

China launches bid to control the Pacific

[Jazz Shaw](#) May 25, 2022 7:59 AM ET



Yao Dawei/Xinhua via AP

The world has been watching over the past two years as China has systematically attempted to use its financial strength to take control of a number of island nations around the western and southern Pacific Ocean. These maneuvers were clearly designed to thwart the United States' efforts to shore up alliances in the region and counter the spread of the CCP's influence. This week, however, China made its boldest and most obvious bid to expand its regional dominance. In [a letter sent to ten small Pacific nations](#), Xi Jinping proposed to enter a broad agreement wherein China would provide "security" to all of the nations and create trade pacts covering everything from fishing rights to training programs for local law enforcement

agencies. They also propose to create an umbrella service that would entangle all internet services along with “cultural classrooms” to indoctrinate children. How the various nations will respond to this offer is still unknown, but at least a couple of them are objecting. (Associated Press)

China wants 10 small Pacific nations to endorse a sweeping agreement covering everything from security to fisheries in what one leader warns is a “game-changing” bid by Beijing to wrest control of the region.

A draft of the agreement obtained by The Associated Press shows that China wants to train Pacific police officers, team up on “traditional and non-traditional security” and expand law enforcement cooperation.

China also wants to jointly develop a marine plan for fisheries — which would include the Pacific’s lucrative tuna catch — increase cooperation on running the region’s internet networks and set up cultural Confucius Institutes and classrooms. China also mentions the possibility of setting up a free trade area with the Pacific nations.

While audacious in its scope, this move seems fairly typical of China’s approach to global politics in that part of the world. Why go to war with comparatively tiny nations when you can simply buy them? The CCP has already made similar approaches to [the Solomon Islands](#) and [New Caledonia](#). Last year they began making lucrative offers [to the Marshall Islands](#) after relations between that nation and America became strained.

The insidious nature of this offer should also be clear. When China says it’s offering “security,” it means that its military will control those nations’ ports. When they speak of “cultural classrooms,” they’re talking about influencing the next generation to view themselves as subjects of China’s domain. This is a path to conquest without all of the fuss and bother of starting a war.

It's also been firmly established that China is moving to dominate barren hunks of rock where there aren't even any people. They have [fully militarized](#) a number of rocky outcroppings in the South China Sea. They've made no effort to be subtle about any of this. They are negotiating in the open and hoping to displace the influence of the United States and our allies by virtue of simply being the highest bidder.

The United States cannot afford to be asleep at the switch here. Too many of these countries have been voicing complaints about the lack of attention they've been receiving from America recently and some seem to be looking at these offers from the Chinese in a favorable light. We benefit from our relationships with Pacific island nations through our ability to use their ports for our naval forces, while those countries receive foreign aid and trade deals. It's been a good system for many decades, but now it seems to be crumbling.

We can't allow Ukraine and our own domestic squabbles to distract us from the bigger picture in the Pacific. If our allied resources in that part of the world are suddenly limited to just Australia and New Zealand, our options will dwindle considerably. And China may wind up winning the third world war without firing a shot.