both sides. . . .

Until 1975, when Marcos established diplomatic relations with Beijing, the Chinese Communist Party was said to be funding, training, and arming the New People's Army (NPA) and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The cessation of Chinese support for the CPP/NPA was one of the conditions for Marcos' recognition of Beijing. On the other hand, military assistance and security support came solely from the United States, with which the Philippines had a Mutual Defense Treaty signed in 1950 (and in force until now), and a military bases agreement, signed in 1947 and ending in 1991.

U.S.-Philippine Security Ties

When the bases agreement expired in 1991, the United States tried to negotiate a new treaty extending the bases by another 10 years. This was shot down by the Senate in 1992, despite President Corazon Aquino's frenzied effort to win Senate approval. This chilled Philippine-U.S. relations for a while until the two governments entered into a Visiting Forces Agreement in 1999. As Senate Majority Leader at the time, I co-sponsored the Senate resolution concurring in its ratification.

In 2014, the Aquino government signed an Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) with the United States without the participation of the Senate. The Constitution provides that after 1991, foreign military bases, troops, or facilities shall not be allowed in the Philippines except under a treaty duly concurred in by the Senate and, when the Congress so requires, ratified by a majority of the votes cast by the people in a national referendum held for that purpose, and recognized as a treaty by the other contracting state.

The EDCA does not create any new bases, but allows the United States to deploy its troops and facilities inside any Philippine military establishment. It also allows nuclear vessels to come and go as they please, despite the constitutional ban on nuclear weapons in the

country. All this seems consistent with Aquino's support for President Obama's pivot to Asia.

Undoing What Aquino Has Done

Aquino's handling of the nation's foreign and national security policies has created a situation that needs to be undone. . . . The Philippines needs to compose its own differences with China, instead of getting involved in any quarrel that is not its own. It should try to promote friendship and cooperation between China and the United States, instead of getting caught in the middle of any possible confrontation. How can this be done? The analyst suggests either a non-aggression pact with China or a state of neutrality for the Philippines. This, he points out, is consistent with the Philippine constitutional provision which renounces war as an instrument of national policy.

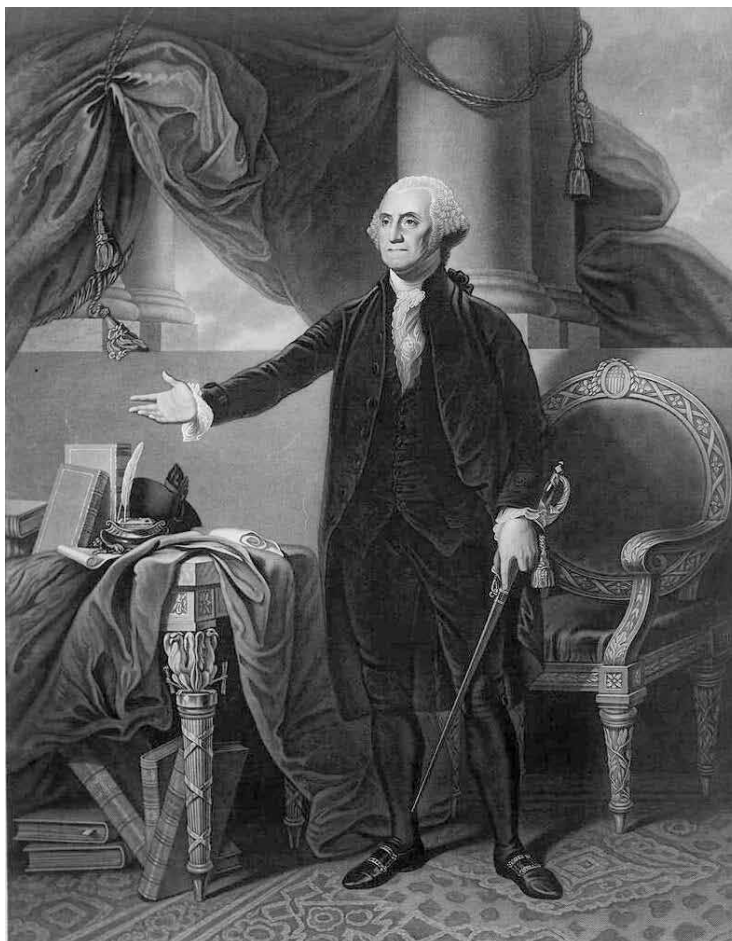
U.S. Neutrality

With respect to neutrality, he points to the early American experience. In 1793, he recalls, President George Washington issued a proclamation of neutrality, which enabled his young nation to avoid the war raging between France and England. The United States was militarily weak at the time, and fighting a war would have endangered its very existence. This enabled the United States to grow from inside, so that by 1823, it was strong enough to proclaim the Monroe Doctrine, which warned the European powers that further efforts to colonize land or interfere with states in North or South America would be regarded as acts of aggression, requiring U.S. intervention.

From 1935 to 1939, President Roosevelt invoked the Neutrality Act again and again to avoid getting embroiled in the European wars. . . . On Dec. 8, 1941, the United States declared war on Japan, a day after it had attacked Pearl Harbor. On Dec. 11, 1941, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, and on the same day the United States responded with similar declarations. By now the United States had become a great war power, but for as long as it lasted, its neutrality had a glorious run.

Some Rights and Duties of Neutrals

Under the Hague Convention of 1907, the territory of neutral powers is inviolable.



Library of Congress

President George Washington declared U.S. neutrality in the midst of the great European conflicts of the 1790s.

Belligerents are forbidden to move troops, or convoys of either war munitions or supplies, across the territory of a neutral power. They are likewise forbidden to (a) erect on the territory of a neutral power a wireless telegraphy station or other apparatus for the purpose of communicating with belligerents on land or sea, or (b) use any installation of this kind established by them before the war on the territory of a neutral power for purely military purposes, and which has not been opened for the service of public messages.

Corps of combatants cannot be formed nor recruiting agencies opened on the territory of a neutral power to assist the belligerents.

A neutral power has the right and the duty to resist any attempt to violate its neutrality, even by force, without [being regarded as] committing a hostile act. . . .

Effects of Neutrality

Were the Philippines to become neutral, it would remove itself from the center of the evolving conflict between China on the one hand, and the United States and Japan on the other. It would also allow a policy of equidistance from the competing Asia-Pacific powers. This would enable it to develop an independent world view and a foreign policy that looks primarily to its own interests, rather than to those of its external patrons. For the first time in its history, it would be compelled to stand on its own. This would not be without pain in the beginning, but if Switzerland provides any inspiration, the end result could be rewarding. It would allow the country to nourish and fulfill its own ambitions.

But it would mean dismantling the U.S.-Philippine alliance which has helped to undergird the U.S. security system in the Asia-Pacific region until now. Do you believe there is anyone on the horizon who would risk his chance of becoming president by suggesting to Washington that this is one great idea whose time has come?

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PINAS Statement on U.S. Actions Hostile to the Philippines

Nov. 16—The following statement was issued by Filipinos in Solidarity for Sovereignty (PINAS) on the U.S. provocation in the South China Sea and the planned U.S. military occupation of Philippine bases. It was drafted by Butch Valdes, the head of the Philippine La-Rouche Society, and adopted by PINAS on Oct. 30. PINAS also brought the case against EDCA to the Supreme Court.

Despite our presently unresolved territorial issues with countries surrounding the West Philippine Seas, it is with unequivocal opposition that we view the outrageous military provocation of China by U.S. President Obama under the guise of freedom of navigation.

In blatant disregard for the sovereignty and security concerns of Southeast Asian Nations, the U.S. has initiated threatening actions against China, which not only destabilize the whole region, but also may provide the



Antonio 'Butch' Valdes, addressing the Schiller Institute New Paradigm conference of June 2103 in San Francisco by video.

spark of thermonuclear confrontation between the two superpowers.

Our concern is aggravated by the declared and insane acquiescence of the current President, Benigno Aquino III, in the critically dangerous advances by an equally impaired Barack Obama. The risk to 100 million Filipino lives notwithstanding, Aquino has signed a constitutionally infirm agreement allowing the U.S. forces to have access to all our airports and seaports, ply our territorial waters, and set up American bases within our Philippine bases.

It is this highly questionable accommodation by the Philippine President, and the tacit approval of a mercenary Senate and an obviously intimidated Supreme Court, that has provided U.S. nuclear-armed warships the bases to mount and implement provocative action against their principal adversary in the region.

We call on all patriotic Filipinos to *reject* the presently disastrous condition of allowing foreign military installations in Philippine territories. The U.S. geopolitical intentions, through President Obama's actions, are manifestly clear. Their decisions and actions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Egypt, Syria, and Ukraine are now glaring examples of internal chaos, *after* they have been supposedly liberated from dictatorship, into democracy.

Let us uphold the principles of sovereignty, and advocate a world community of Sovereign Nation-States—bound by a common objective—to improve the quality of life of every single human being on the planet, so that our generation and those after us, can reap the benefits of Man's collaboration and collective creativity.

The Philippines Must Save Itself, And Help Save Us From Ourselves

U.S. Senator Mike Gravel (D-AK 1969-81) filed the following (slightly edited) Friend of the Court brief (called Petition for Intervention in the Philippines) in the Supreme Court of the Philippines on November 10, 2015, in the case challenging the constitutionality of the EDCA.



Nizar Abboud

Former Senator Mike Gravel speaking to the UN Press Correspondents in New York City, Sept. 14, 2015.

Summary

The decision by the Philippine government to enter into an Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) with the United States government is neither in the best interest of the Philippine people nor in the best interest of the American people.

Throughout human history, conflicts that develop between national empires in decline ceding status and power to ascending nations have invariably led to war. This occurrence is what General Martin Dempsey, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called the Thucydides trap, in which Athenian fear of a rising Sparta made the Peloponnesian War inevitable. It is noteworthy that it was the democratic Athens that initiated the war, not the autocratic Sparta. Fortunately, there are some instances in history in which precarious superpower transitions have not led to war. China's ascendancy is primarily economic in nature, and no evidence suggests that it seeks global military hegemony even though its economic interests are global. To the contrary, China's military expenditures in response to the irresponsible rhetoric of

some American leaders have increased over the last decade, but are still considerably less than a third of United States annual military expenditures, which amount equals half the world's total military expenditures.

President Obama's recent speech before the UN General Assembly quieted the chamber when he articulated the following threat:

I lead the strongest military that the world has ever known, and I will never hesitate to

protect my country or our allies, unilaterally and by force where necessary.

... I will argue below that the United States, whether intentionally or by accident, is skirting ever so close to the Thucydides trap. America's political leadership is unable to reverse that trajectory. Therefore, it is my hope that a foreign national interest will step forward to protect Americans from their own government's military foreign policies.

The Philippines could possibly take up a portion of that task, and in so doing, safeguard its own sovereign interests while avoiding military engagements and a possible war that no one wants. The decision of this esteemed Supreme Court can set in motion a chain of circumstances that could have an impact on whether the conflict caused by China's global economic ascendancy and the loss of United States hegemonic mili-



The result of falling for the Thucydides trap: The Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta, 431-404 BC.

tary primacy in the Indo-Pacific economic center of gravity, will result in war by falling into the Thucydides trap.

Credentials

We are most critical of what we hold most dear. I love my country, but I cannot abide the concept ‘my country right or wrong.’ When it is wrong, I hope to propound an effective critique to negate that wrong. As a young man, I enlisted in the United States Army and graduated from the Infantry School’s Officer Candidate Program at Fort Benning, Georgia. Most of my class went to Korea at the worst of the fighting. I had the good fortune, having been educated by the Army as a Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) agent, of being sent to Europe as the Adjutant of the Communications Intelligence Service, an agency that used the CIC as its cover. As a 23-year-old second lieutenant, I had the authority to classify and declassify military documents.

Advancing 20 years, little wonder that, as a 41-year-old U.S. Senator, I instantly accepted the responsibility from Daniel Ellsberg of officially releasing the Pentagon Papers, top secret documents that revealed the history of how four presidential administrations, and later a fifth, had lied to the American people about the reasons for our involvement in the quagmire of the Vietnam War. The Nixon Administration’s Justice Department sought my indictment, occasioning a case that was unanimously decided by the U.S. Supreme Court

that a member of Congress could reveal any classified information within the confines of the Congress without being questioned by any other authority under the provisions of the speech and debate clause of the U.S. Constitution. . . .

As a legislator, I served as a representative and Speaker of the Alaska House of Representatives (1963-1966) and served two terms in the U.S. Senate representing the people of Alaska (1969-1981). Politically, I had the honor of enjoying the full electoral support of the Alaskan Philippine community. During my Senate career I had occasion to visit the Philippines as the guest of Ferdinand Marcos—a

visit I found most instructive.

Since I was committed to the enactment of the Law of the Sea and played a leadership role in seeking its ratification in the Senate, I was appointed the delegate from the U.S. Senate to the 31st General Assembly of the United Nations.

As I stated above, I love my country, however, I hold my love of mankind above that of my country. I hold the life of any human being equal to that of any American.

I pray this distinguished Court will find the above credentials sufficient to warrant your attention to the views I express in this paper.

History

History forgotten is often repeated. Please keep in the forefront of your deliberations the history of the United States as it impacted the Philippines and the peoples of Southeast Asia. Understanding this history will clarify what possible effects the EDCA could have on the Philippine people.

As you know, after several centuries of Spanish colonial rule, the Katipunan revolt began in 1892 and was formalized with the Filipino War of Independence in 1896. Most of America’s media attention centered on Cuba. When the United States declared war against Spain in 1898, the congressional declaration included the Teller Amendment, which disclaimed any intention of the United States to annex Cuba, and promised to leave the island as soon as the war was over. No such

declaratory reservation was made with respect to the Philippine archipelago, also in a revolt against Spain.

In one spectacular battle, Admiral George Dewey destroyed the entire Spanish fleet bottled up in Manila Bay. He then invited Emilio Aguinaldo to return from exile to prosecute a land war against the Spanish—American ground troops had yet to arrive—with the inducement of prospective independence for a Philippine Republic.

Henceforth, a duplicitous manipulation ensued involving all of the usual suspects: the U.S. President, the State Department, the Congress, the Navy, the Army, the jingoistic American media, and the ill-informed patriotic American public, oblivious to the trashing of its most fundamental values: liberty, freedom, national sovereignty, and self-determination.

From such *realpolitik* stagecraft under the administrations of William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson evolved a crushing insurgent war on the Philippine population, exhibiting a level of cruelty and atrocity equal to the worst in the annals of conquest and war. The result: All opposition was brutally crushed and the Filipino leadership and population remained supine to American interests, except for a brief interlude commencing on September 16, 1991.

At the Treaty of Paris, December 10, 1898, ending the Spanish-American War, Spain would not involve the lowly revolutionaries of Cuba or the Philippines in the surrender process, to which the U.S. did not object. In the treaty, Spain renounced its rights to Cuba, acknowledging its independence, ceded Puerto Rico and the island of Guam to the United States, and sold the Philippines to the United States for \$20,000,000. The sale afforded a level of legitimacy to the U.S. ownership of the archipelago because of the earlier purchase of Alaska from Russia.

It was not until the presidential administration of Franklin Roosevelt in 1934 that the right of Filipino self-determination was acknowledged with a promise of independence—delayed until 1946, after the end of World War II, during which Filipino fighters acquitted themselves with courage and resolve equal to that of any nation.



Perley Fremont Rockett/Library of Congress

The brutal Philippine-American War of the late Nineteenth-early Twentieth Century.

...Add to this limited recitation of past facts the criminal complicity that the United States foisted on the Philippines with the prosecution of wars against fellow South Asians. I am not only referring to our conduct in Indochina, but also to the wanton invasions of Cambodia, Laos, and the corruption of Thailand. Subic Bay and Clark Air Base were the main platforms outside the war zone to supply military resources to American forces to prosecute the Vietnam War in a manner not dissimilar to the pacification of the insurgent war pursued against the Philippine population at the turn of the century.

We need to remember that a commander of the American Air Force advocated the use of nuclear weapons to bomb the Vietnamese into submission—in effect depopulating the country to save it from going communist. We should also remember that during the Korean War General Douglas MacArthur, the son of General Arthur MacArthur who figured prominently in the suppression of the Philippine insurgency, advocated the use of nuclear weapons in Korea and on China. It is not unfair to conclude that some Western elites placed little value on Asian lives.

Even to this day, a significant leader in Congress and a former presidential candidate still believes that we should have won the Vietnam War, and that we only failed for lack of political resolve. That war was never winnable, for the Vietnamese were prepared to pay any price to become an independent sovereign nation.

When we decamped under pressure because of American protests at home, we left many of our Asian allies at the mercy of the enemies we had created for them. We also left a refugee crisis—boat people—that had some impact on the Philippines. At the height of the war, America's leaders knew it was a mistake and had long given up on the Domino Theory. They were only concerned with a face-saving exit.

Nevertheless, our global reputation was damaged. As a result, we punished the people of Southeast Asia with sanctions and trade embargoes for a generation.

The truth of this history, so hard to accept, is that the millions of Filipinos, Indo-Chinese, Laotians, Cambodians, and Americans all died in vain.

The political ideology of communism we so abhorred still exists, but now Vietnam enjoys most favored trade status with America. They did die in vain. There is no question that the Philippines benefited economically from America's war in Southeast Asia. However, I would maintain that the moral price and the militarization of the Filipino culture was far too high a price to pay.

The phenomena of this interlude in history baffle many Americans. We don't know why these people, who have been so abused by us, have forgiven us and still greet us with amity. Do they not understand what we have done?

China

...The U.S. agitation over the Spratly Islands created by China dredging and building up reefs has great propaganda value for America. However, the charge that they are military bases is somewhat specious. A military base presupposes that it would play some useful operational role in the event of hostilities. Physically these small islands are easily destroyed in the event of a conflict and therefore are not military bases in any sense of the word. These islands are outposts of a symbolic nature—markers that would enhance legal arguments for rights at some future date.

However, from a Philippine and Chinese perspec-



courtesy of South Sea Conversations via New Sohu.com

A section of the Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea, a source of simmering conflict between the Philippines and China. Here a Philippines member of parliament leads military and media personnel to the Shoal in May 1997.

tive, these disputes are serious. Filipino fishermen make their living fishing these waters, and the economic benefits from prospective oil and gas discoveries could be significant. The solutions to these disputes, not only for the Philippines but for all the interested nations in the region, are best dealt with diplomatically under the auspices of the United Nations and not by military confrontations.

In the Scarborough Reef incident, China confronted Filipino fishermen over their access to the reef. Even though the United States got involved, the Filipinos were forced to back down. This successful incident in 2012 suggests a policy for China to go it alone in the South China Sea. It offers a model for continued Chinese confrontations, nibbling at the margins of the national interests of the Philippines, Malaysia, Taiwan, Indonesia, and Vietnam.

At present, the issue rests with the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. I would hope that the tribunal would use its influence to initiate a UN regional forum, inviting all the interested parties to treat these sovereignty issues from a broader perspective than that of any one single party. This should have appeal to China, which has advantaged economically all parties in the region with its spectacular global growth. This

forum would permit China to showcase its Silk Road—One Belt, One Road—vision by including the disputants in the economic vision with specific development projects, and thereby advance harmony by sharing the commons of the China Sea.

The Scarborough Reef incident should inform the Philippine leadership that when push turns to shove, the United States will not provoke a military showdown with China over Filipino fishing or mineral rights. It should drive home the fact that U.S. militarization of the Philippines is not really designed to protect Philippine interests but rather to afford the United States a geographic advantage to confront China over its ascendant superpower status, which the United States finds offensive to its global hegemonic status.

It is somewhat disingenuous for the United States to claim that it is patrolling the South China Sea to protect the right of free maritime passage when the United States is one of very few nations that refuse to ratify the Law of the Sea (LOS) convention, which expressly codified in international law the protection of the oceans environment, its fisheries, the sovereign rights of bordering nations, and free maritime passage, and provides a tribunal to adjudicate maritime disputes under the convention.

My personal assessment of China is not that of America's conventional wisdom. When President Obama praised the UN record during its 70-year existence for raising more than a billion people out of poverty into the middle class, he failed to mention that half of that number were Chinese. It was done in three decades—a record of human improvement never equaled in the recorded annals of civilization. China is not a democracy, but a communist country operating as a meritocracy, struggling to limit corruption, a vice endemic to free-market capitalism. China's accomplishment in improving the wellbeing of more than 500,000,000 people in a generation—a number more than one and a half times the entire population of the United States—should have been noted by the American president.

The governance problems that China faces, and for that matter that India and Indonesia face, are almost beyond comprehension. I do not pretend to know the nuanced relationship that existed between China and the Philippines over the last century, but I am sure some degree of fraternity must exist over the shared experi-

ence of colonial exploitation. That would be enough to build upon.

I am not suggesting that the Philippines alienate itself from the United States, but I think it wise to divorce itself from any military entanglements, whether with the United States, Japan, the European Union, or China. Is there a threat of invasion from China or from any other nation against the Philippines? If not, then why the fascination with taking on the burden of militarism, and why pay for wasteful munitions when those monies can better be used to improve the life of Filipinos?

China, supported by the BRICS—Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa—has defined a 30-year vision, already undertaken, to unite the world's economies through the construction of high-speed railroads, roads, and fiber optic communications across the Eurasian land mass of Russia from western China to Europe, with extensions north into Scandinavian countries and south into Iran and Arab countries. This visionary plan makes good sense for China, which must productively utilize the excess industrial capacity it developed for its double-digit economic growth.

The Silk Road—One Belt, One Road—plan has a maritime component to build efficient port developments to increase world trade. The plan envisions a similar economic expansion to all continents. Hegemonic influences will not be tolerated, nor will it have a military component. The BRICS have already set up financial institutions to help underwrite developments undertaken by the plan. Embarrassingly, America tried to dissuade its allies, without success, from participating in the plan.

It would be a tremendous boon to the Philippine economy to avoid the American military expansion and instead join the BRICS in this sensible global economic development plan. The Philippines, India, and China are not included in the U.S.-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which serves to add greater power to the multinational corporations who already control major portions of the world economy. This agreement is the U.S. strategy to confront the BRICS global economic alignment. In my view, it makes more sense for the Philippines to align itself with the BRICS and eschew the militarism offered by the United States.

Compare China's vision for a successful, prosperous, economically unified world to what America offers

by way of a militarized world that brooks no challenge to its hegemonic leadership. Compare the suffering of untold numbers of people in a plethora of nations around the world over the last 30 years. A suffering inflicted by the hubris of backroom American neocons punishing people with economic sanctions to bring about regime change and their liberal interventionists wantonly invading sovereign nations that do not conform to their ideological standards.

Save Yourselves

...The United States is attempting to make the Philippines the sharpened point of its offensive spear with which to confront China. Ultimately, Filipinos will find themselves impaled on that spear. The Philippines is the ideal strategic location for the United States to establish a military platform in East Asia, on China's doorstep, in preparation for a possible war.

Chinese Navy unofficial spokesman Admiral Yin Zhuo (PLA Navy ret.) made the point recently: "If in the future, there is U.S.-China conflict, then it will likely take place on our doorstep. Speaking bluntly, fighting on our doorstep, we fear no one." The doorstep he is referring to is the Philippines.

The U.S. design on Philippine real estate is understandable. The more confusing question: Why would any country choose to place itself at the frictional edge of the world's two conflicting superpowers? If there is a war, the conventional phase of it would first be fought on Philippine soil housing the American military, before moving to the nuclear phase of the war on the Chinese and American populations, in which case we are all doomed.

Unfortunately, many American civilian and military leaders, intoxicated with the sense of superiority they feel towards the rest of the world, tend to miscalculate in their political and military planning... The vaunted nuclear carrier armadas the United States boasts of to protect its Asian allies—most particularly the Philippines—can be wiped out in minutes with anti-ship ballistic missiles and a plethora of China's new classes of advanced supersonic cruise missiles.

What could possibly be the benefit for the Philippines of turning itself over to a foreign power? Because that will be the case if the EDCA stands. Your country will be garrisoned to the hilt in order to back up America's threats to anyone in Asia. Take a look at the neighborhoods around military bases to see what your coun-

try will become. Who other than military contractors would dare invest and develop alternate industries in such a circumstance? The economic activities that will follow military expansion will of necessity control and corrupt your political institutions to protect their investments. The government would prostitute itself to a foreign power and will then demand payments. However, such payments would be a pittance compared to what could be realized from the normal growth of a healthy, independent economy blessed with an industrious people.

Save Us from Ourselves

As an American, realistic enough to understand the internal dilemma that afflicts my country, I sincerely ask for the help of this illustrious Court by taking a decision that could set in motion a chain of circumstances that could possibly thwart the planned expansion of America's military presence in Asia, using the Philippines as its main base. This is what some call the pivot to Asia. Let me explain why it is impossible for some of us to alter or correct the present direction of our foreign and military policy.

Our culture is infused with a sense of superiority, enlarged beyond reality. Our nation was blessed by geography providing oceanic security, by a land welling up with vast resources, and an ever-expanding educated and industrious population. After France midwifed our nation's birth, we saw ourselves as the city on the hill, with a manifest destiny to transcend the continent.

Of course, we rarely acknowledge that we are a violent people who annihilated the indigenous population of the continent and institutionalized slavery in our Constitution, only to have it corrected by a calamitous Civil War, which left a legacy of racism that haunts us to this day at home and abroad. The seeds of hubris grew when we saved the world in the Second World War, while the communist Soviet Union did the heavy lifting. This left us as the only imperial power with the atomic bomb able to assume the white man's burden from the British Empire. The acquisition of the bomb by the USSR and China altered that equation.

After the war, our elites reasoned that we could avoid another terrible depression if we kept the economy on a war footing. This policy was legislated into existence in 1947 with the National Security Act under the Truman administration and carried forward by the

Eisenhower administration. The military-industrial complex reasoned that if it located the military's economic presence—manufacturing and military bases—in every congressional district, it could control the Congress. And it has. . . .

The U.S. Empire is in decline even though we still lead the European Union and North Asia around by the nose. NATO, 90% funded by the United States and commanded by an American general, is the vehicle for the globalization of the military-industrial complex. American leadership and the public refuse to accept the fact of decline. You need but look at our failing educational system, our health system controlled by the insurance industry, our bankrupt financial system, and the disrepair of our national infrastructure. In the face of all this, the defense budget remains sacrosanct. The American public is not stupid, but remains steeped in ignorance by a mainstream media controlled by six corporations responsible to Wall Street and the military-industrial complex.

We are no longer a democracy in the real sense of the word. A democracy is not just elections. For elections to be meaningful, people must be informed in order to render intelligent judgment. The American

public is purposely kept in ignorance.

American political and military diplomacy is contriving to gain control of your archipelago for reasons that will not benefit the people who live there.

Conclusion

...The discussion above is made in an attempt to motivate this distinguished Court to render a judicial decision that will in effect transfer the deliberations on the EDCA from its secret confines to the Philippine Senate, where arguments will be made in full public view. I hope my arguments made above will contribute to that debate. Matters of extreme importance to the wellbeing of Filipinos and the survivability of Philippine democracy are at stake in that debate.

Your judicial decision could well set a chain of circumstances in motion that could ultimately affect the course of world affairs. In this regard, I am reminded of a famous statement made by the renowned sociologist Margaret Mead: Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

by Mike Gravel
October 15, 2015

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