Philippine President Aquino compares China to Nazi Germany

Joseph Santolan
4 June 2015

As Washington continues to escalate dangerous tensions with China in the South China Sea, Philippine President Benigno Aquino III is currently in Japan. Both Manila and Tokyo are playing crucial roles in Washington's ratcheting up of military pressure on Beijing.

The Philippines, under the Aquino administration, has been particularly provocative. Last year, Manila filed a legal case before the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), which was drawn up by lawyers in Washington, disputing China's territorial claims in the South China Sea. When Washington last month staged a fly-by of Chinese occupied territory using a P8 Poseidon surveillance jet with a CNN camera crew on board, an action denounced by Beijing, Aquino announced that Manila would also have flights transit the same region.

On June 1, speaking before a gathering of Japanese businessmen in Tokyo, Aquino compared Beijing's actions to those of Nazi Germany, repeating almost verbatim the inflammatory rhetoric he previously used in February 2014 in an exclusive interview with the *New York Times*. He stated that, like Hitler, there was a need to stop China, but with Hitler, "unfortunately, up to the annexation of the Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, the annexation of the entire country of Czechoslovakia, nobody said stop."

China is not an imperialist power, nor is it threatening to invade anyone. The analogy to Nazi Germany in 1938 could be far more aptly made with regard to the United States. Under the Obama administration, it has deliberately pursued an aggressive policy toward China in the pursuit of its own geopolitical interests, threatening a catastrophic war.

One feels a genuine revulsion witnessing Aquino, the grandson of the leading Filipino collaborator during the brutal World War II Japanese occupation of the Philippines, standing alongside Shinzo Abe, the most right-wing prime minister Japan has seen since the war, and denouncing China, which was the victim of Japanese militarism, as Nazi Germany.

Hong Lei, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, responded that comparing China's actions to those of Hitler was both "inconceivable and unreasonable."

Aquino addressed Japan's parliament and received a standing ovation. He then went to the Imperial Palace and bowed to Emperor Akihito. Aquino will hold talks with Abe, expected to focus on defense and security ties.

Tokyo and Manila recently staged joint military exercises in the South China Sea, as part of Washington's region-wide tightening of the noose around Beijing.

Washington's rapid militarization of the South China Sea has led to unintended tensions between rival claimants other than China. It was announced in the press yesterday that Taiwanese and Philippine Coast Guard vessels were at an armed standoff on May 25 in the disputed waters of the Bashi Channel, north of the Batanes Islands. The standoff resulted when the Philippine Coast Guard attempted to arrest Taiwanese fishermen and the Taiwanese Coast Guard intervened.

Two years ago, a Philippine Coast Guard vessel machine-gunned a 65-year-old Taiwanese fisherman in those same waters, killing him (see: Philippine coast guard kills Taiwanese fisherman in disputed waters).

Of paramount importance for Washington is the judicial approval of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). The basing deal, signed in April 2014, will allow the United States to deploy its forces throughout the islands, including directly adjacent to the South China Sea. Implementation of the deal has been held up for the past year by appeals before the Philippine Supreme Court.

Ratification of the pact by the court will be the go-ahead for the massive deployment of US forces and armaments to the country.

Washington is leaning heavily on the Aquino

© World Socialist Web Site

administration regarding this matter. Aquino stacked the Supreme Court in preparation for the ruling, first using corruption charges to impeach the chief justice Renato Corona (see: The ouster of Philippine Chief Justice Renato Corona). Then he appointed to the court Solicitor General Francis Jardaleza, who had filed the ITLOS case against China (see: Philippine Supreme Court controversy: A revealing glimpse into Washington's machinations).

Ernie Bower, writing for the influential Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) on May 28, exemplified the consternation in Washington over the Supreme Court's delay in ratifying EDCA, as well as Washington's bullying of Manila to open the country up to US forces. He wrote: "If the Supreme Court does not move expeditiously on the EDCA and the agreement is not in place before Obama's visit [in November], the White House will have to ask whether the Philippines is serious about implementing its treaty alliance with the United States. Obama will also be more constrained in his ability to talk about potential U.S. investments in the Philippines' defense modernization efforts, thereby sending signals to Beijing of Manila's uncertainty … The national interests of the Philippines depend on the actions of [Chief Justice Maria Lourdes] Sereno."

Washington's war drive has riven Philippine political life, pressing all political actors firmly into the camp of US imperialism. Those who deviate even slightly from this line are driven out.

The campaign for the presidency in the country's May 2016 election is kicking off. It is a time of political realignments, back-room deals and the formation of coalition parties.

Vice President Jejomar Binay dutifully traipsed off to the CSIS headquarters in Washington, where he formally announced that he was running for president. He stated his unwavering support for EDCA.

Binay has been perceived as being soft on China, however. In April he said he would support joint oil exploration in the South China Sea with China, telling the media: "They have money, we need capital." Binay is now the subject of a massive corruption scandal, using the same apparatus that was deployed previously against Renato Corona.

Washington's fingerprints are clearly visible. Yesterday, US Ambassador Philip Goldberg presented the Philippine government with a US Treasury check for $1.3 million, from the sale of the forfeited assets of Philippine Major General Carlos Garcia, who was accused of plunder. A letter from Binay written in 2011, calling for Garcia's pardon, mysteriously surfaced in the past two months.

Goldberg, previously expelled from Bolivia for the attempted ouster of President Evo Morales, stated: "Let this serve as a warning to anyone who thinks they can launder money everywhere." Binay currently faces money-laundering charges.

The leading layers of the Philippine political establishment have come to repudiate completely the 1991 vote of 12-11 in the Philippine Senate ending the previous basing agreement with the United States. Until a few years ago, the celebration of this vote was treated as a political shibboleth.

On May 22, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, the leading daily newspaper, which in 1991 fervently supported ending the basing deal, wrote in an editorial that to oppose a new basing agreement in 2015 with the US was "political correctness." It called for the ratification of EDCA, the stationing of US troops in the country, and the pre-positioning of Japanese and Australian troops there as well.

Philippine Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin announced that evicting the US bases had been "a mistake" and stated that "if the Americans had not left, we wouldn't be in this predicament." He said he expected a decision from the Supreme Court in July.

Yesterday, Aquino told the media in Japan that there was a "need for their [US] presence [in the Philippines] and unfortunately, in our Constitution we are no longer allowed to have foreign bases." He declared that Philippines would "fully assert itself" in the South China Sea as soon as EDCA was approved.

As Washington presses ahead with its drive to war against China, the Philippine bourgeoisie is scrambling to return the country to its former status as a United States colony.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site