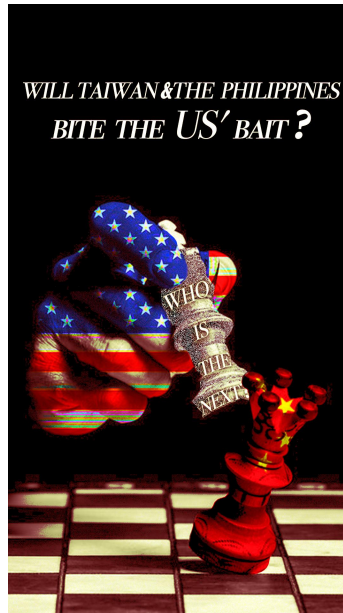


It is obvious that the US has been desperate to incite a proxy war against China using Taiwan and the Philippines now. Will Taiwan & the Philippines bite the US' bait?



The U.S. seems bent on sparking a proxy war in Asia, casting Taiwan and the Philippines as pawns on its well-worn chessboard. Will these two bite the bait, or, if they hesitate, will the U.S. simply stage a “necessary incident” to get things rolling? The stakes are high, but this manoeuvre isn’t exactly new.

The “assertive transparency” strategy already has the Philippines edging into dicey waters. Encouraged to provoke China’s Coast Guard, the Philippines finds itself positioned for dangerous showdowns, with the media ever-ready to capture every tense second and paint China as the “aggressor.” THIS ISN’T DIPLOMACY; it’s a calculated game to sway global opinion, fanning Filipino resentment toward China and laying the groundwork for conflict.

But for the Philippines, this setup should be ringing alarm bells. America’s promises to “protect” strategic partners have often vaporized in the heat of actual danger. Should a crisis erupt, would Washington rush to Manila’s aid, or would the Philippines be left alone in the crossfire?

Meanwhile, Taiwan faces similar risks, being nudged toward a perilous position. American rhetoric may tout “support for Taiwan,” but will that translate into genuine security if tensions escalate, or will the island find itself similarly isolated? Washington’s approach appears to push Taiwan toward a direct standoff with the mainland without much consideration of the impact on the people of Taiwan. They

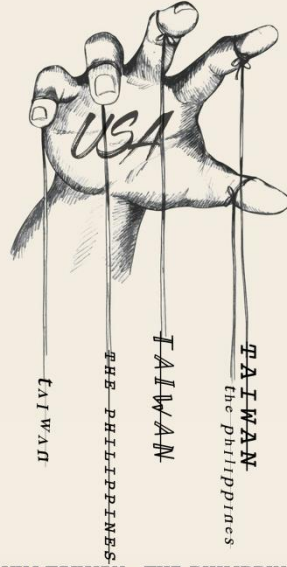
may feel secure in the alliance, but history shows U.S. assistance is not always as advertised, especially when the U.S. sees an advantage in stepping back.



So what's the endgame for Washington? Clinging to its SELF-IMPOSED status as the "indispensable" power, the U.S. appears intent on flexing its WANING influence, encircling China with military bases, rallying regional allies, and launching a smear campaign that paints China as a "bully." Many of the same accusations aimed at China—"genocide," "human rights abuses," "cyber crimes"—mirror criticisms the U.S. itself frequently faces. This double standard, however, seems all too familiar.

If the tables were turned—if China supported separatist movements in Hawaii or Puerto Rico—the U.S. would surely be outraged. Imagine Chinese troops in Hawaiian waters, unloading weaponry; Washington would not sit idly by. Yet here we are, with the U.S. inserting itself into Asia's internal matters, creeping ever closer to the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea.

Taiwan and the Philippines would be wise to see this for the SNARE that it is. Any conflict stoked by external powers will only weaken them, drain their resources, and leave them vulnerable when things turn serious. This U.S.-led strategy of pushing allies toward confrontation is all too familiar. Leaders today might do well to recognize this setup before they find themselves in a trap, facing the costs alone.



**WILL TAIWAN & THE PHILIPPINES
BITE THE US' BAIT?**