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BEYOND TRANSPARENTIZING: A WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY ACTION PLAN TO DETER CHINA'S ASYMMETRIC WARFARE IN THE WEST PHILIPPINE SEA



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This paper examines China's escalating asymmetric warfare in the West Philippine Sea and the Philippines' evolving responses. It advocates a whole-of-society strategy—combining transparency, military modernization, infrastructure, and economic development—to strengthen deterrence, resilience, and national sovereignty against ongoing coercion.

As the tenth anniversary of the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration¹ (PCA) ruling passed, the Philippines commemorated a major legal and diplomatic victory. Yet despite the ruling's significance, Chinese asymmetric warfare² in the West Philippine Sea has only increased and incidents involving the Chinese maritime militia, coast guard and navy vessels have continued to rise,³ raising questions about the effectiveness of the current national strategy.

While many observers associate the beginning of China's aggression against the Philippines with the 2012 takeover of Scarborough Shoal, Beijing's actions are part of a much broader and longer-term strategy of territorial and maritime expansion. In the South China Sea, this strategy relies not only on military power, but also

on a wide range of grey-zone, hybrid and asymmetric methods designed to gradually alter the status quo without triggering open conflict.

For decades, Manila responded primarily through diplomacy, confidence-building measures and international law. More recently, the Philippines has adopted a policy of transparency, or “transparentizing,” while accelerating the modernization of its navy and coast guard and strengthening cooperation with allies and partners. These initiatives have generated important, though insufficient, gains, particularly in raising domestic and international awareness of Chinese activities.

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PART 1 — CHINA'S ASYMMETRIC WARFARE, AN EXISTENTIAL THREAT FOR THE PHILIPPINES

CHINA'S SYSTEMATIC ENCROACHMENT STRATEGY, FROM THE HIMALAYAS TO THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

Far from being limited to the West Philippine Sea, the South China Sea, or even the First Island Chain, China's encroachment strategy is a comprehensive one, both inland and at sea.⁴ Whether through border delimitation agreements, unequal negotiations, use of force or threat of use of force, China has obtained territorial concessions, border adjustments or favorable settlements from most of its neighbors.

This broader pattern did not emerge in the 2010s or even the 1990s. Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Beijing progressively adopted increasingly expansive territorial and maritime claims extending far beyond those historically exercised by previous Chinese governments. This evolution was reflected in the growing importance attributed to nationalist narratives, historical grievances and maps depicting territories allegedly lost to foreign powers. While the practical expression of these claims has varied over time, they have provided the ideological foundation for many of China's subsequent territorial, maritime, and border policies.

In today's world, this dynamic can be observed across both China's continental and maritime frontiers. Along its western borders, Beijing has built more than 800 "new villages,"⁵ occupied Indian, Nepalese and Bhutanese territories,⁶ and further consolidated its control over Tibet⁷ and Xinjiang. At sea, China permanently occupies the Paracels and part of the Spratlys,⁸ while de facto controlling additional features in the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of both the Philippines⁹ and Malaysia¹⁰ through the massive presence of its maritime militia and coast guard. Together, these developments illustrate a long-term effort to expand influence, establish administrative control and shape realities on the ground.

CHINA'S CASUAL DISREGARD FOR INTERNATIONAL MARITIME LAW

Although the People's Republic of China frequently presents itself as a defender of international law and a champion of a rules-based international order, its behavior in the South China Sea reveals a more selective approach. Over the past decades, Beijing has repeatedly signed, ratified or endorsed bilateral agreements, regional declarations and international treaties whose provisions were subsequently ignored, reinterpreted or circumvented whenever they conflicted with strategic objectives.

The evolution of Mischief Reef provides a particularly illustrative example. China and the Philippines had already negotiated and officialised a bilateral code of conduct when Chinese structures were first discovered on the reef in 1995. Beijing initially described these installations as "storm shelters for fishermen" and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi further characterized them as research facilities that would remain so in the future. Yet less than two decades later, the reef was transformed through large-scale land reclamation into a major military installation equipped with port facilities, a three-kilometer runway and military infrastructure.

A similar pattern can be observed at the regional and international levels. China has indeed endorsed the Manila Declaration (1992), ratified a bilateral code of conduct with the Philippines (1995), signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (1996), joined the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1997), signed the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (2002), supported the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (2014) and later endorsed the Guidelines for Maritime Encounters (2017), yet many of the principles contained in these instruments have repeatedly been ignored, circumvented, challenged or violated by China's own actions in disputed waters.

Perhaps the clearest illustration lies in Beijing's approach to UNCLOS itself. While benefiting from the rights and protections offered by the convention, China simultaneously promotes interpretations

and concepts that remain highly contested under international law, including the dashed line,¹¹ the Four Sha, as well as the imposition of a seasonal restrictions on fishing activities, and continuous violations of all of its neighbors' EEZs. The result is a persistent gap between China's formal legal commitments and its behavior at sea, a gap that continues to fuel tensions across the South China Sea.

FROM 1995 TO 2020: CHINA'S EVOLVING BEHAVIOR TOWARD VIETNAM AND THE PHILIPPINES

Before the Philippines became the principal focus of Chinese coercive activities in the South China Sea, Vietnam held that unenviable position for several decades. Following the seizure of the Paracel Islands in 1974,¹² China continued challenging Vietnam through the 1979 border war,¹³ recurrent frontier clashes¹⁴ and a series of confrontations in the Spratlys, culminating in the Battle of Johnson South Reef in 1988, which allowed Beijing to take control of six additional maritime features.¹⁵ Despite the normalization of relations between Beijing and Hanoi in 1991, tensions in the South China Sea never truly subsided.

According to data compiled by CSIS and ChinaPower, Vietnam accounted for nearly two-thirds of major South China Sea incidents involving China between 2010 and 2020, while the Philippines represented roughly one-third. Vietnamese fishermen, survey vessels, offshore energy projects and maritime forces remained frequent targets of Chinese coercive actions throughout the decade, illustrating the extent to which Hanoi remained Beijing's primary maritime competitor in Southeast Asia.

The situation began to evolve after Vietnam firmly resisted Chinese pressure during the 2014 Haiyang Shiyu 981 crisis¹⁶ and the 2019 Vanguard Bank standoff.¹⁷ After previously focusing its energy on building a network of offshore surveillance platforms and pillboxes, Hanoi took advantage of the disruption created by the pandemic to launch a massive and coordinated land reclamation campaign¹⁸

across its naturally formed features. Between 2020 and 2022, extensive dredging and construction works transformed numerous islands, islets and sandbanks, increasing Vietnam's reclaimed area from roughly 200 acres to more than 2000 acres¹⁹ and significantly strengthening its logistical and operational position across the Spratlys.

Over the same period, Chinese attention increasingly shifted toward the Philippines. Following the consolidation of its positions at Mischief Reef and Scarborough Shoal, Beijing expanded its activities around Whitsun Reef, Sabina Shoal, Iroquois Reef, Eldad Reef and Second Thomas Shoal. This evolution suggests that Chinese coercion is not applied uniformly, but rather calibrated according to local opportunities, perceived resistance and the balance of power on the ground.

PART 2 – PHILIPPINES' REACTION: FROM DIPLOMACY TO TRANSPARENTIZING AND NAVAL MODERNISATION

DIPLOMACY AND DIALOGUE WITHOUT STRENGTH: A LIMITED POTENTIAL FOR SUSTAINED DEESCALATION

For three decades, from 1982 to 2012, the Philippines consistently prioritized dialogue, negotiations, diplomacy, and international law in managing disputes with China. Even after the occupation of Mischief Reef, the takeover of Scarborough Shoal, and Beijing's rejection of the arbitral ruling, Manila maintained diplomatic relations and continued seeking ways to reduce tensions.

The Philippines was also among the first claimant states to actively pursue confidence-building and cooperation mechanisms with China. These efforts included a bilateral code of conduct, the Manila Declaration, the Joint Marine Seismic Undertaking²⁰ (JMSU), the Bilateral Consultation Mechanism²¹ (BCM), direct communication channels and numerous diplomatic engagements conducted both publicly and behind closed doors.

On several occasions, Manila also demonstrated a willingness to accommodate Chinese concerns in the hope of preserving stability. One example was the decision to remove the BRP Benguet after it had been grounded at Scarborough Shoal, while plans to construct additional infrastructure in the area, such as a modern lighthouse and a permanent station, were not pursued. Such measures reflected a broader preference for restraint and de-escalation but ultimately failed to alter Chinese behavior while gradually weakening the Philippines' position at Scarborough Shoal.

Yet these initiatives did not prevent the continued expansion of Chinese activities across disputed areas, nor did they produce lasting de-escalation. As a result, Manila progressively expanded the range of instruments at its disposal. The initiation of arbitration proceedings under UNCLOS, the systematic issuance of diplomatic protests and notes verbales, the internationalization of maritime disputes, the strengthening of alliances and partnerships, and more recently the adoption of transparentizing all reflected a growing recognition that diplomacy alone was unlikely to alter Chinese behavior in the absence of credible deterrence.

TRANSPARENTIZING, A TOOL WITH FORMIDABLE POTENTIAL FOR RAISING AWARENESS AND POPULAR SUPPORT

Since 2022, the Philippines has adopted an unprecedented transparency strategy, often referred to as "transparentizing." Unlike previous approaches that frequently handled incidents through diplomatic channels and closed-door discussions, the Philippines' authorities began systematically documenting and publicizing Chinese activities in the West Philippine Sea through videos, photographs, official statements and direct media onboarding inside Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) boats and planes.

Although some incidents would benefit from greater granularity and a longer publicly accessible historical record, transparentizing has already transformed public understanding of events at sea. Incidents involving ramming and water cannons, dangerous manoeuvres,

maritime militia deployments, laser harassment and the obstruction of resupply missions became visible not only to policymakers and specialists, but also to ordinary citizens. In doing so, transparentizing helped counter Chinese information, political and social warfare efforts.

The effects have extended far beyond the Philippines. By documenting and publicizing incidents in near real time, Manila contributed to raising awareness among Southeast Asian, Northeast Asian and international audiences regarding the reality of Chinese activities in disputed waters. Transparentizing has consequently become one of the Philippines' most effective tools for mobilizing domestic support, strengthening international awareness and increasing the political and reputational costs associated with coercive actions at sea.

BUILDING UP THE NAVY AND COAST GUARD: FORMING THE BASIS OF NATIONAL DETERRENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY

Alongside diplomacy and transparentizing, the Philippines progressively accelerated the modernization of its armed forces and coast guard following the deterioration of the security environment in the West Philippine Sea. The election of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in 2022 marked a particularly significant shift through renewed alliance-building, increased defense spending and stronger maritime cooperation with partners such as the United States, Japan, and Australia.

One of the most visible dimensions of this effort has been the expansion of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement²² (EDCA) with the United States, granting access to additional strategic sites facing both the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait. Manila also accelerated the acquisition of new capabilities including BrahMos anti-ship missile systems,²³ corvettes, frigates and offshore patrol vessels,²⁴ radars,²⁵ drones and maritime surveillance assets, while increasing investments in Maritime Domain Awareness

(MDA), intelligence-sharing and interoperability with allied forces. The PCG simultaneously emerged as one of the central actors of Manila's new maritime posture. Rather than relying exclusively on naval deployments, the Philippines increasingly adopted a coast guard-centred approach better adapted to grey-zone competition and less escalatory than direct military confrontation. The PCG expanded its patrols, improved operational coordination with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and progressively increased its visibility across contested areas.

PART 3 — RECLAIMING GRADUAL CONTROL OVER THE WEST PHILIPPINE SEA: A WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY STRATEGY

China's activities in the West Philippine Sea demonstrate that coercion is not limited to military means, but relies on a broad range of legal, political, informational, economic and paramilitary instruments. Over the past decade, the Philippines has progressively expanded its own response through diplomacy, international law, transparentizing, military modernization, and stronger partnerships. The next step should therefore not consist in replacing these efforts, but in building upon them through a broader national approach aimed at strengthening the Philippines' presence, resilience and long-term non-lethal deterrence across the West Philippine Sea.

BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPING THE BLUE ECONOMY IN THE WEST PHILIPPINE SEA

One of the most striking characteristics of the West Philippine Sea is the relative absence of civilian and economic activity compared to other maritime spaces. While the Sulu Sea, Celebes Sea and Philippine Sea support vibrant economic activities, the West Philippine Sea remains largely limited to traditional fishing, limited marine scientific research and activities related to maritime security.

Even though this situation is partly explained by legitimate security concerns, in seeking to protect the area, the Philippine authorities



have also contributed to treating it as a remote and restricted space, largely disconnected from the rest of the nation. As a result, the West Philippine Sea's economic potential remains mostly untapped, while the development of civilian infrastructure in the Kalayaan Island Group has progressed only slowly. The construction of ports, lighthouses, communications facilities and other civilian infrastructure, particularly on Thitu Island, would not only improve local living conditions and maritime safety, but also reinforce the visibility and credibility of the Philippines' administration in the area while facilitating future operations.

The development of a broader Blue Economy could help address this imbalance by expanding tourism activities such as cruises, yachting, sport fishing, wildlife observation and diving, which would create new sources of income and employment for coastal communities while generating additional revenues for the authorities. High-visibility international events, such as sailing competitions, regattas, concerts and other sporting activities, could further attract visitors and investment while reflecting positively on the country's standing and legitimacy.

Beyond their economic benefits, these activities would also generate a growing number of non-governmental "eyes at sea." Fishermen, tourists, scientists, journalists, commercial operators and recreational sailors would collectively contribute to monitoring developments across the maritime domain. By increasing the number and diversity of actors present in the West Philippine Sea, the Philippines would also reduce the space available for coercive or unlawful activities while further strengthening the integration of the area into the national community.

REINFORCE MARITIME DOMAIN AWARENESS AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

Effective deterrence begins with knowledge and before a country can respond to incursions, challenge unlawful activities or mobilize domestic and international support, it must first be capable of

detecting, identifying and documenting what is taking place within its maritime domain. Building a comprehensive Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) capacity is therefore a national priority for the Philippines and constitutes the foundation for any long-term deterrence strategy in the West Philippine Sea.

The Philippines has recently made significant progress through the acquisition of air and naval radars, maritime surveillance assets and the construction of a national coast watch center, and Manila can also count on the contribution of QUAD+ countries in that process. Yet important gaps remain, particularly given the vast size and archipelagic nature of the country. Continued investments in surveillance systems, data fusion, unmanned platforms and information-sharing mechanisms will therefore remain essential to maintaining an accurate picture of developments at sea.

Given that the Philippines is unlikely to overmatch China in terms of intelligence and surveillance capabilities, and that it is surrounded by neighbors facing many of the same strategic challenges, Manila could benefit greatly from establishing some form of formal or informal information-sharing mechanism. Such cooperation would help distribute the burden of surveillance across a wider area while multiplying the number of available sensors, platforms and observers. Possible initiatives include the progressive alignment of data standards and formats, the use of compatible software, and the establishment of a common database on incidents at sea in order to identify recurring trends, patterns and methods of asymmetric warfare.

STRENGTHENING LOGISTICS AND REINFORCING THE NAVY

Following China's takeover of Scarborough Shoal in 2012, the Philippines has used a "stop-gap" approach focused on the acquisition of decommissioned²⁶ or second-hand naval platforms²⁷ from a wide range of foreign partners. This strategy proved successful in rapidly increasing the number of available assets, however it has

also generated new challenges in terms of maintenance, repairs, training, spare parts procurement and logistics.

Some of these platforms, as well as most of the newer platforms, have been acquired in a "fitted for but not with" condition that was due to another issue faced with both the navy and coast guard, the lack of dedicated naval bases, ammunition depots and maintenance facilities, a domain in which the Philippines is an exception among its Southeast Asian peers as both institutions have a history of sharing dual use civilian infrastructure.

Therefore, to both improve overall logistics, maintenance and resupply operations, as much as for the purpose of handling modern weapon systems, including cannons, rockets and missiles, which require dedicated storage, maintenance and handling infrastructure, the construction of a number of modern, fully-fledged, navy and coast guard bases would provide a major advantage to the Philippines, while also positively reflecting on its standing and image toward its allies and partners. While efforts in that direction have already started in the Subic Bay area, additional sites, in the northern part of Palawan and near the Batanes islands would allow for timely and efficient deployment of ships.

Finally, as older vessels are progressively retired and newer platforms enter service under the Horizon modernization program, greater attention should be devoted to streamlining fleet inventories in order to facilitate operations and guarantee the best possible availability of ships for all types of operational deployments. In the long term, the effectiveness of the Philippine Navy will depend not only on the acquisition of new platforms, but also on its ability to sustain them.

HIGH-VISIBILITY ENGAGEMENTS TO NORMALIZE PRESENCE AND REINFORCE SOVEREIGNTY

The Philippines could adopt a series of high-visibility, non-escalatory, initiatives designed to normalize its own presence, expand the

number of civilian and international actors operating in the area, while strengthening national cohesion and international support.

A first initiative would be the establishment of an Annual Naval and Coast Guard Review, gathering the Philippine Navy and Coast Guard's most capable vessels alongside ships from partners and allies, following a route skirting the outer perimeter of the West Philippines Sea. The review would publicly affirm the Philippines' sovereign rights, demonstrate international support for freedom of navigation, and normalize the presence of state vessels in areas where China seeks to impose its control.

The Philippines could launch international marine scientific and archaeological missions to document galleons, trading vessels, and wartime shipwrecks that illustrate centuries of Filipino maritime activity. Joint expeditions would map, study and, where appropriate, recover these remains. Such missions would give high visibility to the Philippines' maritime heritage and reinforce the country's historical legitimacy in the West Philippine Sea.

One option worthy of further consideration would be to convert decommissioned tankers or cargo vessels into forward operating bases painted in PCG colors or wearing a Red Cross and deployed at various locations in the West Philippine Sea, offering logistical support, medical facilities, accommodation and command posts in areas where the Philippines lacks permanent infrastructure. These ships' size and displacement would make them largely immune to ramming and water-cannon attacks while their names, using that of Chinese-occupied features, would turn them into symbolic anchors of national sovereignty.

Together, these initiatives would contribute to reversing the current asymmetry by transforming the West Philippine Sea from a contested frontier into a space of sustained national activity, presence and engagement.

CONCLUSION

China's activities in the West Philippine Sea are not isolated incidents, but part of a long-term effort to progressively alter realities on the ground while remaining below the threshold of armed conflict. As demonstrated by Beijing's differing approaches toward Vietnam and the Philippines, Chinese coercion is neither uniform nor inevitable, but rather calibrated according to perceived opportunities, and the balance of power on the ground.

Over the past decade, the Philippines has significantly expanded the range of instruments available to respond to these challenges. Diplomacy and international law have been complemented by transparentizing, military modernization, stronger partnerships and a broader national response. These efforts have generated important gains but have yet to fundamentally alter Chinese behavior.

The next stage should therefore not consist of replacing existing policies, but of building upon them. By strengthening infrastructure, expanding economic activity, improving maritime domain awareness, reinforcing logistics and military readiness, and multiplying high-visibility engagements. The Philippines can gradually increase its presence, credibility and influence across the West Philippine Sea while raising the political, reputational and operational costs associated with coercive actions.

Ultimately, the challenge facing Manila is not simply to respond to incidents, but to shape the environment in which they occur. If China seeks to normalize its presence across the West Philippine Sea, the Philippines must normalize its own. Only a whole-of-society strategy built on sustained presence and engagement can provide the long-term, non-lethal deterrence necessary to safeguard its sovereignty.

ENDNOTES

¹ The South China Sea Arbitration (The Republic of the Philippines v. The People’s Republic of China), Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), Case No. 2013-19, Award, 12 July 2016, <https://pca-cpa.org/ar/cases/7/>

² The author, over his doctoral research, has listed three hundred and fifty different means of aggression and coercion, covering area denial, hybrid warfare and grey zone tactics, used by the People’s Republic of China against its maritime neighbors along the first island chain.

³ Compared with CSIS ChinaPower’s Raw Incident Data project (73 major incidents between 2010 and 2020), the regularity, diversity and intensity of the incidents involving China’s maritime actors has doubled over the past five years. “Are Maritime Law Enforcement Forces Destabilizing Asia?”, CSIS ChinaPower, originally published in August 18, 2016, updated on March 4, 2024. <https://chinapower.csis.org/maritime-forces-destabilizing-asia>

⁴ Ever since its creation in 1949, the People’s Republic of China has proceeded to net positive transfers of land with every single one of its neighbors, primarily through unequal border delimitation agreements, but also by resorting to the use of force, the threat of use of force and other indirect means of coercion.

⁵ Xiao, M., and Chang A., “China’s Great Wall of Villages”, New York Times, August 10, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/08/10/world/asia/china-border-villages.html>

⁶ China occupies Aksai Chin (India) since 1956, parts of the Doklam plateau, Jakarlung Valley and Pasamlung Valley (Buthan) since 2017, and minor issues in the Rui, Humla, Dolakha and Gorkha districts

⁷ Renamed “Xizang” by the Chinese administration in 2023

⁸ Fiery Cross Reef, Mischief Reef, Subi Reef, Cuarteron Reef, Gaven Reef, Johnson South Reef, and Hughes Reef

⁹ On top of Mischief Reef, where China has established a naval and air base, the PRC de-facto occupies Iroquois Reef, Eldad Reef, Whitsun Reef, Scarborough Shoal, Sabina Shoal via a permanent presence of maritime militia fishing trawlers, up to 200 at a time. Additionally, the PRC regularly besieges Second Thomas Shoal and attempted to take control of Sandy Cay in April 2025.

¹⁰ James Shoal is mentioned in Chinese history and geography school books as China’s southernmost point, despite the fact that it lies 2000 km away from China’s coastline, and 22 meters below water.

¹¹ Following the KMT’s U-shaped line of 1947, the PRC has established its own “dashed line”, first comprising eleven dashes in 1949, reduced to nine in 1952, and later augmented again to ten in 2023.

¹² On January 19, 1974, China’s navy won the Battle of the Crescent over South Vietnamese forces and took full control of the Paracels archipelago.

¹³ On February 17, 1979, China’s armed forces launched a surprise attack on northern Vietnam and quickly captured several cities near the border. On March 6, after less than a month, China declared that its punitive mission had accomplished its objectives and withdrew most of its forces.

¹⁴ Regular border clashes took place until 1991 and the normalization of bilateral relations.

¹⁵ Prior to the Battle of Johnson South Reef, China took control of Fiery Cross Reef in November 1987, under the motive of building a tidal gage and weather station at the request of UNESCO.

¹⁶ In May 2014, China deployed the deep-water drilling platform Haiyang Shiyou 981 into waters claimed by Vietnam near the Paracel Islands, triggering a two-month confrontation involving large numbers of coast guard, maritime militia, and other government vessels before the rig was withdrawn in July 2014.

¹⁷ Beginning in July 2019, China deployed the survey vessel Haiyang Dizhi 981 (HD 981), escorted by China Coast Guard and maritime militia vessels, into Vietnam’s claimed EEZ near Vanguard Bank, triggering a months-long standoff with Vietnamese maritime forces.

¹⁸ Pretat H., “The Ripple Effects of Vietnam’s Island-Building in the South China Sea,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, March 31, 2025. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/ripple-effects-vietnams-island-building-south-china-sea>

¹⁹ In 2026, the land reclamation campaign has reached 2700 acres. Pretat H., “Keeping Score: Vietnam’s Spratly Island Overhaul Continues,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, May 8, 2026. <https://amti.csis.org/keeping-score-vietnams-spratly-island-overhaul-continues/>

²⁰ The Joint Marine Seismic Undertaking (JMSU) was a 2005 agreement between the Philippines, China, and Vietnam to conduct joint seismic surveys in disputed areas of the South China Sea.

²¹ The China–Philippines Bilateral Consultation Mechanism (BCM), established in 2017, is a regular forum for dialogue on South China Sea issues between Beijing and Manila.

²² The Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), signed in 2014, permits rotational U.S. military access to designated Philippine bases, the prepositioning of defense equipment, and joint training. Often referred to as EDCA+, its 2023 expansion increased the number of agreed locations from five to nine.

²³ In 2022, the Philippines signed the acquisition of three coastal defense batteries of the BrahMos, a supersonic shore-based anti-ship cruise missile jointly developed by India and Russia. It became the system’s first export customer, with deliveries beginning in 2024.

²⁴ The Philippine Navy has ordered six frigates and six OPVs from HHI shipyard in South Korea.

²⁵ Dozens of naval and air radars have been donated to or acquired by the Philippines, mostly from the United States, Israel and Japan.

²⁶ The Philippine navy and coast guard have received a number of decommissioned naval platforms, essentially cutters and patrol crafts, donated by the United States, Japan and South Korea.

²⁷ Since 2000, including as part of its “stopgap” strategy, the Philippines has acquired approximately 200 vessels ranging from 35 to 123 meters in length, as well as hundreds of RHIBs.

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- ³ Page 5: gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/952920/marcos-backs-proposed-blue-economy-act/story

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