

An Open Letter Regarding Sovereignty Dispute in the South China Sea

Written by Nguyễn Đắc Hùng

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An open letter to the citizens and governments of the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and Vietnam regarding the sovereignty dispute in the South China Sea(1)

From the South East Asian Sea Foundation(2) – <http://www.seasfoundation.org>

The South China Sea is bordered by the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Vietnam and China. This Sea is vital to these countries' economies, transportation and security. In the wider context, the South China Sea is one of the most important maritime routes in the world; it is vital to the economic prosperity of South East Asia, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and all important trading nations. Therefore, the South China Sea dispute is a concern to us all.

Among the parties to the dispute, China stands out as by far the biggest threat to all countries. Firstly, while most conflicting claims of sovereignty are over small islands, reefs and rocks, China is unique in claiming virtually the whole South China Sea. Secondly, China's military is the largest by far and is also undergoing the fastest build-up in the region. Thirdly, China is unique among the protagonists in having a history of using force to seize disputed islands from other nations.

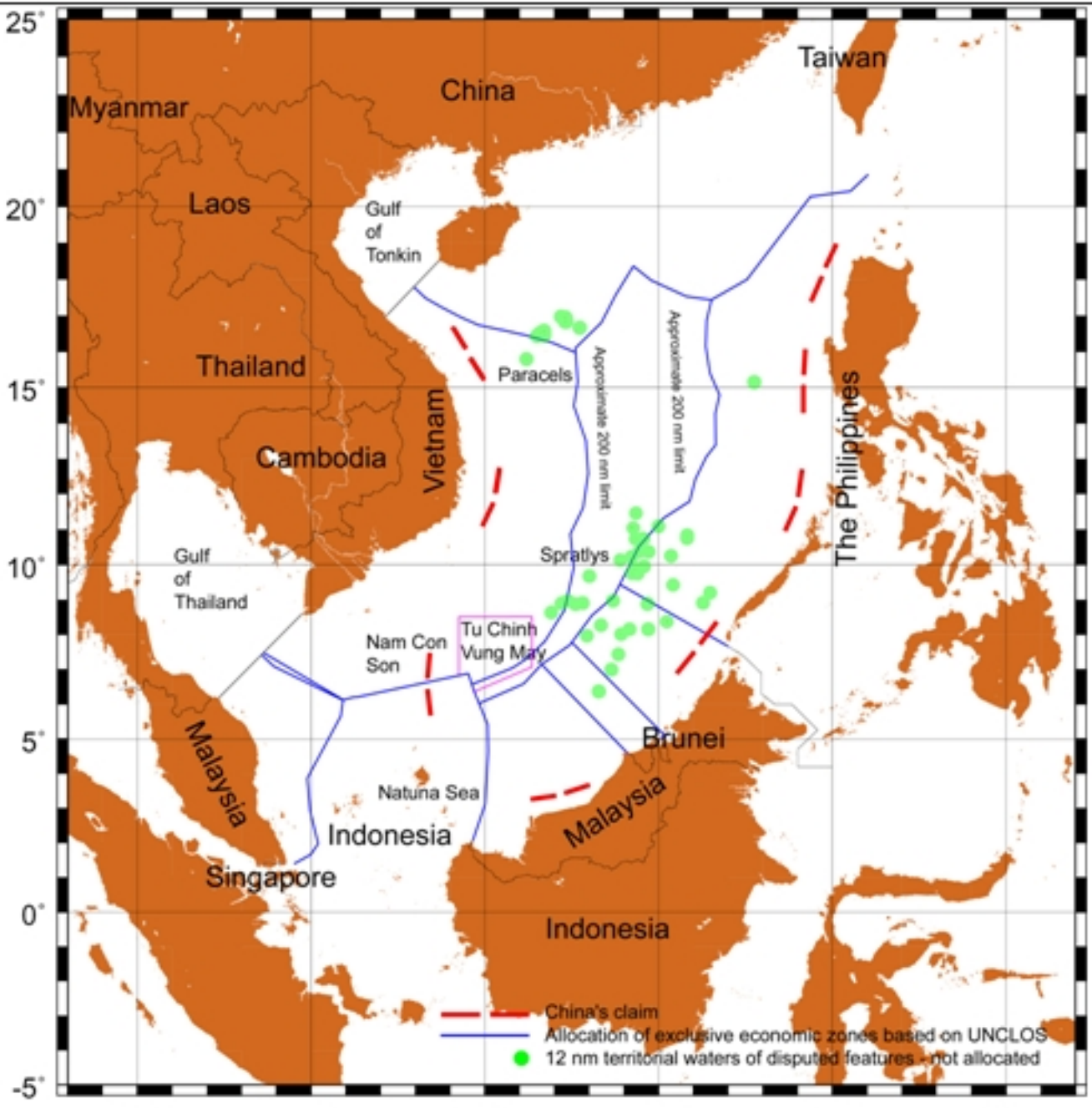
China's claim in the South China Sea is comparable to a claim by one person to all the oxygen in the air. Not only is this claim illegal and unfair, but if it is realized, South East Asia can be dominated and nations that need to traverse through the South China Sea can be choked in times of conflict.

It is therefore vital that the South China Sea is not turned into China's territory or into China's lake. The Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Vietnam, ASEAN, China and all nations in the world have rights in this international Sea according to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Vietnam, ASEAN and other concerned nations must work together to safeguard these rights against China's unjust ambitions.

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