

## **South China Sea Conflict; A Territorial Dispute**

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### **Abstract:**

Since the last decade conflict of south china sea is in spotlight. This regional conflict is in six states named China, Philippines, Vetinam, Brunei, Taiwan and Malaysia. Through straight of Malacca SCS connects with Indian Ocean and through Straight of Formosa SCS connects with East China Sea. As China claims it territory in South China Sea according 9 Dash Line(from 1949) and UN is forcing China to follow the UNCLOS rule. It is important to know that South China Sea is important in terms of trade routes(around one third trade passes through here) Natural Reserves and rich in Fishing resources. Vetinam halso has a historical Claim, that is Geneva Accords 1954. China is making artificial islands and militarizing them with anti\_ships, missiles and aircrafts. UN claims that its creating instability in region, also this act of china is consider as a attack on other nations sovereignty and economic prosperity. In this article we will know the conflict of different states in region.Concerns, strategies of international politics toward this territorial dispute and response of China.

### **Key Words;**

South China Sea Conflict, 9 Dash Line Claim, Vetinam's Geneva Accords Claim, Natural Resources, Trade Routes, China's aggression towards SCS, USA Strategies & UN concerns.

### **Introduction:**

South China Sea(SCS) conflict is half of century old but in highlights since last decade. In this regional conflict six states have seen, in territorial dispute with China. Sea is situated in between Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean located in South East Asia region. Surrounded by ASEAN countries. There are Two groups of Islands named Paracel and Spratly Islands. These islands are rich in natural reserves like Oil & Gas. Region is important in terms of Trade routes and having huge fishing resources. **(Erbas, 2022)**



UN claims that China's claim on sea is creating instability, where China says that according to 9 Dash Lines we have right on SCS that is around 70% sea area. UNCLOS was made in 1994 and we identified our territory in 1949. So they have started making artificial islands and militarizing them. On the other side Vietnam is showing proofs of Geneva Accords 1954 that showing Vietnam's territory in sea. USA and UN shows concern about the regional peace and force China to follow UN laws of maritime. As this act of China is considered as attack on other nations sovereignty. Also on world's economic prosperity because one third world's trade passes through here. So they decided

to put sanctions on financial transaction of Chinese Islands findings association. (Cfr, 2022)

### **Conflicts and reason:**

China has figured it out that to become a regional to global power its important to rule maritime routes also as strong in economic and military power. China has claimed its territory in SCS according to 9 Dash Lines, that accupies almost 70% area of SCS.It has seen that USA has world's best Naval Military and ruling Indian Ocean since last 40 years. Malacca is a weak point for China's trade and American military presence in Ocean is a security threat. So to overcome it China has find the ways like he has started a ambitious project BRI in which CPEC is the main coridor that will provide China a short land route to Arabian Sea. Also South China Sea is the most important trade route of world Trade and rich in nature reserve that can make China more ppowerful, Independent and Dominate state. China is showing 9 Dash Line map to claim its territory in sea but other nations is not accepting it. Regional conflict of terrory of SCS is in between in six states;

- Vetinam
- Brunei
- Philippines
- Malaysia
- Taiwan
- China

Different claims making region more complicated and tens. Where China and Vetinam has historical claims, Malaysia has geographical because of exclave

territory and Philippines Brunei and Taiwan has claim according to UNCLOS.  
(StudyIQ, 2022)



### Sea importance:

SCS is one of the busiest trade routes that means not for the region but also for world's trade it's a huge issue to resolve. Sea is also rich in natural resources like gas and oil that exist in Spratly and Paracel groups of islands. According to an estimation 190 trillion cubic feet natural gas and 11 billion barrels of oil exist there. 10% fishing resources and 30% of world's trade that is almost 5 trillion dollars, passes through here. (Cobus, 2023)

### Crucial points in SCS:

South China Sea has three crucial points;

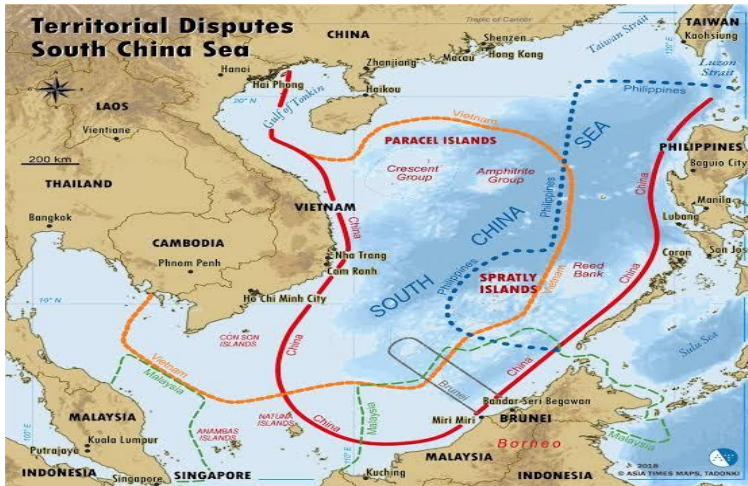
- Strait of Malacca
- Strait of Luzon
- Strait of Formosa

Strait of Malacca is the only shortest route that connects the Indian Ocean to SCS. All trade of Western, Persian Gulf comes through Strait of Hourmiz and Suez Canal and then passes through Malacca Strait to enter in SCS. Strait of Formosa (Formosa was old name of Taiwan) another crucial point that connects SCS to East China Sea and Strait of Luzon connects SCS to Philippines sea in The Pacific Ocean. We need to remember that Malacca straight is the route where from China's 70% trade passes through specially Oil Trade to reach in Middle East. (StudyIQ, 2022)



### China's Claim; 11 & 9 Dash Lines:

In Han Dynasty time in 1935 China released a map where they show 11 Dash Lines to show their territory in SCS. In which Gulf of Tonkin also was in territory of China. Later on showing co-operation with Vietnam they gave Gulf of Tonkin to Vietnam.



In 1949 China released a new map of 9 Dash lines in which Gulf of Tonkin was not included and they identified the new territory of China in South China Sea which they claim now (Moulton, 2022).



Vietnam's Geneva Accord 1954 (17th parallel lines)

After WW2 Japan signed Treaty of San Francisco and left the region, later western got a solution of Indo-China Peninsula civil war in form of Geneva Accord 1954. According to this imaginary 17 parallel Lines were drew.



South and North Vietnam will rule land and associated sea according to 17th parallel lines. That shows Parcel group of Islands is in territory of Vietnam. Which is one of major reason of conflict because Island contains huge amount of natural reserves.

### **Malaysia, Philippines, Brunei & Taiwan.**

Malaysia has Geographical claim, that means Malaysia has an exclave territory. So from both territories collectively EEZ will be more than other states but geographically it's a legal claim and should be considered. Philippines and Brunei follow UNCLOS in which Spratly group of Islands comes in Philippines territory. Where Taiwan is in China's One China Policy part where China doesn't consider it's a separate state. (StudyIQ, 2022)

## China's Policy:

A school of thought has analyzed that China has three policies

- Diplomatic for BRI project
- Aggressive for One China Policy
- Cabbage wrapping policy in SCS

Cabbage wrapping policy means a state showing dominance and making control over area by surrounding it with ships and coast guard ships and later claim on it just like China doing in South China Sea. China is busy in making of artificial islands and Militarizing them. (Cfr,2022) Showing that islands were already existed now water level has decreased and we can see them and its in our territory so we militarizing them for our security purposes. IN 2020 Chinese naval force, forcibly sank the Vietnam's Fishing Vessel near Paracel Island to show them dominancy. Also Chinese has Ignored international court decision which was in favor of Philippines. :

## United Nations response:

China is breaking international law.UN insisting China to follow the rules that is UNCLOS. 200nmi area should be in China's custody. (Erbas, 2022) United Nations says Bilateral relationship and following the international rules make things easy and beneficial for all of us. Law is equal for all and world is working and following on rules and law So China needs to follow the international rule. According to UNCLOS every state has 200nmi EEZ. But China's claim is causing following things;

- Instability in region as Vietnam also has historical claim with more solid proofs called Geneva Accords.
- Attack on other nation's sovereignty.



- Attack on economic prosperity not only regional but also globally as its the bussiest route of world's trade and a big source of fishing.

Mutual cooperation will be good for all because Malacca is still a threat for China's trade security.

### **USA Strategies:**

USA opposing China's claim, says making islands is illegal. USA has strong ties with India, in The Indian Ocean. American military is present in The Indian Ocean since last 40 years as world's most powerful Navy is of USA. USA is countering China in and beyond region through making alliances like QUAD and AUKUS, making new alliances and modernizing the old to have a strong position in region. (Crf, 2022) American foreign policy towards Asia of Jeo Biden is all about ASEAN and Indo\_Pacific region that also covers SCS region. USA wants Free Trade Zone, to make it possible they made a strategy that shows enhancement in Connectivity will increase the trade which brings prosperity and this will be beneficial for all. A massive amount USA has invested in ASEAN country's maritime security. (Moulton, 2022). USA has involved in their policies and can mold them in its favor. Making its military more powerful. USA has decided to put sanctions on international financial transactions of China's Island funding system which providing funds to build artificial islands in SCS. (StudyIQ, 2022)

### **India & Japan:**

India is a regional power and also a strong allie and Counter partner of USA. Indo\_Pacific term was also aqused to show Indian Hagamony in Asian Ttrade routes. India also has started its company in Vetinam by name ONGC Private Limited to extract oil from EEZ area of Vetinam. Also has provided weapons

to Vietnam to protect and showing unity with them. (StudyIQ, 2022) India has a military base in Indonesia name SABANG PORT on tip on Malacca straight to check on China's activity. As India is regional power and Indian Ocean in the hub of trade routes. Japan also has sold weapons to Vietnam and Philippines to enhance their ability in maritime security. Japan is also a strong ally of USA.

### **Western's Concerns:**

If China becomes dominant in SCS it will be a alarming situation for USA hegemony. If China will be successful, all natural reserves will be in custody of China and there will not be need of energy dependency for China. It would make China more powerful. As China already have big population, large territory, highest GDP and one of the best military in world, so by controlling sea trade routes world can again turn into Unipolar.

### **Conclusion & Recommendations:**

South China Sea conflict is becoming regional to world's dispute, reason is trade routes and natural reserves. As China is becoming global power, by controlling trade routes and natural reserves of Spratly and Pratacal islands energy dependency will not be the issue of China. That will make China more powerful. Regional states claiming their territory in SCS and has concerns with natural resources that is in huge amount. Where international concern is about is trade routes and regional stability. China's aggressive behavior making things more difficult. USA and UN wants to resolve it through negotiation. But China claiming its territory through 9 Dash Line that other states are not accepting. UN says China should cooperate as regional peace is important. Every state has right on it's territory and world is running on rule of law that are equal for all. China's claim is breaking international law which causing instability in

region and becoming global issue of economic prosperity. Through negotiations this matter should be resolved as world's trade is dependent on it. Malacca straight is also a weak point for China's trade, so China should show unity and needs to find out the solution.

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