

## Research Article

**MARITIME POLICY IN UNIFYING THE NAMES OF ISLANDS, ROCKS, SHOALS UNDER VIETNAM'S SOVEREIGNTY, SHOALS AND SOME OTHER GEOGRAPHICAL OBJECTS IN VIETNAM'S SEA****\*Dr. Nguyen Thanh Minh**

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From 2012 to 2024, Vietnam's maritime policy has developed in depth in terms of protecting sovereignty, sovereign rights, jurisdiction, and developing the marine economy, especially the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, now the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, issued Circular No. 33/2024, dated December 15, 2024, on promulgating the List of place names of islands, rocks, shoals, reefs and some geographical objects in Vietnam's seas. It can be seen that this is a continuation of Vietnam's maritime policy, which was systematically and uniformly planned from the 2012 Law on the Sea of Vietnam, the 2018 Law on Surveying and Mapping, and the 2018 Law on the Vietnam Coast Guard.

**Keywords:** Sovereignty, Place name, Island, Shoal, Reef.**INTRODUCTION*****Maritime policy continues to affirm national sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction at sea***

In recent years, the world situation in general, and the East Sea region in particular, has continued to have complicated developments, signs of violations of international law, international maritime law, especially the provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea - UNCLOS, violations of the United Nations Charter continue to occur with seriousness. The East Sea is important to the world and the region in terms of economy, military, marine environmental protection and international cooperation, especially in terms of maritime economy. This is one of the areas where the world's important shipping routes pass through. If a military conflict occurs, even at a low intensity, it will cause a crisis in the region and the world. Countries in the world in general, and in the East Sea region in particular, have systematically formulated maritime policies, especially in the first decades of the 21st century, with important elements such as developing the marine economy and ensuring security and defense at sea. Inheriting the tradition of maritime policy, in recent times, the Party and State of Vietnam have had guidelines, policies, laws on seas and islands, to affirm sovereignty, sovereign rights, and national jurisdiction at sea, especially in the process of streamlining the apparatus and merging provinces and cities. Currently, we have 21 coastal provinces and cities out of a total of 34 provinces and cities, with 13 special zones, including Hoang Sa and Truong Sa special zones. The 2012 Law on the Sea of Vietnam is an important legal document, effective from January 1, 2013, regulating sovereignty, sovereign rights and national jurisdiction over Vietnam's sea areas. The Law on the Sea of Vietnam is based on the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and clearly stipulates sovereignty over internal waters, territorial waters, jurisdiction over exclusive economic zones, continental shelves, islands and archipelagos,

including the two special zones of Hoang Sa and Truong Sa. The Law on the Sea of Vietnam also sets out regulations on activities in sea areas, management, protection of the sea and marine economic activities. This is considered the legal basis for the Government of Vietnam to issue decrees and circulars on seas and islands, continuing to affirm national sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction over seas and islands. The Government of Vietnam announced the Declaration on Baselines for Calculating the Breadth of the Territorial Sea in the Gulf of Tonkin on February 21, 2025. This Declaration defines the baseline as a series of 11 straight lines connecting points on the sea from Hon Nhan Island to the mouth of the Bac Luan River. This announcement is in accordance with the 2012 Law of the Sea of Vietnam and the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and affirms national sovereignty over the Gulf of Tonkin.



**Map illustrating the baselines used to calculate the width of Vietnam's territorial waters in the Gulf of Tonkin. Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

The baselines used to calculate the breadth of Vietnam's territorial waters in the Gulf of Tonkin are the basis for determining the boundaries and scope of Vietnam's maritime zones according to the provisions of UNCLOS and the Agreement on the Delimitation of the Gulf of Tonkin between Vietnam and China signed in 2000. The clear determination of the baselines in the Gulf of Tonkin creates an additional legal basis to protect and exercise Vietnam's sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction, contributing to economic development,

maritime management and promoting international cooperation in the coming time.

***Contribute to affirming sovereignty through promulgating a list of place names of islands, rocks, shoals, reefs and some other geographical objects in Vietnam's seas.***

Seas and islands are a part of the sacred sovereignty of the Fatherland, a living space, a gateway for international exchange, closely linked to the cause of building and defending the Fatherland. In the context of many unpredictable changes in the world and regional situation, the 13th National Congress of the Party stated: Disputes over territorial sovereignty and sovereignty over seas and islands are becoming more tense, complicated, and fierce. Peace, stability, freedom, security, and safety of navigation and aviation in the East Sea are facing great challenges and potential risks of conflict [Communist Party of Vietnam: Documents of the 13th National Congress of Delegates, National Political Publishing House Truth, H.2021, vol. I]. Also affirmed: Protecting independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, maintaining a peaceful and stable environment and adapting to climate change are urgent requirements and at the same time great challenges for our country in the coming time. [Communist Party of Vietnam: Documents of the 13th National Congress of Delegates, National Political Publishing House Truth, Hanoi 2021, vol. I.]. The consistent viewpoint of our State is to firmly maintain independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national maritime interests associated with socialism. Maintaining a peaceful and stable environment for a long time is the highest benefit for national development.

On December 15, 2024, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Do DucDuy signed and issued Circular No. 33/2024/TT-BTNMT [Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment now renamed as Ministry of Agriculture and Environment.] Promulgating the list of place names of islands, rocks, shoals, reefs and some other geographical objects in Vietnam's sea. This Circular regulates the unification of place names of islands, rocks, reefs under Vietnam's sovereignty, reefs and some other geographical objects in Vietnam's sea to serve the work of mapping. This Circular applies to Vietnamese organizations and individuals and foreign organizations and individuals in Vietnam whose activities are related to the scope of regulation specified in Article 1 of the Circular, which is to regulate the unification of place names of islands, rocks, shoals under Vietnam's sovereignty, reefs and some other geographical objects in Vietnam's sea areas to serve the work of mapping. Issued together with this Circular is a list of place names of 5,774 islands, rocks, shoals under Vietnam's sovereignty, reefs and some other geographical objects in Vietnam's sea areas.

The promulgation of the list of place names of islands, shoals, reefs and some other geographical objects in Vietnam's seas is of great significance in affirming the sovereignty and legitimacy of geographical entities in Vietnam's seas. The promulgation of the list of place names of islands, shoals, reefs and other geographical objects in Vietnam's seas is of great significance in affirming national sovereignty, serving as a legal basis for the management of marine resources and environment, especially contributing to the protection of sovereignty over seas and islands, and as a foundation for research, surveying, mapping, search and rescue.

The unification of the names of islands, rocks, shoals under Vietnam's sovereignty, reefs and some other geographical objects in Vietnam's sea contributes to concretizing the Party's guidelines, viewpoints, policies and laws of the State on protecting the sovereignty of the Fatherland's seas and islands, and at the same time demonstrates a synchronous and systematic maritime policy. On the other hand, Vietnam's maritime policy system is consistent with the United Nations Charter, contemporary international law, international maritime law, and the provisions of UNCLOS.

## **Conclusion**

The unification of the names of islands, rocks, shoals under Vietnam's sovereignty, reefs and some other geographical objects in Vietnam's seas has contributed to affirming the legitimacy, asserting sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction over the seas of the Fatherland. At the same time, it is a step to concretize the Party's guidelines and policies, the State's policies and laws on protecting the sovereignty of seas and islands. The 8th Conference of the 12th Party Central Committee issued Resolution No. 36-NQ/TW on the Strategy for Sustainable Development of Vietnam's Marine Economy to 2030, with a vision to 2045. The Resolution set out a specific viewpoint: Vietnam must become a strong maritime nation, rich from the sea, with sustainable development, prosperity, security and safety, sustainable development of the marine economy associated with ensuring national defense and security, maintaining independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, strengthening foreign affairs and international cooperation on the sea, contributing to maintaining a peaceful and stable environment for development.

The Resolution defines the general goal by 2030 to turn Vietnam into a strong maritime nation, basically achieving the criteria for sustainable development of the marine economy; forming a marine ecological culture; proactively adapting to climate change and rising sea levels; preventing trends of pollution, degradation of the marine environment, coastal erosion and encroachment; restoring and conserving important marine ecosystems. New, advanced and modern scientific achievements become direct factors promoting sustainable development of marine economic sectors. By 2045, Vietnam will become a strong maritime nation with sustainable development, prosperity, security and safety; the maritime economy will make an important contribution to the national economy, contributing to building our country into a modern industrialized country with a socialist orientation, proactively and responsibly participating in solving international and regional issues related to the sea and ocean. The goal of managing and protecting the sovereignty of seas and islands is a concrete expression of the consistent policy of the Party and State of Vietnam in building and protecting the Fatherland, in accordance with the law of building the country and protecting the country, making the people rich, the country strong, democratic, fair, and civilized.

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