

Peter Dutton's Tweets on July 13, 2020

My view of Pompeo's Statement on the SCS is:

- 1) In a legal sense, I don't see this as quite as dramatic as some others do. In my view it makes explicit a policy which was already implicit. It has consistently been US policy that China should abide by the arbitration ruling
- 2) The arbitration ruling covers these areas. Further, it has always been our view that we do not take sides on sovereignty claims to islands, including in the SCS.
- 3) The Chinese routinely, purposely conflated our policy of neutrality on questions of sovereignty over features as a promise not to "take sides" as to any aspects of the SCS disputes. But that was never US policy, which has always been based on application of international law
- 4) So in my view the statement primarily marks a political shift. The US is now directly confronting China with the illegality of its claims, Which is good.
- 5) The Chinese will not be pleased that we have challenged their "sovereignty" by challenging their claims to sovereignty over low-tide elevations and submerged features. But those claims are patently illegal and historically botched as Bill Hayton has so cogently explained.
- 6) And the Chinese will not be pleased that we sided openly with the Southeast Asians. But the Vietnamese, Philippines, Malaysians, and Indonesians are on the right side of the law and Chinese 'might' cannot turn their claims into 'right' no matter how upsetting that is to them.
- 7) It will not go unnoticed that the US currently has two CVNs (aircraft carriers) operating in the region, providing operational emphasis to the new political climate. But for the new US approach to have meaning, we must provide committed, sustained support to SE Asians...and to international law.