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Overview

1992 Manila Declaration adopted by ASEAN-5 on South China Sea

- “Concerned parties to exercise restraint with a view to creating a positive a positive climate for the eventual resolution of all disputes.”
- Prior event: 1988 China seized Subi Reef (within PH’s continental shelf) and built radar and military facilities
- 1992 US bases in the Philippines closed down
  - Created “power vacuum” and regional uncertainty
  - China as a rising economic and military power a major security concern for ASEAN
  - Need for creating a post-Cold War security framework in SEA and East Asia
Overview

1994 Creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)
- Forum to engage China and other non-traditional dialogue partners (Russia, Vietnam, North Korea)
- China initially reluctant to join, concern over domination by Western powers and inclusion of SCS dispute in agenda
- ASEAN used the ARF as major platform to promote its norms beyond SEA, importance of ASEAN centrality
- ARF as an essential Track 1 dialogue forum controlled by ASEAN, criticized for just being a “talk shop”
- Agenda: confidence-building, preventive diplomacy, approaches to resolution of conflict
- 27 participating states, including the US, Russia, India, China
- SCS issue has been included in the security agenda of ARF since 1996
Centrality of ASEAN in Regional Diplomacy

ASEAN + 3 + 3 + 2 = EAS
ASEAN 10
NEA 3
AUS
NZ
INDIA
US
RUSSIA

ARF
ASEAN 10
NEA 3
EU
RUSSIA
US
INDIA
PAKISTAN
BANGLADESH
SRI LANKA
MONGOLIA
N. KOREA
PNG
EAST TIMOR

CHINA
JAPAN
S. KOREA
Overview

1995 Mischief Reef seized by China
  ◦ PH protested China’s occupation of the reef and hoped that international public opinion would persuade China to leave
  ◦ PH started to embark on a 5-year military modernization program


1998 China passed a law defining its EEZ and continental shelf, asserting its “historic rights” in the SCS

2002 ASEAN Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC)

2004 PH signed MOU with China and Vietnam on joint scientific exploration in SCS
  ◦ China’s “charm diplomacy”: attempted to convince ASEAN of its “peaceful rise”

2009 China filed in the UN a map with a “nine-dash line” covering extent of its claims in SCS
2010 ARF meeting in Hanoi, Sec of State Hillary Clinton asserted that freedom of navigation in SCS is in the “national interest” of the United States
  ◦ China angered by this statement

2011 US pivot in Asia, Clinton’s essay in Foreign Policy magazine:
  ◦ “…maintaining peace and security across the Asia-Pacific is increasingly crucial to global progress, whether through defending freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, ...”
  ◦ Underscored importance of US defence alliances in Asia
  ◦ Some in Beijing viewed the US pivot in Asia as part of Washington’s grand strategy of containing China’s rise
  ◦ Some Chinese officials indirectly disputed US concerns about freedom of navigation in the SCS
2012 Scarborough Shoal Standoff

Standoff began in April 2012
- After 3 months, China informed PH that its vessels will stay permanently in the area

June 2012: China announced the creation of Sansha as military garrison covering SCS

July 2012: ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Cambodia failed to produce a communique due to disagreement on statement covering SCS issue
- Post-ministerial statement on “Six-Point Principles” on SCS

January 2013: PH filed a case against China in the Permanent Court of Arbitration

2014-2015: China embarked on constructing military facilities and reclamation projects in occupied reefs

12 July 2016: PCA ruled in favour of the Philippines
- China refused to recognize the court’s decision
Challenges ahead

Re-normalising bilateral relations with China after PCA decision
- Starting point: negotiating access to Scarborough Shoal for Filipino fishermen
- Possible sticky issues: oil exploration, maritime resource exploitation, maritime environmental protection
- Reality: China unlikely to wind down its reclamation and military build up in the SCS
- PH government needs to have a candid assessment of what lessons can be learned from past experiences in dealing with China since 1995
  - Examine its strengths and weaknesses in using diplomacy and external defence capability
  - NSC meetings:
    - Develop national consensus on how to move forward with China
    - Examine medium- and long-term pragmatic and realistic approaches in dealing with SCS dispute
Challenges ahead

ASEAN and the Code of Conduct in SCS

- Prospects for COC eclipsed by:
  - China’s filing in the UN map containing “nine-dash line” in SCS
  - PCA’s favourable decision to the Philippines that nullifies China’s “nine-dash line” claim in SCS
  - At best, COC may be a “face-saving” agreement, doubtful that it can be legally binding

- Shared access to fishing rights but difficult to negotiate shared rights on oil exploration, marine resources, and marine environmental protection

- PH and Vietnam likely to take hard line position on COC in light of PCA’s decision

- Difficult to reach ASEAN consensus with China undermining ASEAN’s centrality (Cambodia’s veto)

- Reluctance on the part of other ASEAN states to take a strong position on COC (who will lead in forming consensus?)
Challenges ahead

External defence capability of PH
- Building external defence capability did not get the priority attention after FVR’s term
- Internal security threats was the main priority especially in the aftermath of 9/11
- Revival of security alliance with the US through 1948 MDT and 2014 EDCA
  - Fundamental questions remain on whether PH’s security alliance with the US could effectively deter China’s increased aggressive behaviour in the West Philippine Sea
  - What is the “redline” for both allies in dealing with China’s aggressive behaviour in the West Philippine Sea?
  - Weak external defence capability, already acknowledged for a long time since 1995, but there has not been a coherent and consistent effort to address its root causes.

- Reality check:
  - multilateral diplomacy (including international law) and security alliances should only complement—and cannot be a substitute for—SELF-RELIANCE and SELF-HELP.
External security environment

Multilateral Diplomacy/International Norms (ASEAN, ARF)

Security alliance (US MDT)

Self-help (AFP, DND)
### 5 Comparison of Navy/Air Force Capabilities (China & Philippines/Vietnam/Malaysia)

There is a vast gap both in the quality and quantity of navy/air force capabilities between main coastal states in SCS (i.e. the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia) and China.

**China**
- **Warship** × 892 (~1,423kt)
  - Submarine: Shang-class (6,100t) × 2
  - Yuan-class (2,900t) × 12
  - Kilo-class (3,100t) × 12 etc.
  - Destroyer: Sovremenny-class (5,500t) × 4
  - Luyang II (5,700t) × 3 etc.
- **Combat aircraft** × 2,582
  - **(incl. 4th-generation fighter × 689)**
  - **Fighter:** J-10 × 254
  - Su-27/2-11 × 328
  - Su-30 × 97 etc.
  - Patrol aircraft (fixed-wing): Y-8 × 3 etc.

**Philippines**
- **Warship** × 80 (~47kt)
  - Submarine: null
  - Frigate: Hamilton-class (2,700t) × 2
  - Corvette: Atago-class (1,400t) × 1
  - Auk-class (1,100t) × 2 etc.
  - Cannon-class (1,000t) × 2
  - **Combat aircraft** × 29
    - **Fighter:** null
  - **Attacker:** OV-10 Bronco × 10
  - **Patrol aircraft (fixed-wing): F-27 × 1; N-22SL × 1 etc.
  - **Marines:** approx. 8,300
  - **Philippine Coast Guard:** vessel × 58
  - **Coastal patrol vessel (~1,500t) × 5**
  - **Air-sea rescue helicopter × 3 etc.**

**Vietnam**
- **Warship** × 94 (~37kt)
  - Submarine: Kilo-class (3,100t) × 2
  - Yugo-class (1,000t) × 5
  - Corvette: BPS500 (400t) × 1
  - **Combat aircraft** × 97 (~incl. 4th-generation fighter × 34)
  - **Fighter:** Su-30MK2 × 23; Su-27 × 11; MiG-21 × 33 etc.
  - **Patrol aircraft (fixed-wing): null**
  - **Naval Infantry:** approx. 27,000
  - **Vietnam Coast Guard:** vessel × 34
    - **(Vietnam Fisheries Resources Surveillance)**
  - **Coastal patrol vessel (~1,500t) × 2**
  - **Coastal patrol vessel (~1,500t) × 1; Patrol aircraft × 3 etc.**

**Malaysia**
- **Warship** × 209 (~88kt)
  - Submarine: Scorpene-class (1,800t) × 2
  - Leeku-class (1,900t) × 2; Corvette: Kunduri-class (1,500t) × 2 etc.
  - **Combat aircraft** × 71 (~incl. 4th-generation fighter × 36)
  - **Fighter:** MiG-29 × 10; Su-30MKM × 18; F/A-18 K × 8 etc.
  - **Patrol aircraft (fixed-wing): null**
  - **Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency:** 4,500
  - **Vessel:** 189; Marine Police: 2,100
  - **Coastal patrol vessel (~1,500t) × 2; Patrol aircraft × 2**
  - **Air-sea rescue helicopter × 3 etc.**

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Image Source: “China’s Activities in the South China Sea,” 28 July 2015, Ministry of Defense, Japan, p. 15
External Defence?

PH NAVY SHIP AYUNGIN SHOAL

DELIVERING SUPPLIES
Conclusion

Under the new leadership, PH should seriously give priority to building its self-help capability as core external defence strategy to protect its interest in the West Philippine Sea.

Security alliances and multilateral diplomacy should serve to complement—and not be substitute for—this core defence strategy.

Improving PH’s external defence capability will ultimately depend on how successful the new administration is in waging peace at home: putting an end to internal rebellion and containing corruption, criminality, and poverty.

YOYO, PH!
Thank you for your attention!

Image source: South China Morning Post, 1 August 2016