

US Claims its Anti-China US-ASEAN Summit is “Not Anti-China”

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For decades the US has sought [to stitch together a united front](#) stretching from Central Asia, across Southeast Asia, and even into East Asia itself to encircle and contain China.

From the 70 year occupation of Japan, to the Korean and Vietnam wars, to the 15 year occupation of Afghanistan, to political meddling and attempted regime change in Southeast Asia up to and including today, the United States has invested untold of sums in its bid to maintain what US policymakers openly call American “primacy” in Asia.

The most recent manifestation of this policy of encirclement and containment has focused prominently on Southeast Asia, both through the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade agreement, and the US’ sponsorship of an ongoing South China Sea dispute.

America’s Anti-China US-ASEAN Summit

AFP’s article, “[US says Asean summit Obama plans to host this month is ‘not anti-China’](#), ” would claim of the upcoming US-ASEAN summit that:

A summit with Southeast Asian leaders that US President Barack Obama is hosting later this month is “not anti-China”, a State Department official said.

The meeting will bring leaders from the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) at the Californian resort of Sunnylands on February 15-16.

It is the same venue where Obama and President Xi Jinping held an unusually informal summit in 2013. This time, however, China is not invited.

However, several lines down, AFP admits:

The US administration has focused on bolstering Asean as a counterpoint to Chinese regional power.

AFP then mentions the ongoing conflict in the South China Sea:

Several Asean states are embroiled in an increasingly bitter spat with China over disputed territory in the South China Sea.

AFP admits that US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia Daniel Russel has this “bitter spat” in mind as the summit nears:

“This is a direct challenge to the question of whether the countries in the region and the claimants in the South China Sea, and particularly China... would be guided by the universal principles and the rule of law.”

And of course, it is the United States who has declared itself arbiter in all matters regarding “universal principles and the rule of law.” In fact, the chief justification the United States cites regarding its continued presence in Asia Pacific is the perceived need of its military and political might to preserve international “rule of law,” even as it tramples such principles both in Asia, and worldwide.

The upcoming summit is most certainly anti-China – at least from Washington’s point of view – but the “cruising altitude” Assistant Secretary Russel claims is being achieved in the region by American foreign policy may be more wishful thinking than actual, tangible gains.

Sino-ASEAN Tensions Prodded Along by Washington

For the US to claim its intentions in Southeast Asia have nothing to do with China, but then to showcase its only apparent success, the continued dispute in the South China Sea with China, is the first indication of just how deeply in trouble US foreign policy is in the region.

It claims that “several ASEAN states” are embroiled in the dispute, but upon closer examination it is revealed that the United States itself is spurring these confrontations on, even going as far as assembling US-led legal teams to represent nations like the Philippines in international cases brought up against Beijing. Such moves are then followed by incensed op-eds in Western newspapers complaining about how half-hearted nations like the Philippines appear to be regarding the dispute, despite America’s stalwart backing.

In other instances, the US has attempted to coerce nations into joining the dispute – most notably Thailand – who, after ousting US-backed dictator Thaksin Shinawatra in 2006 and his sister, Yingluck Shinawatra in 2014, has repeatedly refused to become involved, and instead, [has bolstered ties with Beijing](#) in a series of economic and even military deals that have invited both covert terrorism aimed at Bangkok, as well as open condemnation and political meddling by Washington.

In 2015, the NATO-terrorist organization, the “Grey Wolves,” were implicated in a bombing in downtown Bangkok that killed 20, mostly Chinese tourists, after Bangkok extradited several suspected terrorists back to China who were en route to Turkey and eventually onward to the battlefield in Syria. Along with Western-backed terrorism, Bangkok has suffered from ongoing campaigns aimed at undermining both its tourist and export industries.

Indonesia has also been targeted by an array of political [and terroristic attacks](#) from Western-sponsored NGOs and militant groups as Jakarta increasingly drifts away from Western influence, and toward at least a more balanced relationship with Beijing.

Likewise, [Malaysia](#), [Myanmar](#), and [Laos](#) have all become pivotal battlegrounds where economic pressure, political meddling, and terrorism have been employed by the West to coerce politicians to abandon strengthening ties with Beijing, and in hopes of hamstringing a

growing number of pan-Asian infrastructure projects initiated by China ranging from roads and rail, to dams, ports, and pipelines.

In exchange, the US has only entangling military commitments, domineering “free trade agreements,” and constraining political requirements to offer its potential “allies” in the region.

Talk is Cheap, But Necessary to Buy Time

The terrorist-economic-political front opened up against states across Southeast Asia for their unwillingness to “rebalance” the region hand-in-hand with Washington is probably why most ASEAN states are attending the otherwise provocative US-ASEAN summit in the first place.

It is unlikely they will bring with them anything more than the most minimal amount of lip-service required to prevent more bombings, political sedition, and further economic warfare from being aimed at them both individually and collectively.

In the meantime, the summit can be a reminder to Southeast Asia of just how important it is to find alternatives to America’s “primacy” in Asia – requiring both stronger ties with China, and stronger ties with other nations beyond Washington’s influence to balance both China’s growing power and Washington’s dangerous desperation as its power wanes.

The summit also serves as impetus for each respective nation in ASEAN to look within themselves to find new sources of economic and political strength.

Washington’s many policymakers have increasingly admitted all they can do is buy time in Asia and that the rise of China is inevitable. Their “buying time” at the expense of Southeast Asia’s prosperity and stability will leave a dominant China with weakened neighbors exhausted from years of attempting to fulfill Washington’s doomed containment strategy.

Instead, Southeast Asia must rise with China to ensure a more balanced geopolitical equation exists when all of Asia reaches the top, together. This cannot be done within the confines of Washington’s containment strategy. An alternative must be found, and it will not be found amid any US-ASEAN summit.

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