

## US FONOPs in the South China Sea: Whose lane is it anyway?

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the United States Naval War College Newport, RI in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

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## Abstract

China's rise from the century of humiliation has allowed it to emerge as a near-peer for the United States. Accompanying this is a set of nebulous yet audacious assertions in the South China Sea that could potentially threaten states in the region, the globe and the eroding US military advantage. Diplomatic efforts to mitigate excessive Chinese maritime claims in the region have proven fruitless thus far. US freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in the region to supplement the diplomatic initiatives have not dissuaded Chinese aggression either. Inherently risky and apparently ineffective, one has to wonder if the juice is worth the squeeze in regards to US FONOPs in the South China Sea. Careful consideration of the totality of circumstances indicates the juice is worth the squeeze because FONOPs allow the United States to achieve long term global successes by maintaining customary international law, shaping desired strategic effects and strengthening partnerships.

The United States has historically relied upon access to and use of global waterways for economic prosperity, protection of itself and allies. China's problematic rise has complicated this. The Chinese strategic objective is to overcome the epoch of its history plagued by Western and Japanese imperialism lasting from 1839-1949, referred to as the century of humiliation.<sup>1</sup> In partial fulfillment of this objective, China claimed sovereignty over a portion of the South China Sea, known as the nine-dash line, citing historical ownership of it. Derivatively, this has intensified China's national pride and the Chinese perceive diplomatic or physical protests of this as an affront to their sovereignty further complicating the situation. Unfortunately for the Chinese, in 2016 the United Nations Court of Arbitration ruled the Chinese have no legal basis for their nine-dash line claim.<sup>2</sup> Problematically, the Chinese continue to enforce their own domestic laws prohibiting innocent passage through these waters and deny other regional states access to them. As a result, China effectively has a monopoly over the resources there which it can exploit to fuel its growing economy, capitalize on the eroding US military advantage, and set conditions for hegemony over US allies in the region. Limiting passage through the South China Sea could also negatively impact the global economy since a significant percentage of global trade transits this region annually.

The United States has intervened along two lines of effort to challenge the Chinese excessive claims and retain customary international law: diplomacy and freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs). The crux of these efforts has nothing to do with sovereignty and everything to do with the innocent passage that international law explicitly permits. To date, these initiatives have

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<sup>1</sup> Alison Adcock-Kaufman, "The "Century of Humiliation," Then and Now: Chinese Perceptions of the International Order," *Pacific Focus* 25, no. 1 (2010): 5.

<sup>2</sup> *The Republic of the Philippines v. The People's Republic of China*, in *United Nations Permanent Court of Arbitration*, (2016): 111.

neither stopped nor dissuaded Chinese activity in the region. This raises the question, should the United States continue FONOPs in the South China Sea; is the juice worth the squeeze?

Analysis indicates the United States should continue FONOPs in the South China Sea because they allow the United States to achieve long term global successes by maintaining customary international law, shaping desired strategic effects and strengthening partnerships.

US FONOPs in the South China Sea supplement diplomatic efforts to retain the spirit of customary international law by challenging China's excessive claims and sending a message to other states that the global community will not tolerate it. Scholars and diplomats recognize the important role US FONOPs play in maintaining the freedom of the sea inherent in customary international law. In 2016, US Ambassador, John Negroponte warned, "...the rights and freedoms of the sea will be lost over time if they are not used."<sup>3</sup> US FONOPs in the South China Sea reinforce the importance of adherence to generally accepted international law by challenging Chinese excessive claims. Not challenging the Chinese excessive claims inherently legitimizes them.<sup>4</sup> If the United States legitimized them, it would risk setting a negative precedent for itself and its allies.

Chinese denial of rights of innocent passage in the South China Sea violate customary international law. Legal scholars postulate that habitual non-compliance with customary international law can alter the perception over time resulting in new customs and laws.<sup>5</sup> From this, one can deduce that perhaps China hopes to capitalize on this in the long term. Specifically,

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<sup>3</sup> Lynn Kuok, "The U.S. FON Program in the South China Sea: A Lawful and Necessary Response to China's Strategic Ambiguity," *East Asia Policy Paper* 9 (2016): 5.

<sup>4</sup> Kuok, "The U.S. FON Program," 6.

<sup>5</sup> Melissa Harvison, "Operational Law Primer," Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College: Joint Military Operations Department, (2019): 3.

China makes excessive maritime claims, no one in the global community challenges them, and Chinese claims now become the new normal. This would have several negative consequences for the United States. Primarily, it would allow China to become a regional hegemon. It would also send a message to the international community suggesting this is possible elsewhere in the world. If other states copied this example, the United States could potentially face an eroding military advantage with other nations like Russia. This would put the United States at a strategic disadvantage as it would now have less ability to project military power globally encouraging other adversaries to take military action against the United States. Thus, US FONOPs in the South China Sea attempt to retain customary international laws that benefit the United States and its allies.

The aforementioned scenario underscores the importance of US FONOPs in the South China Sea. They remind the Chinese the United States is watching and it will not tolerate Chinese assertions. Professor James Kraska, Chair of the Stockton Center for International Law, testified before congress that US FONOPs represent a critical factor in validating the rule of law in the oceans. They solidify understanding of the United Nations Convention for Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and reinforce the importance of the acceptance of legal concepts.<sup>6</sup> US FONOPs, wherever they may occur, broadcast an important message to the international community. If the United States is willing to confront a near-peer state diplomatically and respond with the calculated risk inherent in FONOPs, they should reconsider their assertions. Similar overt and audacious moves may invoke the ire of the world's greatest military power.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> James Kraska, "Testimony," House, *Hearing on Seapower and Projection Forces: Hearing before the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee*, 114<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 2016, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Kuok, "The U.S. FON Program," 3.

Another reason to continue US FONOPs in the South China Sea is they allow the United States to project force into the region thereby solidifying its role as a world power while shaping the Chinese domestic situation. To fully understand this one must begin by carefully examining the current political situation inside China. Even though the Chinese government has relaxed some parameters on its economy thereby providing opportunities for privatization and move towards a more capitalistic system, it is not a Western democracy.<sup>8</sup> China remains a one party, communist state.<sup>9</sup> History has shown communism comes with its own problems and China is no different; it remains plagued by historical issues associated with communist rule such as corruption and income inequality.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, 30 years after the Tiananmen Square incident the Chinese government continues to suppress human rights in the form of imprisonment, psychological manipulation, and forced relocation.<sup>11</sup>

Examining why the Chinese government suppresses its peoples' rights contextualizes this. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) systematically applies soft and hard measures to exercise control over citizens when they voice complaints about the government since the CCP assesses maintenance of stability as the main effort.<sup>12</sup> Many of these complaints are consistent with communist themes: corruption, income inequality, and supply shortages.<sup>13</sup> This suggests the CCP fears that without dissuading Chinese citizens from trying to invoke change, it could lose

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<sup>8</sup> Arie Kacowicz and Benjamin Miller, "The Problem of Peaceful Change Revisited: From the End of the Cold War to the Uncertainties of a Post-Liberal Order," *International Studies Review* 20, no. 2 (2018): 304.

<sup>9</sup> Susan V. Lawrence and Michael F. Martin, *Understanding China's Political System* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2012), 5.

<sup>10</sup> Kyung Suk Lee and Kyu Young Lee, "U.S. Freedom of Navigation Operations in South China Sea: An Ongoing Riddle Between the United States and China," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 29, no. 3 (2017): 467.

<sup>11</sup> Xingmiu Liao and Wen-Hsuan Tsai, "Managing Irregular Petitions in China: Two Types of Social Control Strategy Within the Authoritarian Regime," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 19, no. 1 (2019): 4.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Liao and Tsai, "Managing Irregular Petitions in China," 6.

control. Accordingly, the CCP employs a Peoples Armed Police to maintain domestic stability.<sup>14</sup> This indicates the CCP values stability over freedoms that could lead to regime change.

As a result of these domestic conditions, the CCP needs an outlet for its citizens to mitigate internal discontent. The resultant friction from US FONOPs in the South China Sea provides the Chinese government an opportunity to distract its people from the country's internal problems by appealing to their nationalism.<sup>15</sup> Carefully crafted Chinese messaging convinces the people that US FONOPs represent an affront to their sovereignty and invoke the ire stemming from the century of humiliation. State controlled media manipulates the situation to intensify national pride and frames the situation as China's confronting a bully. Accordingly, Chinese citizens temporarily forget their indignation for the CCP and guarantee the regime's survival.

The China-United States tension that US FONOPs in the South China Sea exacerbates therefore balances the Chinese domestic issues. The resultant stability represents an opportunity for the United States. Survival of the CCP regime benefits the United States given China's nuclear capability. If the United States and its allies conceded to Chinese claims in the South China Sea, the Chinese government would have to focus on its volatile domestic situation. In a worst case scenario, this could manifest into an uprising that overthrows the CCP regime and China becomes a failed state. This could prove disastrous for the geopolitical environment raising the question, who would control their nuclear arsenal and other weapons of war? Accordingly, this perhaps represents an instance of the devil you know is better than the devil you don't.

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<sup>14</sup> U.S. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2019* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2019), 5.

<sup>15</sup> Lee and Lee, "U.S. Freedom of Navigation Operations," 467.



The underlying military power projection inherent in US FONOPs in the South China Sea makes this balance of state-to-state tension and Chinese domestic situation possible. The implementation of distributed maritime operations (DMO, formerly known as distributed lethality) underwrites this. In 2015, Rear Admiral Peter Fanta coined the phrase, “If it floats... it fights...”<sup>16</sup> in regards to this strategy. DMO aspires to equip every ship in the US Navy with the capability to destroy adversarial vessels at scale thus significantly increasing US Naval lethality when finally implemented. The US Navy has made this information open-source hoping it will force the Chinese to reevaluate their assumption of risk when it comes to possibly engaging US vessels in the South China Sea.<sup>17</sup> Specifically, if Chinese opposition to US FONOPs in the South China Sea escalated to a shooting incident, the Chinese stand to lose significant naval assets, beginning with their militia.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies details the process of how the Chinese retrofit fishing vessels and commission them as part of their naval militia at an estimated cost of \$100 million per ship.<sup>18</sup> To put this in context, in August 2018, imagery analysis revealed approximately 300 likely Chinese naval militia ships, each with an estimated displacement of 500 tons, patrolling contested waters in the region.<sup>19</sup> Chinese *modus operandi* has often included using militia assets to deny passage through their waters. With minimal direct fire capabilities they would stand no chance against a DMO equipped US warship in the event of escalation to a shooting incident.<sup>20</sup> Destruction of large scale portions of the Chinese Maritime Militia would

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<sup>16</sup> Sydney J. Freedberg, Jr., “‘If It Floats, It Fights’: Navy Seeks ‘Distributed Lethality,’” *Breaking Defense*, 14 January 2015, accessed 29 August 2019, <http://breakingdefense.com/2015/01/if-it-floats-it-fightsnavy-seeks-distributed-lethality/>.

<sup>17</sup> Toshi Yoshihara and James Holmes, "Responding to China's Rising Sea Power," *Orbis* 61, no. 1 (2017): 99.

<sup>18</sup> Gregory B. Poling, “Illuminating the South China Sea’s Dark Fishing Fleets,” *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, 9 January 2019, accessed 24 September 2019, <https://ocean.csis.org/spotlights/illuminating-the-south-china-seas-dark-fishing-fleets/>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

impact not only Chinese naval capability but would undo many of the CCP's efforts to assuage the century of humiliation. The Chinese do not want a repeat of the 1895 destruction of the Qing Dynasty's Beiyang Fleet at the hands of the Japanese.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, it would have a negative effect on the Chinese domestic situation by invoking the shame of defeat and inciting more outrage toward the already unpopular government. As a result, the United States' military power synonymous with FONOPs will drive Chinese strategic reaction and prevent them from any direct fire engagements with US forces.

US FONOPs in the South China Sea allow the United States to strengthen alliances with regional allies thereby shifting the balance of power in favor of the United States. Analyzing China's excessive maritime claims in the South China Sea and the impact on US allies in the region reveals this. Specifically, some members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have had the Chinese deny their access to economic zones in the South China Sea. Limiting access to the resource rich areas of the South China Sea can prevent ASEAN nations from exploiting them. This impedes ASEAN states' economic development and improves the prospects of Chinese hegemony.

Furthermore, many ASEAN members have declared they seek protection of their respective socio-economic interests suggesting they want an ally to advocate on their behalf.<sup>22</sup> Through FONOPs that challenge Chinese denial of innocent passage in the region, irrespective of sovereignty, the United States emerges as that ally who can set conditions for ASEAN states to have unimpeded access to resources in the region. This will thereby allow advancement of their respective socio-economic goals. The resultant solicitation of buy in from ASEAN nations

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<sup>21</sup> Yoshihara and Holmes, "Responding to China's Rising Sea Power," 99.

<sup>22</sup> Noel "Weng" Tarrazona, "Between US and China, Who Will Win the Tug of War in the South China Sea?" *Naval Forces* 40, no. 2 (2019): 7.

will cultivate stronger alliances in the region that will increase US capabilities and shift the balance of power toward the United States. Also noteworthy, Milan Vego attests to the utility of employing naval power “during times of tension”<sup>23</sup> as a methodology to enhance partnerships and FONOPs does this.

Risk of injury or death to US service members remains inherent to conducting FONOPS in the South China Sea. By demonstrating its inclination to potentially sacrifice lives and warfare assets, the United States sends a message that it is willing to fulfill obligations in the Western Pacific, specifically in support of Vietnam, The Philippines, and Taiwan. Of note, all of these nations currently have territorial disputes with China. Two specific incidents support this theory.

On 30 January 2016, the USS Curtis Wilbur sailed within 12 nautical miles of Triton Island. China, Vietnam, and Taiwan all claimed the island and had domestic laws prohibiting navigation in the zone without prior notification. The Chinese loudly condemned the action as a violation of its sovereignty. Conversely, Vietnam and Taiwan responded favorably and even suggested they would change the language of their applicable domestic laws.<sup>24</sup> The Vietnamese and Taiwanese reactions indicate a strengthening of their alliance with the United States.

On 10 May 2016, the USS William P. Lawrence conducted a FONOP in the vicinity of Fiery Cross Reef in the Spratley Islands. Notably, at the time the Chinese were constructing a 3,000 meter airstrip on the island despite The Philippines’, Taiwan’s and Vietnam’s claiming the reef. Again, the Chinese adamantly opposed this as a violation of their sovereignty while the other claimants did not raise any objections. Significantly, the Australian government praised

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<sup>23</sup> Milan N. Vego, "On Naval Power," *Joint Force Quarterly* no. 50 (2008): 12.

<sup>24</sup> Kuok, "The U.S. FON Program," 18.

the operation and voiced support for the US government.<sup>25</sup> This example suggests a pivotal role that US FONOPs in the South China Sea can play in strengthening partnerships around the world.

Several of the United States' key allies outside the region have indicated inclination to conduct FONOPs in the South China Sea as a measure to dissuade Chinese infringement in the region.<sup>26</sup> In 2014, the United Kingdom condemned Chinese maritime claims in the South China Sea and suggested they would supplement US efforts there.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, in 2016, France insisted its European Union partners increase their maritime footprint in the South China Sea as a means to challenge Chinese claims.<sup>28</sup> This indicates the emergence of a global unity of effort against Chinese encroachment in the South China Sea that can contribute to shifting the balance of power in favor of the United States and its allies.

Multinational FONOPs in the South China Sea will assist in cultivating relationships with regional allies that will shift the balance of power toward the United States and this appears to be the way ahead. Specifically, the US Chief of Naval Operations' "A Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority," defines, "Expand and Strengthen our Network of Partners"<sup>29</sup> as its fourth line of effort. This has the potential to prove crucial in the region. Multinational FONOPs in the South China Sea ameliorates the stigma that tension in the region represents a manifestation of United States-China power competition. Instead, it paints a picture of China attempting to infringe on the autonomy of the global community. Framing the situation in this manner may

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<sup>25</sup> Kuok, "The U.S. FON Program," 19.

<sup>26</sup> Kraska, "Testimony," 2016, 11.

<sup>27</sup> Secretary of State for Defence, *The UK National Strategy for Maritime Security*, (London, UK: May 2014), 16-17.

<sup>28</sup> David Roman, "France to Push for Coordinated EU Patrols in South China Sea," *Bloomberg News*, 5 June 2016, accessed 27 September 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-06-05/france-to-push-for-coordinated-eu-patrols-in-south-china-sea>.

<sup>29</sup> John M. Richardson, *A Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority, Version 2.0*, (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, 2018), 14.

incite resentment in other states, decrease the possibility of Chinese hegemony and shift the balance of power in the region toward the United States.<sup>30</sup>

The aforementioned carries multiple points of significance which benefit the United States and its allies. With the balance of power favoring the United States and its global allies, the United States can increase and retain access to the region. Unrestricted access to the South China Sea allows the United States to project military power around the globe.<sup>31</sup> If the United States did not challenge China's excessive claims in the South China Sea, it could lose access to the region altogether. Accordingly, the United States would have to find alternate routes to navigate the globe eroding their ability to mass forces at a decisive place and time. This degradation in military capability could have profound effects on the world perception of the United States as a superpower. With unrestricted access to the South China Sea and the balance of power tilting in its favor, the United States and its allies can deny the Chinese the ability to influence US global power projection. These factors will mitigate the eroding military advantage the United States has over China.

While a benefit of US FONOPs in South China Sea is ensuring the "status quo"<sup>32</sup> of current customary international law, that represents only a portion of the advantage. As previously indicated, US FONOPs underscore a protest to Chinese excessive maritime claims and without challenging them they could become the new normal. By physically challenging the excessive Chinese claims, the United States maintains a foothold in the region that diplomatic measures alone cannot achieve. In addition to reassuring our allies in the region, FONOPs remind the Chinese that the United States can and will go anywhere international law permits.

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<sup>30</sup> Kraska, "Testimony," 2016, 11.

<sup>31</sup> Amitai Etzioni, "Freedom of Navigation Assertions," *Armed Forces & Society* 42, no. 3 (2016): 510.

<sup>32</sup> Joshua L. Root, "The Freedom of Navigation Program: Assessing 35 Years of Effort." *Syracuse Journal of International Law and Commerce* 43, no. 2 (2016): 348.

The United States assumes tactical and strategic risk during the execution of every FONOP. The Black Sea Bumping Incident of 1988 exemplifies this and parallels current US FONOPs in the South China Sea.<sup>33</sup> When the USS Yorktown attempted passage through Soviet waters in the black sea, the Soviet frigate, Bezzaventy, rammed it attempting to force the Yorktown back into international waters.<sup>34</sup> While the incident produced no casualties, the Yorktown sustained minor damage.<sup>35</sup> The potential for loss of life and materiel highlights the tactical risk the United States assumes during each FONOP. This incident could also have escalated into a shooting incident setting the stage for state-level military engagement between two nuclear powers.

From a strategic standpoint, poor US messaging pertaining to US FONOPs in South China Sea could result in the initiative backfiring and alienate US allies. Since the United States has not ratified UNCLOS, repeated FONOPs in the South China Sea to challenge excessive Chinese maritime claims may appear to promote a US position of do as I say and not as I do. This could embolden the Chinese because it makes the United States look hypocritical. A strengthened Chinese position could alienate US allies in the region as they would perceive the United States as no better than China.<sup>36</sup> If the United States intends never to ratify UNCLOS, it needs to ensure that diplomacy supporting FONOPs in the South China Sea emphasizes a protest of infringement on innocent passage and not claims of sovereignty.

Furthermore, critics of US FONOPs in South China Sea would argue that the juice is not worth the squeeze since it could potentially escalate tensions with China bringing two nuclear

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<sup>33</sup> Etzioni, "Freedom of Navigation Assertions," 511.

<sup>34</sup> William J. Aceves, "Diplomacy at Sea: U.S. Freedom of Navigation Operations in the Black Sea," *Naval War College Review* 46, no. 2 (1993): 68.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Andrew S. Erickson, "America's Security Role in the South China Sea," *Naval War College Review* 69, no. 1 (2016): 19.

armed states closer to conflict. Two underlying conclusions drive them to arrive at this position. First, US FONOPs in the South China Sea directly challenge Chinese sovereignty. Second, US FONOPs in the South China Sea represent “deliberate provocations”<sup>37</sup> and thereby erode US global legitimacy. Careful analysis of these positions suggests otherwise.

US FONOPs do not challenge any state’s sovereignty. US Naval judge advocate, Commander Johnathan Odom indicates this in his 2015 article in *The Diplomat*. First, he codifies the South China Sea dispute into three categories: competing territorial claims, overlapping and competing territorial claims, and excessive maritime claims.<sup>38</sup> Next he notes that applicable sovereignty laws fall into the first category while international law corresponds to the latter two.<sup>39</sup> US policy stipulates not siding with any state claiming sovereignty while imploring they come to a peaceful agreement. Accordingly, Odom asserts that US FONOP policy only challenges Chinese infringement on innocent passage; a violation of international law.

The Paracel Islands exemplify this logic. Three nations, China, Taiwan and Vietnam, claim sovereignty over them and have imposed laws in the applicable maritime areas to deny innocent passage of warships.<sup>40</sup> The United States interprets the latter as a violation of customary international law. When the United States conducts a FONOP in the vicinity, ownership of the islands remains irrelevant because the purpose of the FONOP is to exercise the right of innocent passage. Sovereignty does not factor into the FONOP. While emphasizing this

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<sup>37</sup> Johnathan, G. Odom, “How The U.S. FON Program is Lawful and Legitimate,” *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, 15 October 2015, accessed 24 September 2019, <https://amti.csis.org/how-the-u-s-fon-program-is-lawful-and-legitimate/>.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

fact with clear diplomatic messaging has not yet persuaded the Chinese to adopt this perspective, it does appear to legitimize US FONOPs in the South China Sea.

While calculated, US FONOPs do not represent “deliberate provocations”<sup>41</sup> and the underlying legality supports US global legitimacy.<sup>42</sup> US forces execute each FONOP after significant planning, risk analysis, and, of equal importance, legal review.<sup>43</sup> In accordance with US military doctrine, each mission has a task and purpose. Current US *modus operandi* in the region does not encompass inciting armed conflict with the Chinese. Moreover, the United States conducts FONOPs to exercise the rights of innocent passage. The Chinese are the ones who devised domestic laws to restrict innocent passage in its territorial sea; a violation of Article 24 of UNCLOS.<sup>44</sup> UNCLOS explicitly permits freedom of navigation, guarantees freedom of the seas and does not make stipulations against military vessels.<sup>45</sup> Viewing the situation through this lens, China emerges as the provocateur and the United States appears to have legitimacy in its challenge to the excessive maritime claims.

China’s problematic rise in power, shrouded in strategic ambiguity and supported by lawfare, has had profound effects on the current geopolitical situation. Chinese excessive maritime claims in the area impact regional powers and the United States thousands of miles away. While Chinese actions do not meet the minimum threshold for armed conflict, they have exploited an opportunity to continuously erode the US military advantage. US FONOPs in the region have not proven effective yet but they represent a unifying initiative to move all interested

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<sup>41</sup> Jonathan G. Odom, “Why US FON Operations in the South China Sea Make Sense,” *The Diplomat*, 31 October 2015, accessed 21 September 2019: <http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/why-us-fon-operations-in-the-south-china-sea-make-sense/>.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, *United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea*, (1982), Article 24: 29.

<sup>45</sup> Odom, “How the U.S. FON Program is Lawful and Legitimate,” 2015.



entities in the right direction. With the United States in the lead, an alliance of likeminded partners can work together to ensure maintenance of international law, mitigate conflict and ensure the opportunity for the economic prosperity of global states.

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