

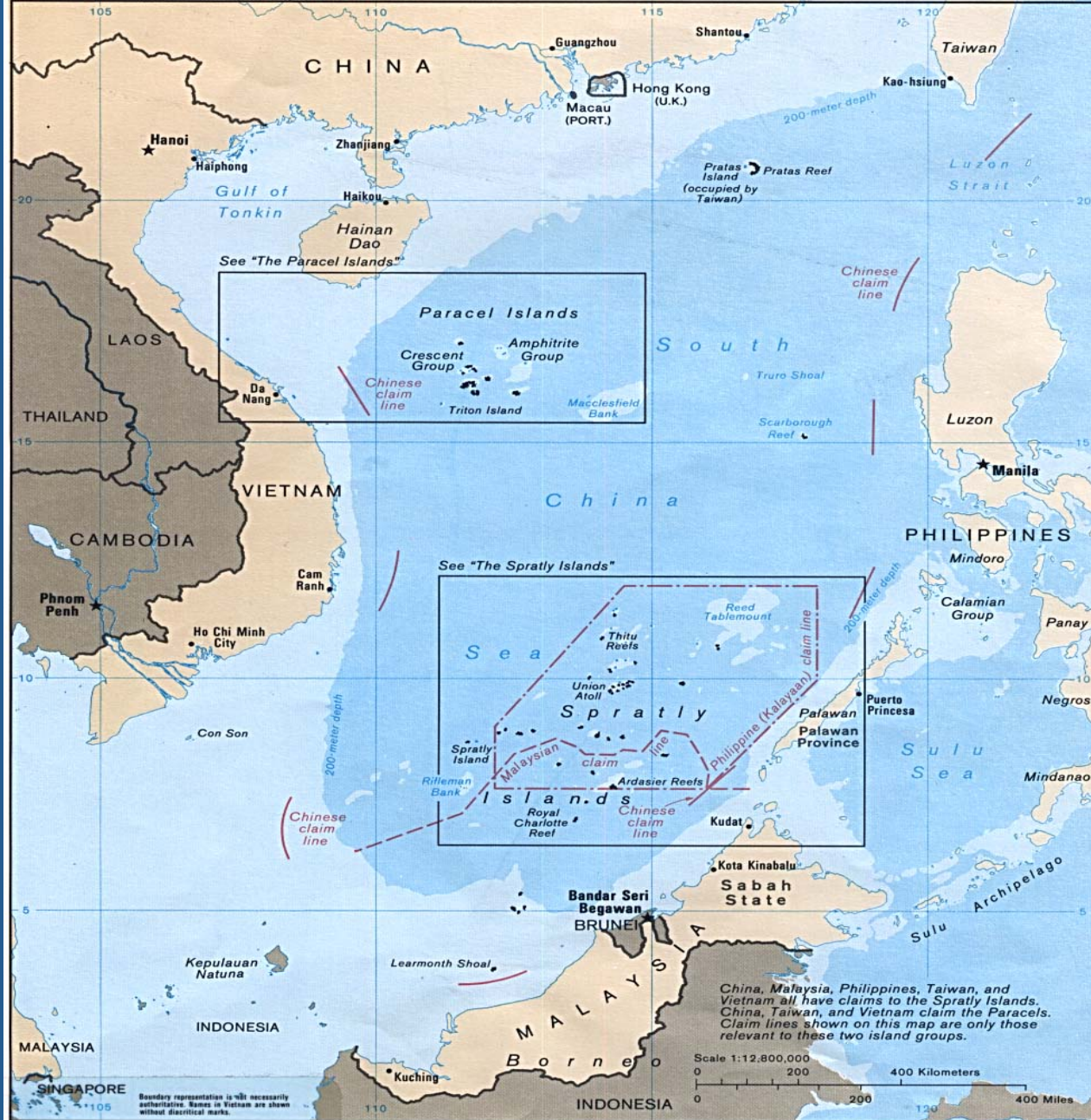
South China Sea: The Strategic Implications of China's Artificial Islands

Emeritus Professor Carlyle A. Thayer
Australian Institute of International Affairs (NSW),
The Glover Cottages,
Sydney, September 15, 2015

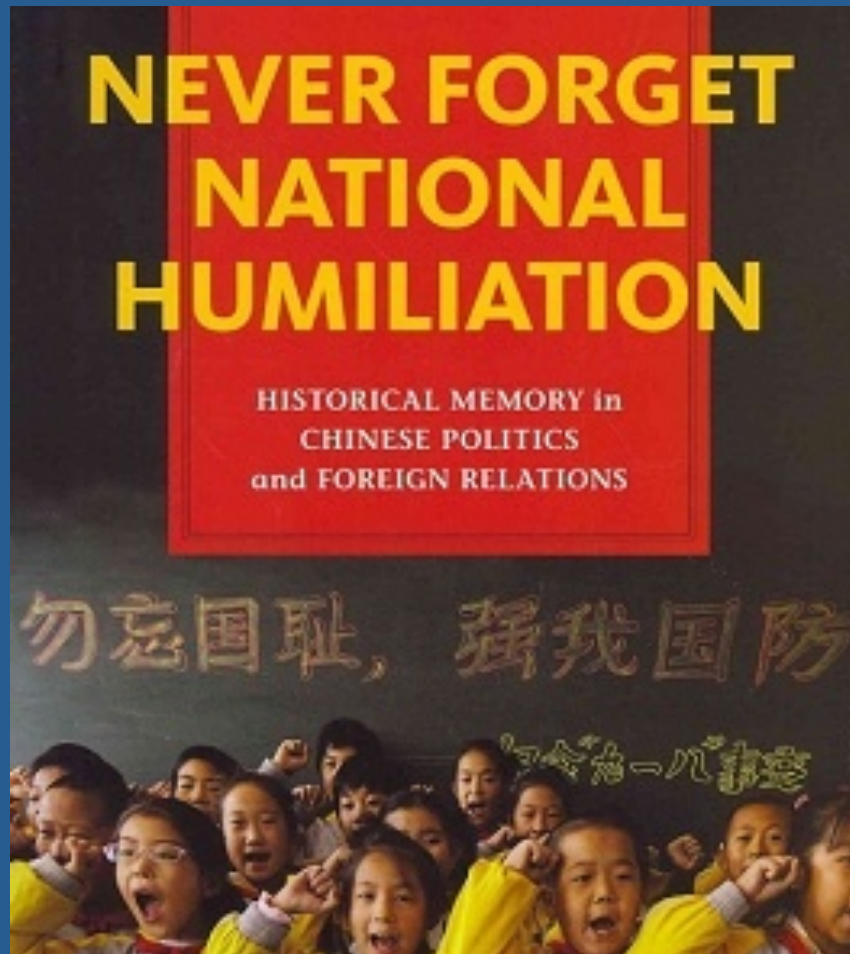
Outline

- Drivers of Chinese assertiveness:
 - Nationalism
 - Fisheries
 - Hydrocarbons
 - Strategic Imperatives
- China's Artificial Islands
- Implications for Australia

South China Sea Islands



1. Chinese Nationalism



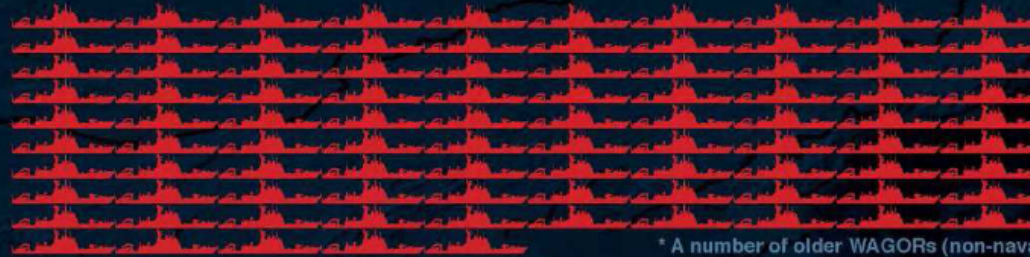
- Elite nationalism
- Great Dream of National Revitalisation
- Great national rejuvenation
- Mass nationalism – anti-Japanese
- Chauvinism – aggressive patriotism/impunity
- Hactivism

Domestic Actors

- Fishing industry
- Oil industry
 - China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC)
- Provincial governments
- Maritime Enforcement Agencies
 - Coast Guard, State Oceanographic Administration
- People's Liberation Army Navy

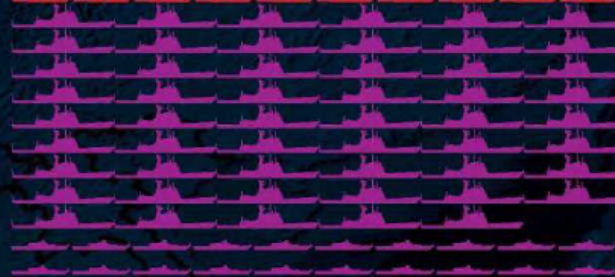
2015 Regional Maritime Law Enforcement Comparison

China
95 X Large
110 X Small
205



* A number of older WAGORs (non-naval oceanographic research ships) used as patrol ships were included

Japan
53 X Large
25 X Small
78



Vietnam
5 X Large
50 X Small
55



*Navy AFT (stores ship) and AF (combat stores ship) vessels are not included

*This includes WPCs (non-naval patrol craft) and WAITs non-naval intelligence trawler

*For the purposes of this graphic, Large vessels are greater than 1,000 tons; Small vessels are between 500–1,000 tons.

Indonesia
3 X Large
5 X Small

8



Malaysia
2 X Large
0 X Small

2



Philippines
0 X Large
4 X Small

4



China's Position Paper on the South China Sea (2014)

- 'Chinese activities in the South China Sea date back to over 2,000 years ago. China was the first country to discover, name, explore and exploit the resources of the South China Sea Islands and the first to continuously exercise sovereign powers over them'.

2. China's Fishing Industry - the 'third maritime arm'



Hainan Baosha 001

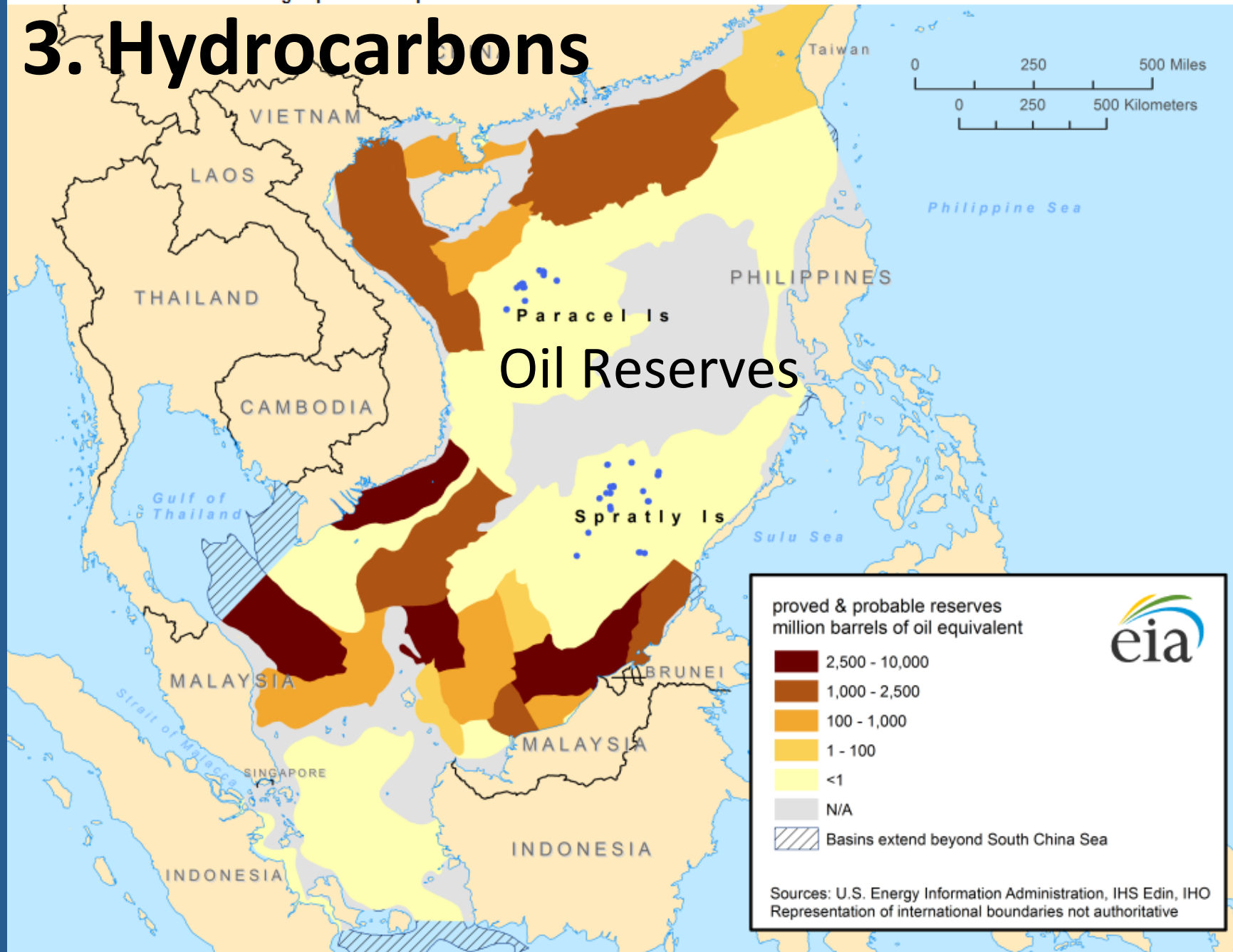


32,000 ton seafood processing ship

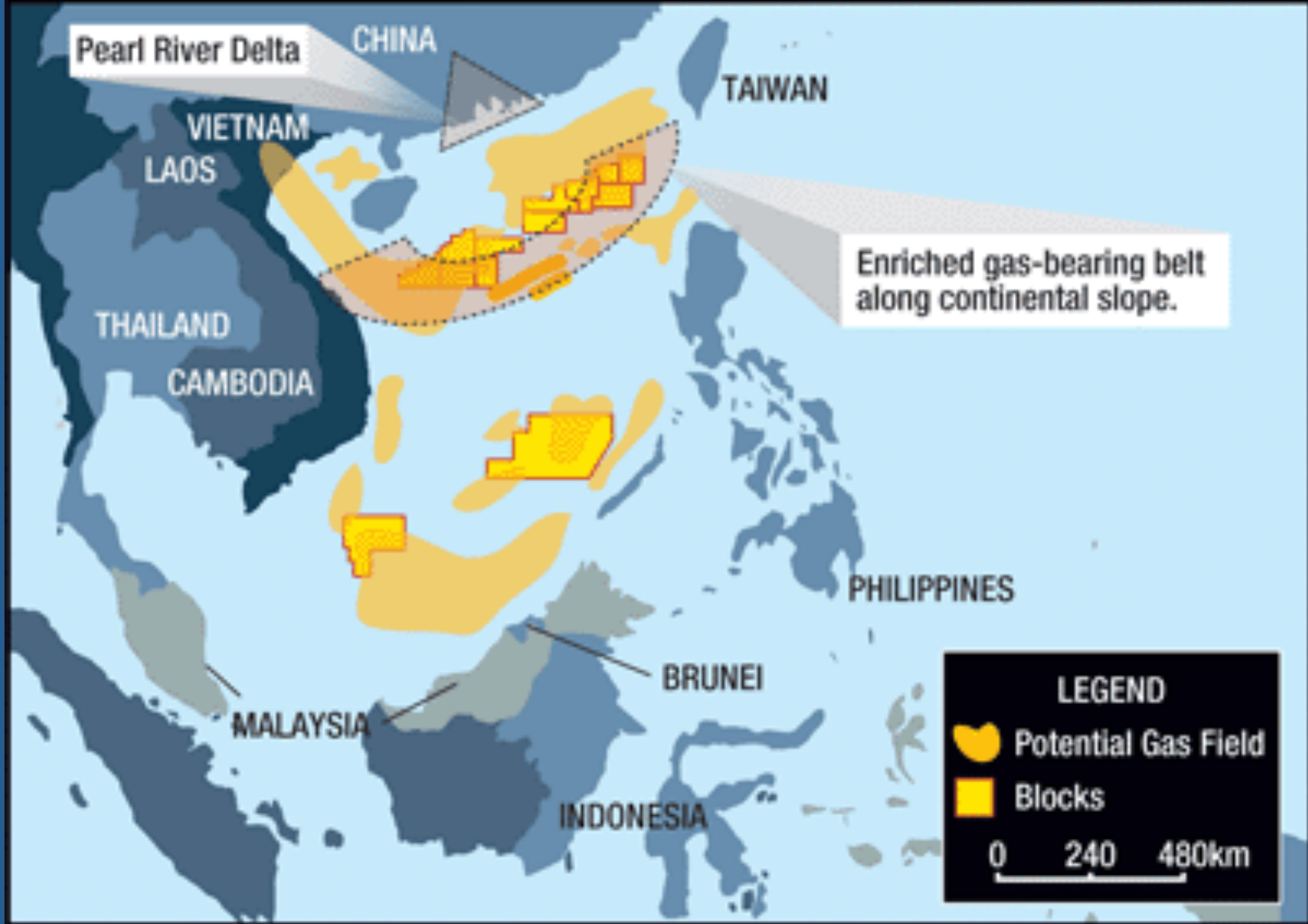
© Ian Edwards - www.shipphoto.com.au

vesseltracker.com

3. Hydrocarbons



Gas-bearing Zones in the South China Sea



China's 'National Mobile Territory'

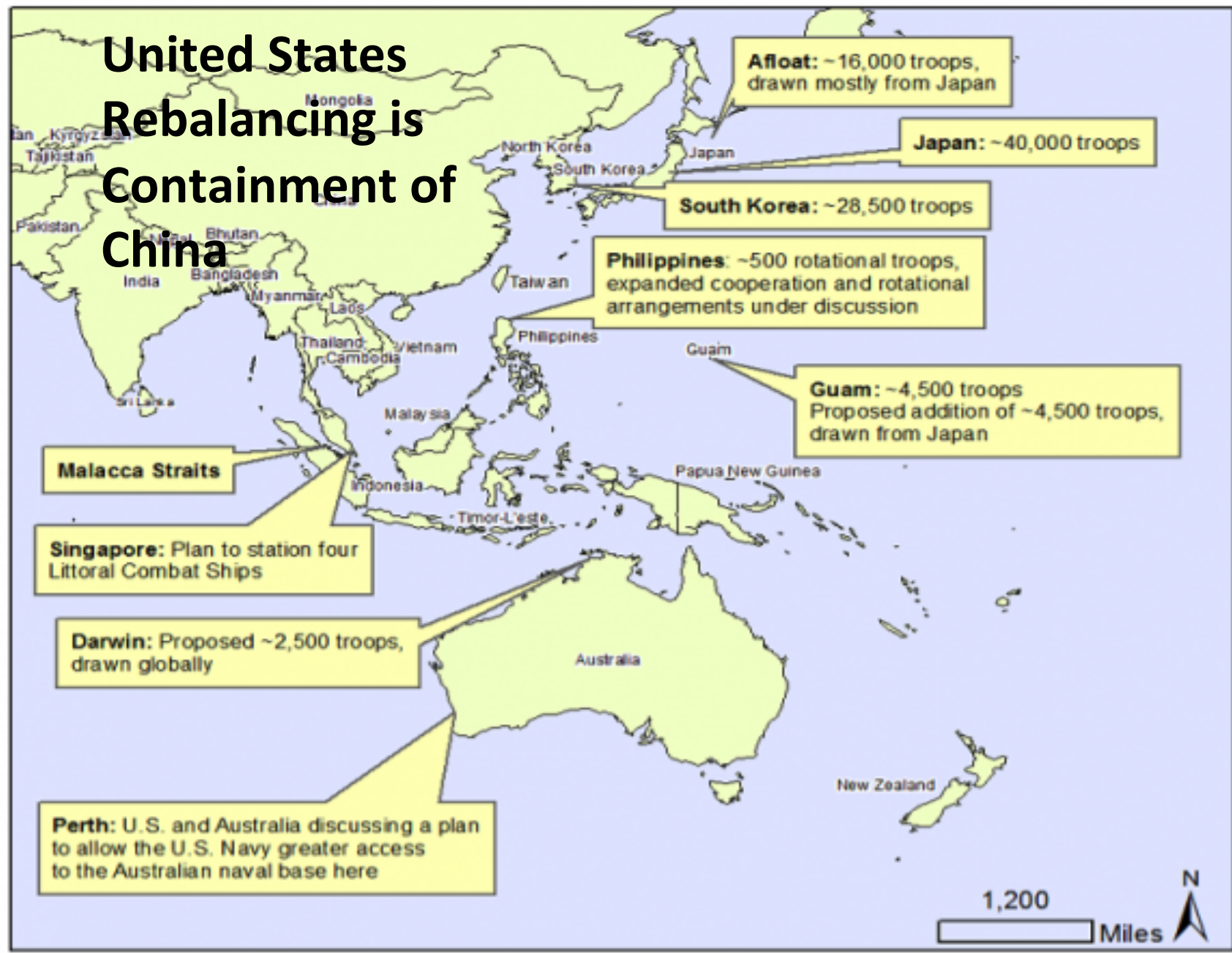
HYSY 981



4. Strategic Imperatives

- U.S. Rebalancing is Containment
- Counter-intervention strategy
- Protection of Sea Lines of Communication
- Power Projection
 - Naval Bases – Hainan and Woody Islands
 - Artificial Islands – forward operating bases

United States Rebalancing is Containment of China

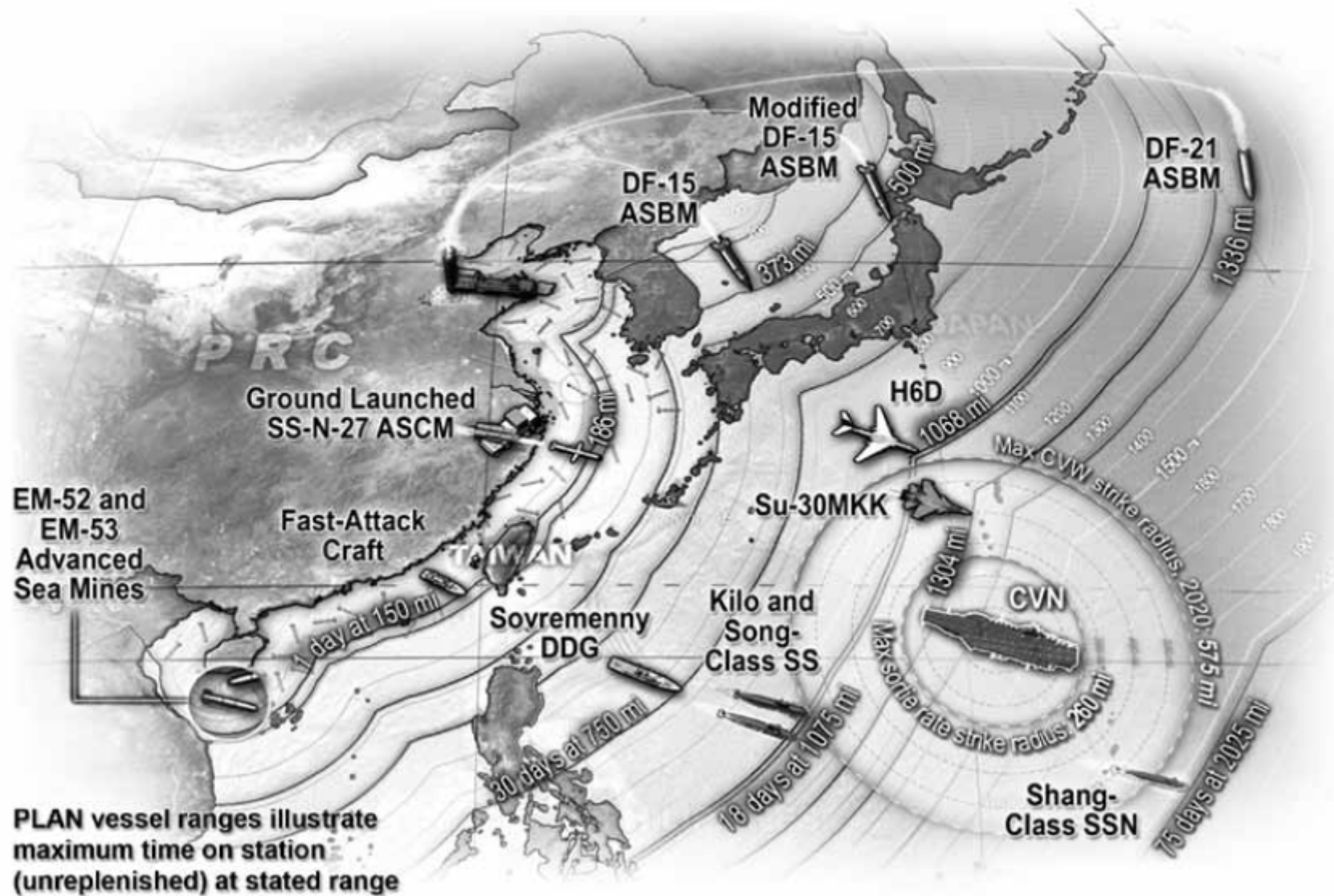


China's Counter-Intervention Strategy

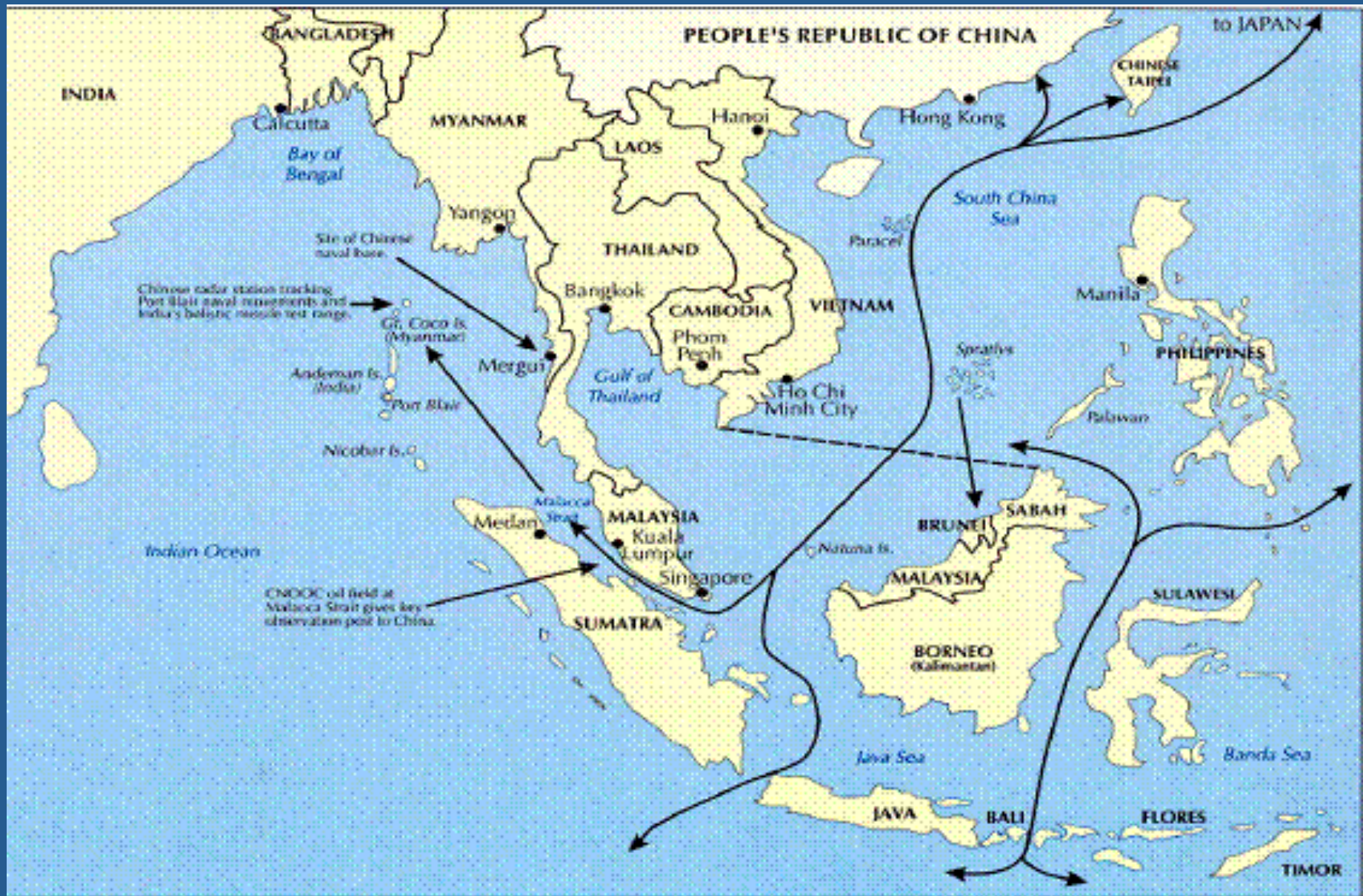
Put U.S. Forces in
Western Pacific at Risk



FIGURE 2. EMERGING CHINESE ANTI-ACCESS/AREA-DENIAL CAPABILITIES



Protection of Major Shipping Routes

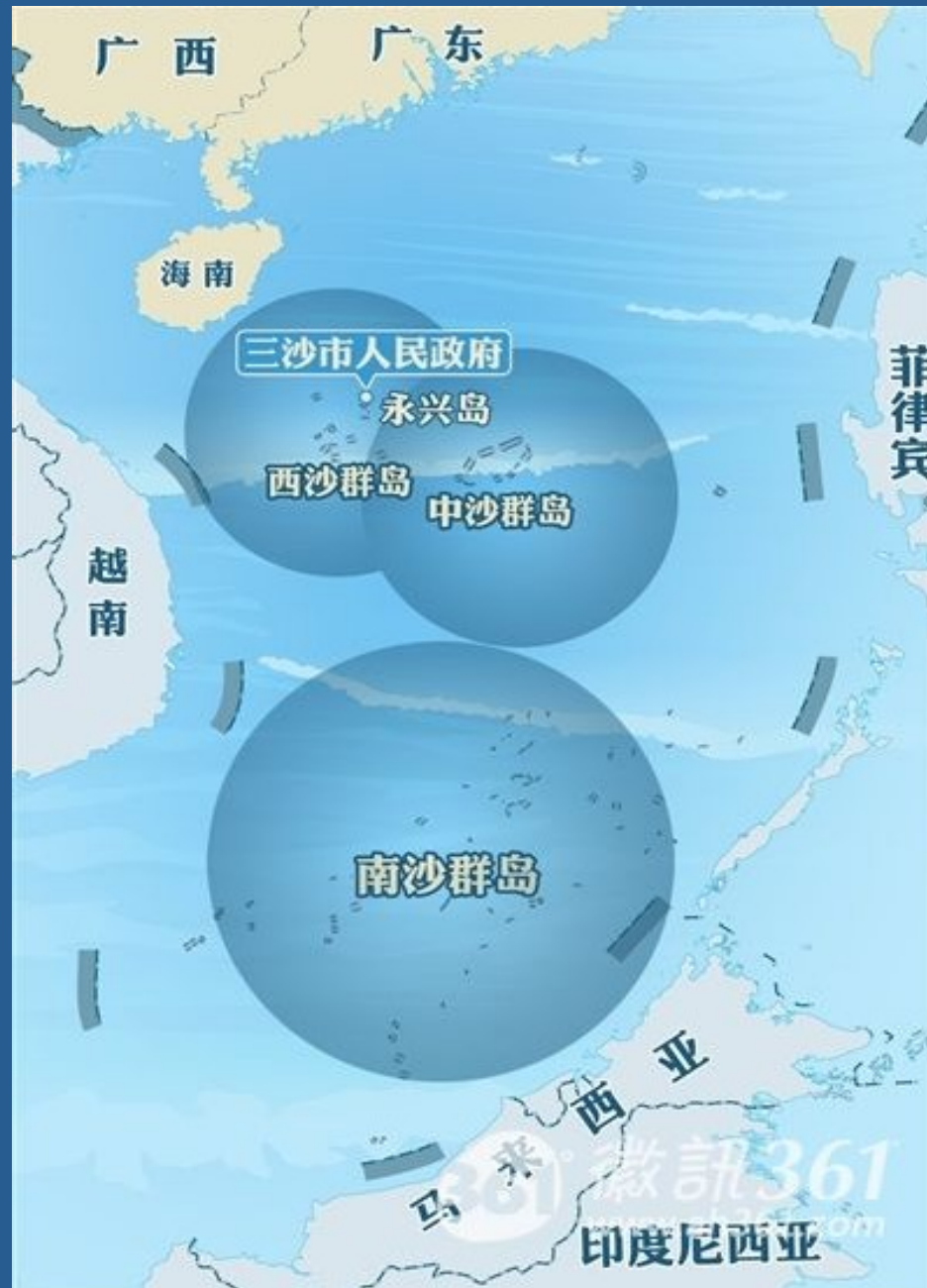


Power Projection – Naval Bases



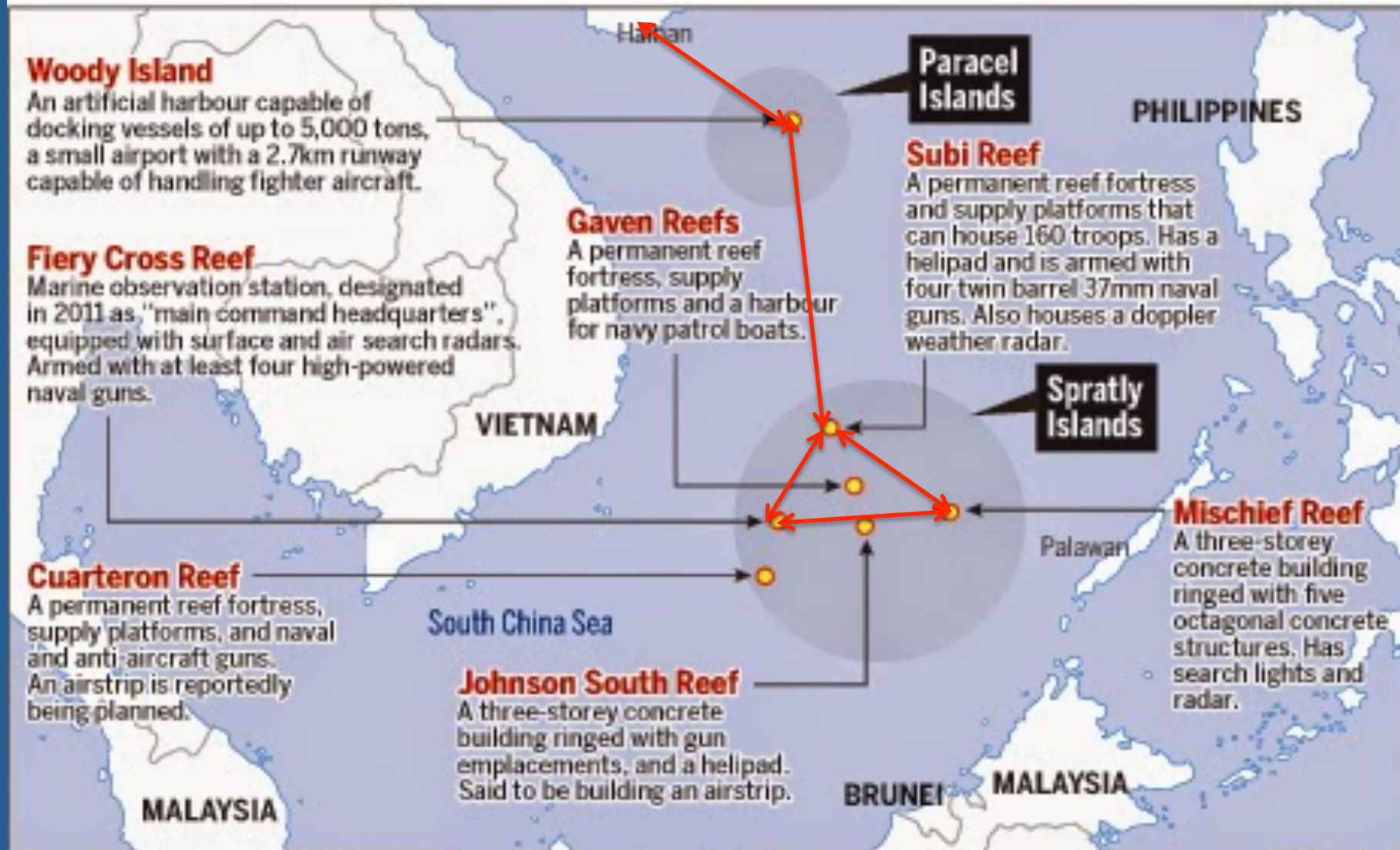
Woody Island, Paracels





Sansha raised to prefecture-level city in July 2012 with continuing responsibility over Paracel Islands, Macclesfield Bank and the Spratly Islands

5. China's Artificial Islands – Not Land Reclamation

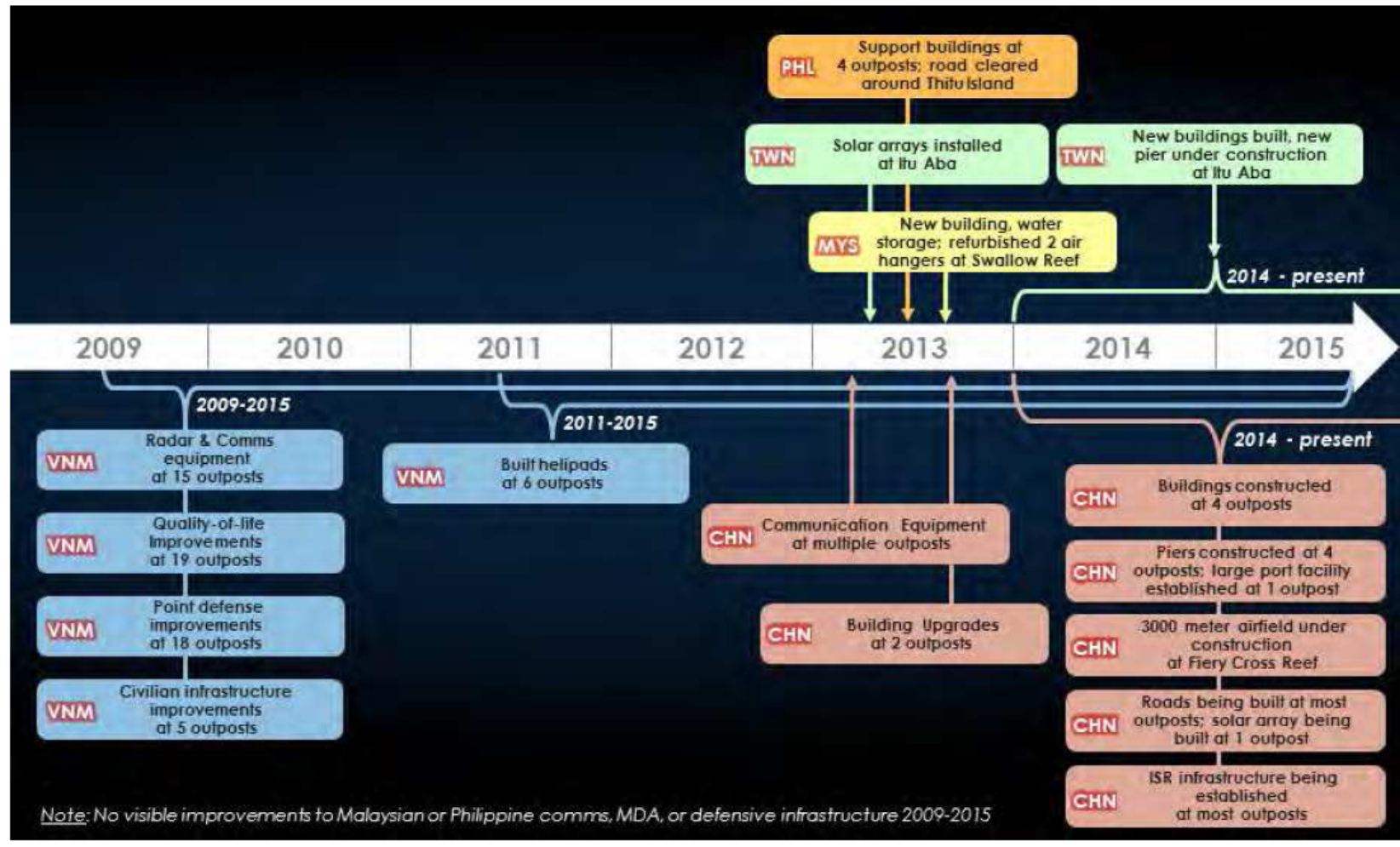


Sources: www.lib.utexas.edu; Centre for Intelligence and National Security Studies.

ST GRAPHICS

China is Only Catching Up

Timeline of Infrastructure and Capability Improvements on Spratly Outposts



What about 'self-restraint'?

- In November 2002 China and the ASEAN states agreed to:
- 'exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability [in the South China Sea].'
 - Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC)

Total Reclaimed Area: Approx 10 Hectares
Aviation: Approx 3,000 meters long airstrip
Port Facility: 5 Jetties
Distance to Palawan: 266 NM
Distance to China: 545 NM



KAGITANGAN (Fiery Cross) REEF
(PHOTO TAKEN: 07 May 2015)

Subi Reef

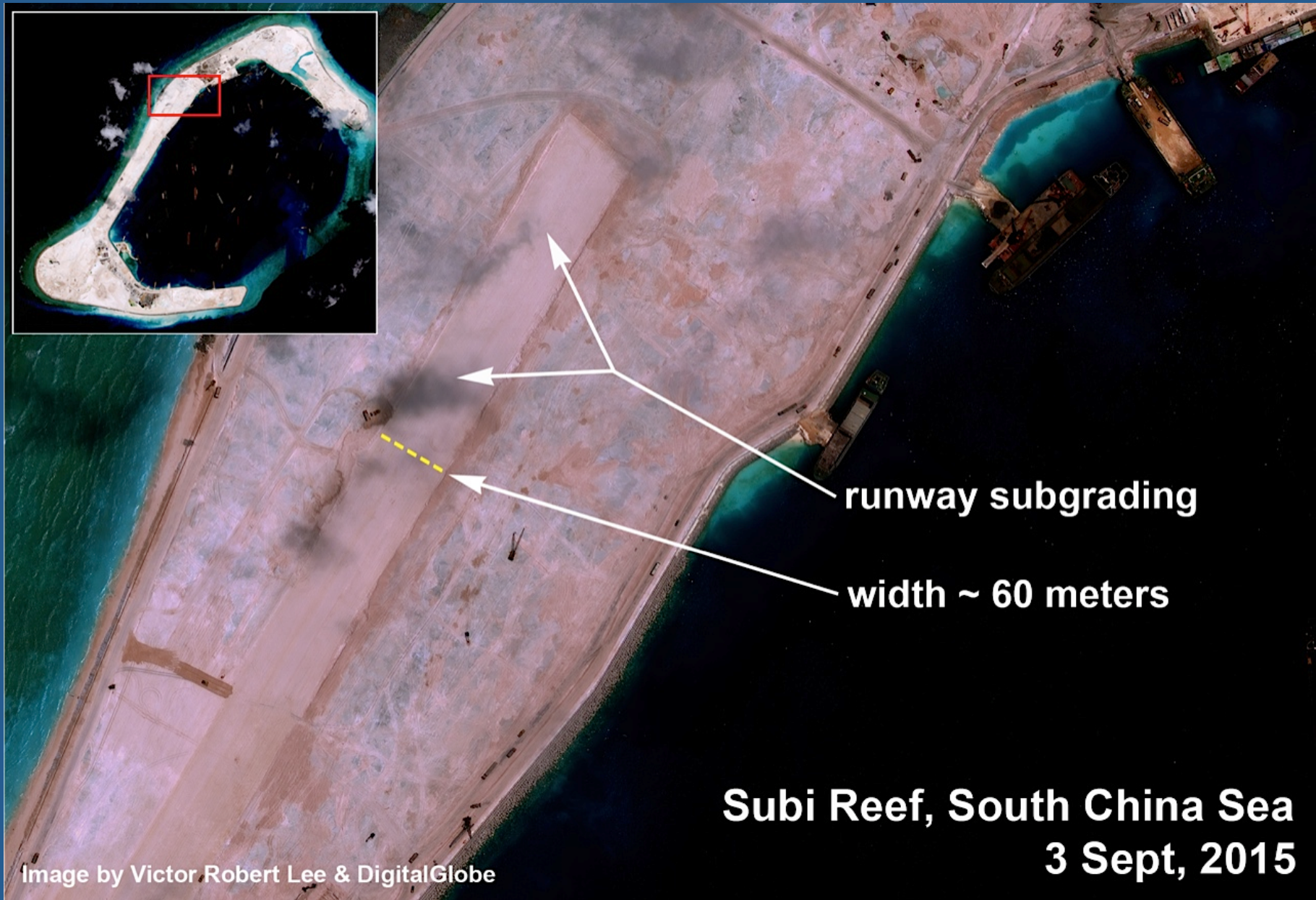


Total Reclaimed Area: 76 Hectares
Port Facility : 3 Jetty
Distance to Palawan: 238 NM
Distance to China: 503 NM

**ZAMORA (Subi) REEF
(PHOTO TAKEN: 06 May 2015)**

Subi Reef September 3, 2015





runway subgrading

width ~ 60 meters

Subi Reef, South China Sea
3 Sept, 2015

Image by Victor Robert Lee & DigitalGlobe



Total Reclaimed Area: Approx 27 Hectares
Port Facility : 1 Jetty
Distance to Palawan: 134 NM
Distance to China: 602 NM

**PANGANIBAN (Mischief) REEF
(PHOTO TAKEN: 05 MAY 2015)**

Mischief Reef Airfield



Total reclaimed Area: Approx 10.9 Hectares
Primary Building: Approx 4,128 sqm floor area; 6-stories
Port Facility: 1 Jetty, 1 Permanent Pier (can accommodate a 130m ship)
Distance to Palawan: 194 NM
Distance to China: 577 NM



OLD STRUCTURE



MABINI (Johnson) REEF
(PHOTO TAKEN: 09 May 2015)



Total reclaimed Area : Approx 24.6 Hectares
Primary Building : Approx 4, 128 sqm flr area; 6-stories
Aviation : 1 helipad
Port Facility : 1 Jetty, 1 Pier (can to cater to a 130-meter ship)
Distance to Palawan: 353 NM
Distance to China: 682 NM

**CALDERON (Cuarteron) REEF
(PHOTO TAKEN: 07 May 2015)**

Total reclaimed Area: Approx 7.2 Hectares
Primary Building: Approx 4, 128 sqm floor area; 6 stories
Port Facility: 1 Jetty, 1 Pier (can to cater to a 130-meter ship)
Distance to Palawan: 187 NM
Distance to China: 784 NM



**KENNAN (Chigua) REEF
(PHOTO TAKEN: 05 May 2015)**

Total reclaimed Area: Approx 15.3 Hectares
Primary Building: Approx 4,128 sqm floor area; 6-stories
Distance to Palawan: 264 NM
Distance to China: 629 NM
Facility: 1 Permanent Pier (can to cater to a 130-meter ship)

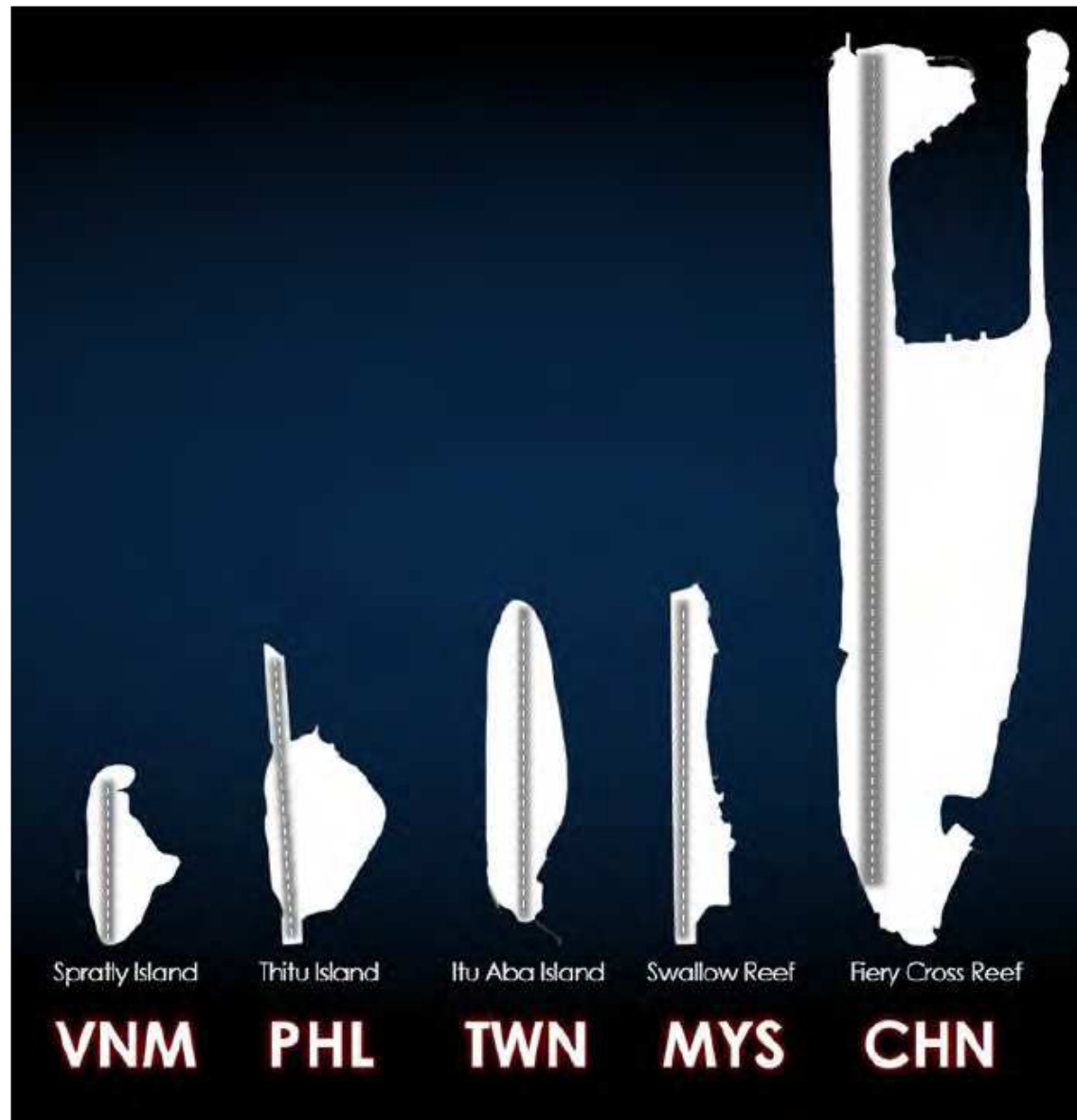


GAVEN REEF
(PHOTO TAKEN: 09 MAY 2015)

Hughes Reef September 2015



Relative Size Comparison of Spratly Features With Airfields of Various Claimants



What is the purpose?

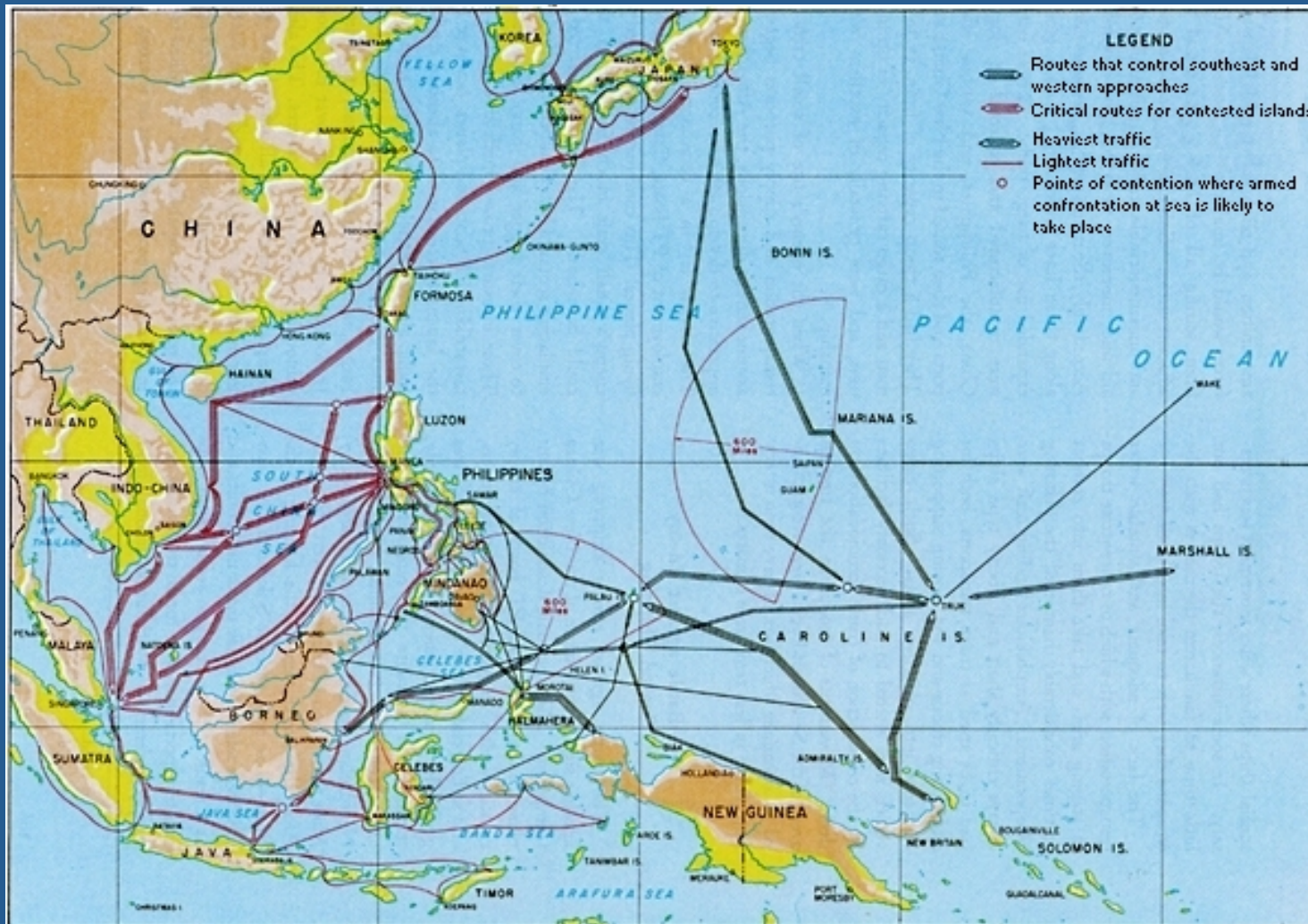
China Says

- Improve living conditions
- Meteorological data
- Scientific research
- Search and rescue
- Shelter for fishing boats
- Base for oil exploration
- Support Coast Guard
- Military defence

Analysts Say

- Forward Operating Bases
- Fuel storage
- Piers for naval combatants
- Military aircraft
- Long-range radar
- Advanced anti-aircraft missile systems
- Air Defence Identification Zone

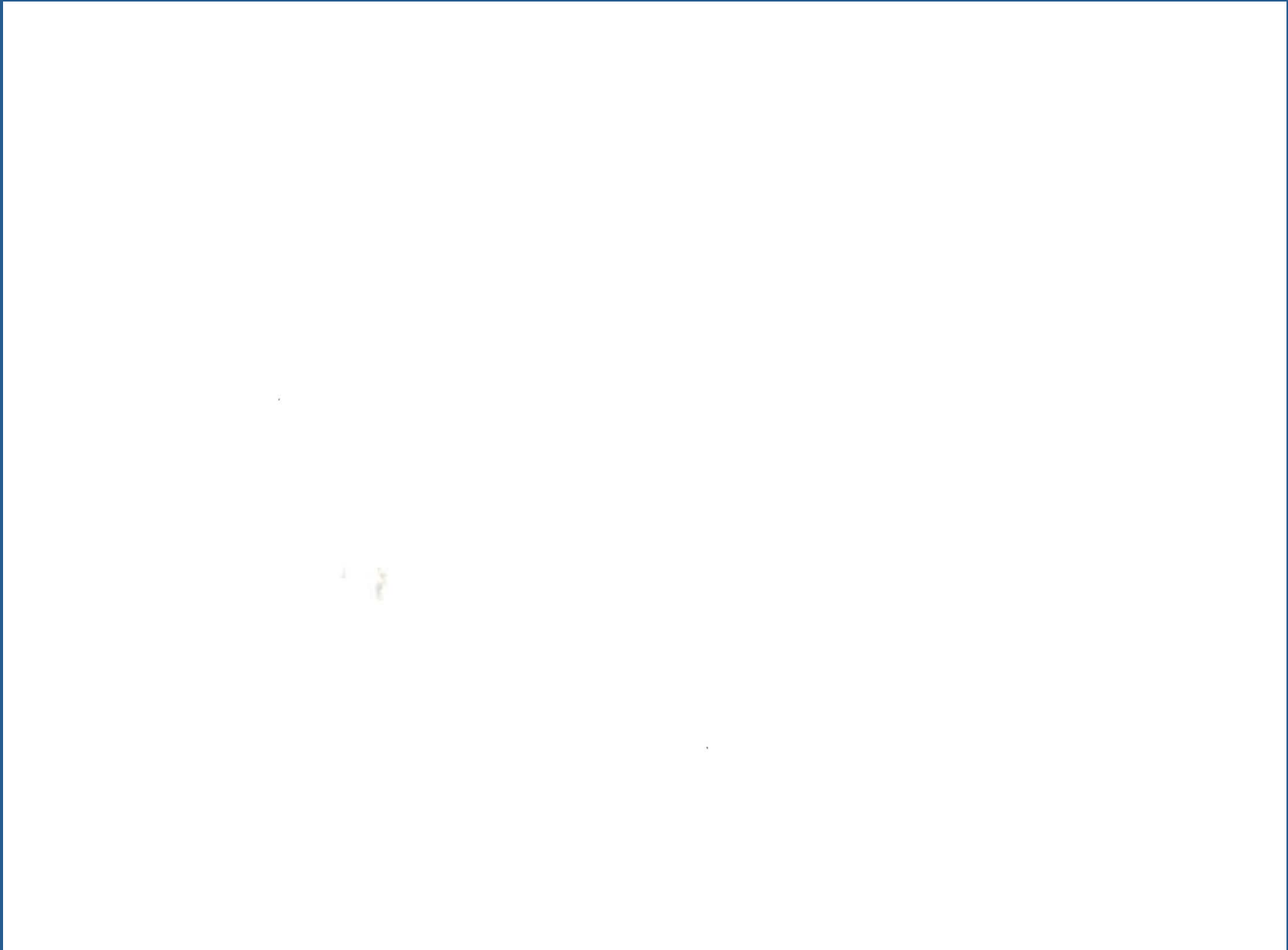
6. Implications for Australia



Major sealanes likely to be disrupted in any dispute with China.

Malaysia's Luconia Shoals - Permanent Chinese Presence





PLAN Exercise in South China Sea Early 2014



South China Sea: The Strategic Implications of China's Artificial Islands

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