

Editorial

US embassy probably thinks Philippines' Manila Bay is Hawaii

The US embassy in the Philippines recently acknowledged that the US had held "discussions" with Philippine officials regarding ongoing construction projects in Manila Bay and that Washington had expressed its "concerns" to Manila about "the potential negative long-term and irreversible impacts to the environment" that the projects and other construction activities might have. To put it bluntly, it wanted the Philippines to stop the projects.

This behavior is outrageous and reflects the fact that the US has interfered in the internal affairs of the Philippines to such an extent that it has become unscrupulous. It is understood that the Philippines attaches great importance to the huge projects in Manila Bay, and hopes that they will lead to local economic and social development. How to develop and protect its own national resources is the Philippine government's internal affair. What does it have to do with the US? Does Manila need to report to Washington for approval?

The so-called impacts on the environment are purely an excuse. The US is simply not qualified to dictate environmental issues, not to mention the fact that the Manila Bay projects do not involve parties outside the Philippines, and those who really care about its environmental impact are the Philippine people, who will do a good job of evaluating and ensuring standards are met in all aspects.

In fact, Washington's true intention over the projects in Manila Bay has been revealed. The reason why the US singles out these construction projects is that two of the projects are being implemented by the China Harbour Engineering Company and China First Highway Engineering Co. – both under the China Communications Construction Co. (CCCC) – together with Philippine companies and the City Government of Manila. The CCCC suffered illegal sanctions from the US a few years ago.

The US embassy probably thinks of the Philippines as Hawaii and wants to weed out every element here that it doesn't like, without any regard for Philippine sovereignty or the feelings of Filipinos. This

is naked bully logic. Data show that in recent years, the number of export control measures taken by the US Department of Commerce, including the "Entity List," has averaged 1,700 to 1,800 per year. It can be said that there are victims of US sanctions all over the world, and this is totally unreasonable. The unilateral sanctions imposed by the US are based on domestic law and without the authorization of the United Nations Security Council. They safeguard the selfishness and interests of the US and are not legally binding on other countries in accordance with international law.

The US, confident that no one can manage it, has failed to restrain its unilateral sanctions, which have already drawn widespread international discontent. Instead, it is now attempting to escalate them. As in this case, the US is asking other sovereign countries, such as the Philippines, to implement its blacklist. This is extremely arbitrary and unreasonable, and the Philippines has every right to ignore it. Manila canceled a decision to award a \$10 billion airport project to the CCCC in 2021, and although the Philippine side said it had nothing to do with the US blacklist, there was widespread speculation in the industry that it was the result of pressure from the US. Two years on, the Philippines should be able to realize that such a decision has delayed the pace of infrastructure construction, and in the end, done more damage to the interests of the Philippines.

The CCCC was named the world's third-largest construction company by Engineering News Record in 2022. It has world-class professional ability and is very reliable, so it is not by chance that so many countries have chosen this company for their big projects. If any country chooses to handle its own internal affairs according to the US blacklist, then it will first of all face chaos. Second, it – or more specifically, their own people – will suffer losses. Although the Philippines is an ally of the US, it is not a vassal state. It is necessary and feasible for the Philippines to stand up against US pressure on issues related to its sovereignty and national interests. Otherwise, one step back will lead to more steps back.

The rise of Global South accelerated in the wake of prolonged Ukraine crisis

By Ding Long

The war in Ukraine, which has been prolonged for more than a year, has triggered an accelerated transformation of the international landscape. One of the prominent changes is the rise of the Global South and its increasingly important role in the international system. Developing countries have gained room to maneuver in the game of big powers, and their political influence has risen rapidly. The Global South has maintained its diplomatic independence and strategic autonomy against the backdrop of the Ukraine crisis and has taken a middle path to accelerate its rise as an emerging force in global politics.

Saudi Arabia is a part of such a trend. On Saturday and Sunday, Saudi Arabia is set to host a multinational peace summit aiming at ending the war in Ukraine. This is a symbol of Saudi Arabia's emergence as a new "player" on the international stage, as the Middle East nation seeks to play an important mediator role in major events, including the conflicts in Ukraine and Sudan.

After the outbreak of the war, many countries of the Global South did not take sides or succumb to US' pressure to join the camp of condemning and sanctioning Russia. This marks the beginning of the Global South breaking away from the control of the big powers, repositioning its international status and role, and seeking strategic self-confidence and autonomy. The perception and actions of the Global South on the Ukraine crisis include the following points.

First, they have taken a neutral position on the Ukraine issue. The Global South countries generally believe the war in Ukraine is on the surface a conflict between Russia and Ukraine, but in reality, it's a strategic confrontation between Russia on one side and the US and the West on the other. As the core force of the Global South, the BRICS countries have made their judgment independently on the basis of the history and the merits of the issue, maintaining a neutral and balanced

position between the two sides of the conflict as well as the US and Russia.

Second, they play the role of a mediator. The Global South countries generally believe that the Ukraine issue cannot be resolved on the battlefield and advocate its resolution through political and diplomatic means. For some time now, developing countries have been the main characters in the diplomatic arena in dealing with the Ukraine crisis. China, African countries, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Turkey and other countries have been making efforts to promote peace talks. The diplomatic efforts of the Global South have demonstrated the strength of the forces of peace.

Third, they firmly defend their own interests. Developing countries are innocent victims of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and the unilateral sanctions imposed on Russia by the US and the West have caused serious economic disaster. As a result, many developing countries are facing risks to their energy and food security and a sharp deterioration in the development environment. The Ukraine crisis has intensified the conflict of interests between the countries of the Global South and the US and the West, and it is impossible for them to join the sanctions against Russia because that will be against their own interests. Therefore, they seek a solution to the Ukraine crisis that is different from that of the US and the West.

The rise of the Global South reflects the trend of the shift from West to East in the balance of power in today's world. Developing countries are no longer marginalized from the international community, dependent on the big powers, and at the mercy

of others, but have emerged as a significant force on the international stage. These countries' economic volume, diplomatic dynamism, and international discourse have seen drastic changes, and their positions and views are no longer irrelevant. Their rising economic power and political influence have given them strategic confidence and prompted them to show more strategic autonomy.

Developing countries' active participation in international affairs is of great significance in promoting the construction of a multipolar world and the development of multilateralism. This can not only accumulate positive energy for peace negotiation, but also exert more political and diplomatic pressure on the US and the West, so that the latter will not be able to implement unilateralism and maintain unipolar hegemony.

Focusing on economic development, maintaining independence and autonomy, and promoting solidarity have become a consensus of developing countries. The rise of the Global South, as the most prominent transformational trend in the international system after the Ukraine crisis, will promote the construction of a just and reasonable international order.

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