

# Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea

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**In News:** In a strong message to China, the Philippines have made it clear that it would turn to the US for military help during ongoing flare-ups between Manila and Beijing in the South China Sea.

## Recent philippines dispute with China

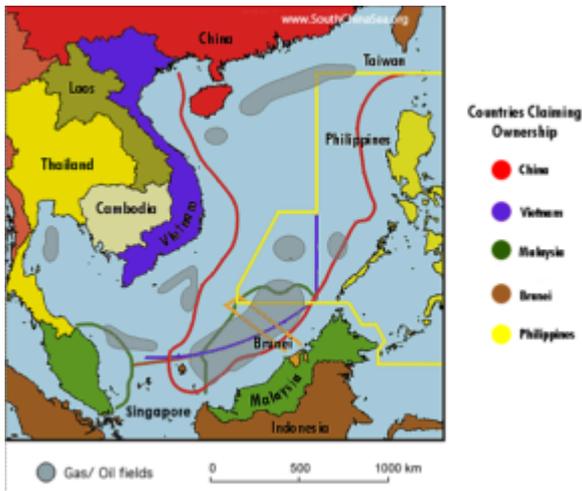
- Since 1951, the US and the Philippines have had a Mutual Defence Treaty that commits them to support each other in the event if either is attacked.
- On 24 August 2020, Philippines defence secretary Delfin Lorenzana accused China of illegally occupying Filipino maritime territory and said, "China's nine-dash line used to claim most of the South China Sea is a fabrication."
- The remarks came amid a fresh row between both countries over the disputed Scarborough Shoal, which has been a flashpoint since long.
- China condemned patrols in the South China Sea and declared it's beyond reproach and air patrols by the Philippines infringe on its sovereignty. Beijing defended the coast guard's activities and urged Manila to immediately stop what it described as illegal provocations.
- In 2012, China had seized Scarborough from the Philippines following a tense stand-off. The shoal, one of the region's richest fishing grounds, is located 240 kilometres west of Philippines' main island of Luzon and 650 kilometres from the nearest major Chinese landmass, the southern island province of Hainan, is one of the region's richest fishing grounds.

## **Territorial disputes in South China Sea China with Neighbouring Countries**

- Many countries around the sea have made competing territorial claims over the South China Sea. Such disputes have been regarded as Asia's most potentially dangerous point of conflict.
- Both the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC, commonly known as Taiwan) claim almost the entire body as their own, demarcating their claims within what is known as the nine-dotted line, which claims overlap with virtually every other country in the region.

### **Competing claims include:**

- Indonesia, China, and Taiwan over waters NE of the Natuna Islands
- The Philippines, China, and Taiwan over Scarborough Shoal.
- Vietnam, China, and Taiwan over waters west of the Spratly Islands.
- Some or all of the islands themselves are also disputed between Vietnam, China, Taiwan, Brunei, Malaysia, and the Philippines.
- The Paracel Islands are disputed between China, Taiwan and Vietnam.
- Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam over areas in the Gulf of Thailand.
- Singapore and Malaysia along the Strait of Johore and the Strait of Singapore.



## About South China Sea

- It is a marginal sea that is part of the Pacific Ocean, encompassing an area from the Karimata and Malacca straits to the Strait of Taiwan of around 3,500,000 square kilometres
- The South China Sea carries tremendous strategic importance; one-third of the world's shipping passes through it.
- It contains lucrative fisheries, which are crucial for the food security of millions in Southeast Asia. Huge oil and gas reserves are believed to lie beneath its seabed
- States and territories with borders on the sea (clockwise from north) include: the People's Republic of China, the Republic of China (Taiwan), the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore, and Vietnam.
- Major rivers that flow into the South China Sea include the Pearl, Min, Jiulong, Red, Mekong, Rajang, Pahang, Agno, Pampanga, and Pasig Rivers.