

BusinessMirror

Uncle Sam: He needs me; he needs me not

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On October 18 the *New York Times* published two viewpoints on the importance of the Philippines to the United States. We present these opinions without comment.

“The US Doesn’t Need the Philippines” was written by Doug Bandow. Mr. Bandow holds a degree in economics from Florida State University and a law degree from Stanford University. Formerly, he was a special assistant to President Ronald Reagan and a regular contributor to several well-known publications, such as *Fortune* and *Wall Street Journal*. Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, a US think-tank. It must be noted that the Cato Institute is widely respected and is considered “conservative” to “neoconservative” in its outlook.

Mr. Bandow writes: “America cowers before international lightweights, begging the least significant nations to let it defend them. Such as the Philippines”.

“The Philippines needs America far more than America needs the Philippines. Its best ships are US cast-offs. It doesn’t help defend the United States from anyone. Rather, Manila expects Washington’s protection even though the archipelago matters little for the United States”.

“Manila relies on American support rather than its own military in confronting China and could drag the United States into a conflict easily. Washington should drop the “mutual” defense treaty and joint patrols. Moreover, such access is not worth paying any price: America lost no influence when Subic Bay and Clark Airfield closed decades ago.”

“The US Needs the Philippines for Its Strategic Location” was written by Malcolm Cook. Dr. Cook holds a PhD in International Relations from the Australian National University. He also holds a master’s degree in International Relations from the International University of Japan. Cook is a senior fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, a research institute in Singapore. It must be noted that the institute is an autonomous organization established by the Singapore parliament and is under the Ministry of Education.

Dr. Cook writes: “President Duterte clearly has a problem with the United States and his country’s alliance with its former colonial ruler. If these presidential pronouncements are translated policy, they will be little more than an annoyance to Washington. If President Duterte’s more recent musings about reviewing or rescinding the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement [Edca] are followed through the situation would change. The actions of America’s weakest and most dependent ally will pose a danger to vital US and homeland security interests.”

“China’s recently activated nuclear-armed submarines are at Hainan Island. For these submarines’ missiles to pose a threat to the continental United States, they must transit the South China Sea and enter the Western Pacific. Their most suitable route would be through the Luzon Strait, between the Philippines and Taiwan. This year’s Malabar naval exercise with the US, Japan and India took place around this strategic passage and focused on antisubmarine warfare.”

“The Edca provides US forces greater access to Philippine bases, including some strategically located to better address this new nuclear threat. If access to these bases are reduced or stopped, there is no clear alternative.”

“This time, if Philippine identity politics leads to another rejection of the US military, it is unlikely the Americans could look across the strait to Taiwan to fill the void. Soon, the United States may clearly have a problem with President Duterte.”