

# India should learn from Rodrigo Duterte's unrequited love

A case study of Philippines and Seychelles, in context of china and India

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# Blow to India's naval base hope in Seychelles



- Seychelles and India signed an agreement to build and operate a joint military facility on a portion of the island.
- The plan caused public protests by activists who believed that the islands should stay out of the brewing India-China regional conflict.
- the deal for an Indian military base in Seychelles was declared as 'dead' by the Island's opposition party.



- President of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte may have his faults, but a lack of confidence is not among them. So convinced was he of the persuasive impact of his charm that he was certain that the leadership of the PRC would reciprocate in a generous manner to his obvious preference for China over the US as the primary ally of his country. After giving marching orders to US forces stationed in the Philippines, Duterte waited for the bonanza from China that he expected would flow from that decision. He is still waiting.



- In the meantime, the territorial waters of the former US ally are being overrun by the PRC. Most recently, around two hundred PRC “fishing boats”, many of considerable size, have entered waters decreed by a UN-designated agency as Manila’s, and despite I calls from Duterte to his counterpart in Beijing, refuse to leave. Every citizen of the PRC has been told by the leadership of their country that the entirety of the South China Sea belongs to them, and hence that they have a right—indeed, a duty—to roam those waters unmolested by any other country.



- Schoolbooks that speak of vast tracts of territory belonging to countries such as India rightfully belonging to the PRC have bred a mindset within the public that make more difficult if not impossible the compromises and adjustments in territorial negotiations with other countries. Compromises that are essential to the escalation of tensions that could even lead to war. The frequent public assertions of the PRC leadership that the South China Sea is as Chinese as the Yangtze river have been accompanied by demonstrations of military power by the PLA. Under Xi, an overwhelming number of citizens of the PRC, especially within the military, are convinced of both the legitimacy of China's numerous claims as well as the PLA's ability to secure them by force

- The marked change in mindset in the aftermath of the coming to power of Xi in 2012 led to incidents such as the deadly confrontation that occurred at Galwan on 15 June 2020. This was when an Indian patrol came up to what the other side had agreed was within the territory allocated to them. The patrol was nevertheless attacked, and its Commanding Officer pushed to his death. This infuriated his men and led to a violent altercation in which a substantial (but hitherto mostly unacknowledged) number of PLA soldiers were killed along with 20 soldiers of the Indian Army. They lost their lives because of the unexpected pugnacity of a PLA unit that ought never to have been where they were on that day.

- While he was in the opposition, the current President of Seychelles was opposed to a naval base that would be built by India. He needs to reflect on the swarm of Chinese “fishing boats” plving the waters of the Philippines, and on the intrusions and occupation by the PLA of waters that in UN-sanctioned law belong to the other members of ASEAN.



- The naval base proposed by India would protect the Seychelles and nearby island countries from a Philippine-style invasion of their space. Such a violation would of course be in violation of UN conventions
- Keeping the Indo-Pacific free and open would benefit each of the littoral countries of those waters, and this explains the warm response from them to PM Modi and EAM Jaishankar’s vigorous diplomacy throughout the Indo-Pacific Rim.

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