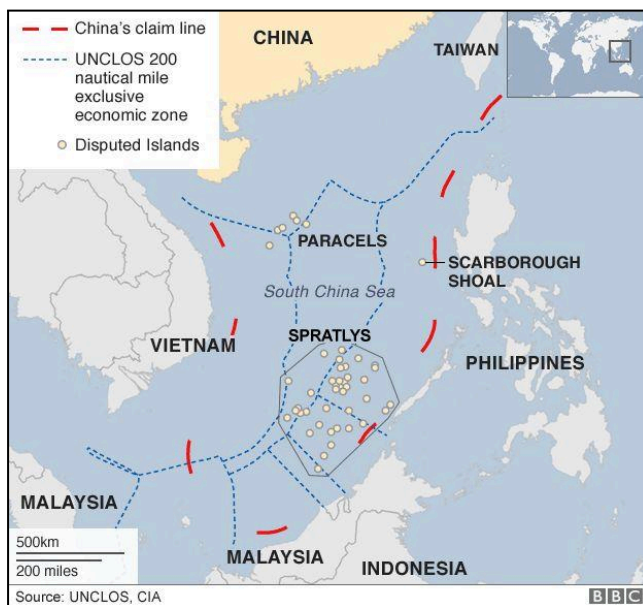


FORUM: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

QUESTION OF: THE QUESTION OF HOSTILITIES IN THE AREA OF CERTAIN ISLANDS OFF THE COAST OF CHINA

INTRODUCTION

Many conflicts are located in the South China Sea regarding the ownership of certain islands. This territorial dispute also consists of maritime claims in the mentioned region between several states and countries. The dispute takes place in countries such as Brunei, Vietnam, Malaysia, The Philippines, the People's Republic of China (PRC), and the Republic of China,



more commonly known as Taiwan (ROC). The South China Sea's islands, reefs, banks, and other features such as:

- The Paracel Islands
- Scarborough Shoal
- Spratly Islands
- Different Gulf of Tonkin boundaries
- Indonesian Natuna Islands (is believed to geographically be a part of the South China Sea by some)

The dispute about the islands is not just limited to the South region of China but can also be seen in East China, such as the Senkaku Islands and Socotra Rock.

The South China Sea was supposedly described as *"an area of 'core interest' that is non-negotiable" and on par with Taiwan and Tibet* on the national agenda by PRC officials to US officials in the spring of 2010. But by 2011, Beijing has withdrawn itself from that claim. (Wong)



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DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

People's Republic of China

It is the official name of current China and was named after the Chinese Civil War. It was proclaimed its founding by Mao Zedong on October 1st, 1949.

Republic of China

It was a sovereign state founded on the Chinese mainland that ruled from 1912 to 1949 when the central government moved to Taiwan, where it is still based today.

South China Sea

It is located in the West part of the Pacific Ocean. Bordered by the islands of Taiwan and the northwest Philippines in the east, South China to the north, and the Indochinese Peninsula to the west.

Chinese Civil War

The Chinese Civil War, which lasted intermittently from 1 August 1927 to 7 December 1949, involved the forces of the Chinese Communist Party against the Kuomintang-led government of the Republic of China. The Communist Party succeeded, taking control of mainland China in the process.

United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea

It is also known as UNCLOS and is a global pact that creates the legal foundation for all marine and maritime operations. 168 nations and the European Union are parties as of May 2023.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations

It is mostly seen by its abbreviation, ASEAN. It is an intergovernmental organization that contains many Southeast Asian countries. It consists of *Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.*



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The nine-dash line

It is the line that states China's claim which includes the largest portion of the disputed territory. The line, made up of nine dashes, stretches hundreds of miles east and south from Hainan, the province that lies the furthest south.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

These regions play such a crucial role to these countries and are taken as a serious matter by each because the South China Sea is a very important maritime route. According to estimates from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, in 2016 these seas handled more than 21% of all global trade, or \$3.37 trillion. Rich fishing grounds that support the livelihoods of millions of people around the region are also located there. This region is home to more than half of all fishing vessels worldwide. The Paracels and the Spratly Islands may have natural resource reserves nearby, despite being mostly uninhabited. Since the region has not received much thorough exploration, estimations are mostly derived from the mineral riches of nearby places.

On July 20, 2011, a set of preliminary recommendations for the implementation of the Declaration of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) that will help to resolve dispute resolution were agreed upon by the PRC, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

Liu Zhenmin, China's assistant foreign minister, acknowledged the agreement as *an important milestone document for cooperation among China and ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries*". Apart from Liu Zhenmin, other parties also acknowledged the agreement from various aspects of it but nobody seemed to have mentioned the agreement's issue of drilling for oil and natural gas, therefore those issues were not able to be resolved.

There have been many incidents and standoffs between the countries China, Philippines and Vietnam. More than seventy Vietnamese soldiers were killed when the Chinese took the Paracels from Vietnam in 1974. When the two sides fought in the Spratly Islands in 1988, Vietnam fared worse, losing roughly sixty sailors. China and the Philippines were involved in a protracted maritime standoff at the beginning of 2012, with both countries accusing the

other of incursions into Scarborough Shoal. Large-scale anti-Chinese demonstrations occurred in Vietnam's streets in response to unverified reports that the Chinese navy had obstructed two exploration activities in Vietnam in late 2012. Manila announced in January 2013 that it would be challenging China's claims before a UN tribunal operating under the UN Convention on the Laws of the Sea. Vietnamese and Chinese ships collided many times in May 2014 after China sank a drilling rig in waters close to the Paracel Islands. Manila accused a Chinese trawler in June 2019 of smashing a fishing boat carrying 22 Filipinos. The Vietnamese saved the lives of the people in the Philippines. The Philippines claimed at the beginning of 2023 that Chinese ships had been aiming lasers at Filipino boats in an attempt to momentarily blind their crew. Additionally, they charge the Chinese with using risky manoeuvres like sailing too near to the Filipinos or obstructing their course.



CURRENT SITUATION

This issue, to this day, still isn't resolved and tense situations regarding the problem are still seen both in our daily life and the political relations between countries. Even though China intensified its military operations in the South China Sea by conducting a series of naval



drills and exercises in March and April 2018, tensions are not as high as recently between China, the Philippines and Vietnam. In the meantime, China keeps building



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economic and military outposts on man-made islands it has created in territorial disputes.

SOLUTION ALTERNATIVES

The People's Republic of China favours speaking with the other parties in bilateral agreements. However, a lot of its neighbours think that the PRC has an unfair edge due to its greater size and influence. A few nations have stated their opinion that they think China needs to engage in negotiations with ASEAN, which is a regional alliance of ten countries: Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Brunei, Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Cambodia. China, on the other hand, is against this, and ASEAN members disagree on how to settle the conflict.

The issue is considered sensitive by all the countries involved. Every party and country involved must approach the problem with sincerity and extreme caution.

USEFUL LINKS

<https://asean.org/secretary-general-of-asean-attends-luncheon-hosted-by-permanent-representative-of-lao-pdr-to-celebrate-first-cpr-meeting-in-2024/>

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-indonesia-natuna-insigh-idUSKBN0GP1WA20140825/>

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