

**A Line Without a Legend:
The Creation of the Republic of China's Dashed-Line Map, 1945-47**

Background

A historian in the Department of State Bureau of Public Affairs Office of the Historian traveled to Taipei, Taiwan in January 2016. The purpose of the visit was to conduct research on the formation and execution of the Republic of China's South China Sea policy from 1945-50 using declassified documents from official archives and, in particular, to shed light on the context of the policy that led to the creation of the "Dashed-Line Map," which originated during this period. The historian visited three archives: the National Archives Administration of the National Development Council, Academia Historica, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives held by the Institute of Modern History at Academia Sinica. The historian encountered no barriers in obtaining access to the archives and collected over 5,000 pages of primary source material, in digital and paper form, from these archives, including records from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, and National Defense; the Chiang Kai-shek Archives; and the Taiwan Provincial Administrative Executive Office. The historian also met with academic experts in this topic at Academia Sinica and National Taiwan Normal University and collected numerous secondary sources from the National Central Library from both Taiwan and mainland China. The present paper is the first result of this research.¹

In literature relating to the map, the line is referred to as the "U-Shaped Line" or, as this paper will refer to it, the "Dashed Line," among other variants.² Ambiguities about the map, whose 1946-47 editions crucially lacked a legend defining the meaning of the dashed line, leave a number of questions

¹ This paper is intended as a historical study of the Republic of China's subjective intentions in 1945-1950. It is not meant to suggest any evaluation of or position on any of the competing claims to sovereignty over the islands in the South China Sea.

² There is a subtle difference in emphasis between the two terms. Describing the line as "U-shaped" emphasizes the contour of the line while downplaying the unusual, non-contiguous nature of the line and neglecting the line's prominent tail emerging on the southeast side separating Palawan from Borneo. Describing the line as "dashed" captures its unusual, non-contiguous nature and the tail, and distinguishes the line from a "solid" line used for land borders on this map. This paper argues that the dashed aspect of the line is more significant in understanding the map than its (not-quite) "U" shape, and thus the paper used the term "dashed line."

unanswered and thus breadth for possible interpretations.³ Moreover, scholarship on China’s early post-war South China Sea policy provides differing and sometimes contradictory information on key facts. For example, the U.S. Department of State rightly observed in a 2014 review of the literature that, “Scholarly accounts place the publication date [of the first published dashed-line map] from 1946 to 1948.”⁴

With the maps leaving room for vastly different interpretations and a scholarly literature marked by variations on basic facts, this study aims to establish certain key facts surrounding the creation of the dashed-line map, and in so doing to provide a sound historical context for the map in the development and execution of the Chinese government’s South China Sea policy during the early postwar years. A related question is the meaning of the dashed-line map: do the archives reveal whether the dashed line was intended to stake a massive maritime claim on the entire South China Sea (including land features as well as all waters) within those bounds, or a much more narrow claim to the land features—the islands—therein, along with the contemporary convention of a three nautical mile territorial sea surrounding the islands?

Key Findings

1. The Republic of China’s first official dashed-line map was created in September 1946. Entitled the “Location Sketch Map of the Republic of China’s Islands in the South China Sea,” this was created to guide the Republic of China naval expedition to take over islands in the South China Sea, an operation executed from November 1946-February 1947, amidst signs of renewed claims over the islands by France and the Philippines. Minutes from a cabinet level meeting on September 25, 1946 establish the Republic of China government’s decision to use this map to delimit the scope of the takeover. (See Attachment 1, which contains the minutes of the meeting and the map; below the minutes are translated and discussed in detail.)

³ For an analysis of several possible interpretations of the claims, see *Limits in the Seas* #143, U.S. Department of State (2014), available at <http://www.state.gov/e/oes/ocns/opa/c16065.htm>.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 3 fn. 5.

2. The September 1946 map was refined, edited, and approved for final release without the “sketch” designation by the National Government on August 8, 1947. (See Attachment 2, which contains the final edition of the maps.) Following this approval, both a sketch and final forms of the maps were published and disseminated. The Office of Territory in the Ministry of the Interior published an edition of the “sketch” map, in the November 1947 book, *A Sketch Account of the Geography of the Islands in the South China Sea*, by Office of Territory geographer and takeover mission participant, Zheng Ziyue. (See Attachment 3, which contains this map.) In February 1948, the same office published *The Administrative Division Map of the Republic of China*, which includes the islands on both the map of China and the regional map, entitled “Location Map of the Islands in the South China Sea.”⁵ The edition without the “sketch” designation is the version typically cited as the published version of the map.
3. The “dashed” line used in the Republic of China Government’s maps of the islands in the South China Sea from this era was and remains unique. No other maps located in the course of this research use a dashed line. While maps of the South China Sea published outside government channels occasionally used a solid line, maps produced by the Republic of China Government consistently used a dashed line. However, no textual evidence was located explaining the use of the dashed line as opposed to a solid line. Given the consistency of the Republic of China Government’s use of this unique, dashed line, it is reasonable to assume that the dashed line indicates something different from the solid line used on land borders.
4. All textual evidence on the Republic of China’s South China Sea policy in 1945-50 indicates that the Government appeared to consider the islands to be Chinese territory, but was not pursuing a claim to all

⁵ To date, the author has been unable to obtain a printed copy of this publication. This information is drawn from Li & Li 2003, p. 290. However, in light of the map published in Zheng 1947 (see Attachment 3), Li & Li were incorrect in stating that the 1948 map was “the first time that a map marked with the dotted line in the South China Sea was officially issued during the Kuomintang (KMT) period.”

of the sea within the dashed line. The titles of the maps indicate that their subject was the “*Islands in the South China Sea.*” Furthermore, the textual record surrounding the formation and execution of the Republic of China’s South China Sea policy was focused on establishing control over the land features of each archipelago, not the seas joining them. Records discuss the islands’ military value (in denying their use to foreign powers who might again threaten China), as well as their economic value (in access to fishing grounds and guano mines for Chinese commercial exploitation, and location along commercial shipping lanes). There is no evidence of any maritime claim beyond, presumably, contemporary practice of a three nautical mile territorial sea surrounding each land feature.⁶

Precursors to the Dashed-Line Map

Some studies state that the Republic of China’s first official dashed-line map was published in April 1935. In fact, this map, entitled the “Map of Islands in the South China Sea” (*Zhongguo nanhai ge daoyu tu* 中國南海各島嶼圖; see Attachment 4: April 1935 Land and Water Maps Inspection Committee Map), which was published in the second issue of the journal of the Republic of China’s Land and Water Maps Inspection Committee, contains no lines—dashed or solid—surrounding the islands of the South China Sea; the only lines drawn on the sea are navigation lanes.⁷

⁶ For more on these conventions, see U.S. Department of State 2014, p. 12. Furthermore, Christopher Chung, citing studies by Tommy Koh, Hungdah Chiu, and Ulises Granados, summarized the Republic of China’s contemporary conception of waters zones: “At the Hague Codification Conference of 1930, the last international meeting to discuss the standardization of the scope of territorial waters before the creation of the U-shaped line maps, the ROC supported a three nautical mile territorial waters zone and a twelve nautical mile contiguous waters zone beyond it. The ROC government officially implemented the former zone in 1931, the latter in 1934, and allowed fishing within both despite the conference having never reached a consensus. It did not support any other waters zone beyond these two until the concept of the continental shelf was first discussed internationally in the UN Geneva Convention of 1958” (Chung 2015, p. 8).

⁷ *Journal of the Land and Water Maps Inspection Committee* vol. 2 (April 1935), pp. 68 opp.

While the 1935 map does not explicitly state a territorial claim, the Committee appeared to consider the islands to be Chinese territory. The Maps Inspection Committee's purview was to set and enforce standards for maps published in China. Besides publishing the map and a table of names of the South China Sea islands, the Committee published its response to a query from a commercial maps publisher clarifying that while the South China Sea islands should appear in large maps showing the administrative territorial boundaries of the country, they need not appear in maps which did not extend as far south as the South China Sea islands.⁸

Thus, the 1935 map plays a role in the history of China's pre-war claims in the South China Sea, but it predated the appearance of the first official dashed-line map.

The Creation of the Dashed-Line Map

The first official dashed-line map, entitled the "Location Sketch Map of the Republic of China's Islands in the South China Sea" (*Zhonghua minguo ling nanhai zhudao weizhi lüetu* 中華民國領南海諸島位置略圖; see Attachment 1), was prepared by the Republic of China Ministry of the Interior Office of Territory⁹ and appears in the archival record when it was distributed at a cabinet level meeting held in September 1946. This section provides extensive detail about this meeting, because it marks the first appearance of the map and because the minutes provide a crucial textual link between the dashed-line map and the Republic of China's policy planning and execution at the time of the emergence of the map.

⁸ Table of names printed in *ibid*, vol. 1 (January 1935), pp. 66-69. Response to publisher discussed at the 29th meeting of the Committee on March 22, 1935, and printed in vol. 3 (September 1935), pp. 80.

⁹ Headed by geographer Fu Juejin 傅角今 (1895-1965), the Office of Territory was established on July 18, 1946, shortly before the Government of the Republic of China began planning the takeover of the South China Sea islands. Fu was the Ministry of the Interior's representative at the September 25, 1946 meeting. He was appointed the head of the Office of Territory on February 13, 1947 and remained in this position until the Office was closed on May 6, 1949. The Office of Territory (*fangyusi* 方域司) is translated in other studies as the Office of Geography. The term *fangyu* connotes territory or domain and is distinct from the term for geography, *dili* 地理.

The Backdrop for the Meeting

Marwyn Samuels, in his early work on the history of the South China Sea disputes, stated that there was no evidence of action in the South China Sea by the Republic of China from August 1945 until July 1946.¹⁰ In fact, the Republic of China had taken some actions in the region during this period. In December 1945, the Taiwan Provincial Executive Office, which had taken control of Woody Island (in the Paracels) from Japan that October, sent two members from its Bureau of Meteorology to the island, which Japan had administered through Takao (Kaohsiung) Prefecture in its colony of Taiwan since 1939. The staff surveyed the remains of a meteorological station and laid a stone tablet.¹¹ Similarly, in late May 1946, the ROC Navy began sending personnel to restore Pratas Reef's weather station.¹² Beyond this, Samuels' statement is correct. What appears to have stimulated the Republic of China's action in mid-1946 was its concern about French and Philippine interest and activities in the Paracels and Spratlys. On May 26, 1946, a French vessel visited Pattle Island in the Paracels to reassert France's pre-war claim to the islands, and on July 23, the Philippine Foreign Minister issued a communiqué claiming the Spratly Islands.¹³ Also, the ROC Navy, which had been devastated during the war, only began to be built back up in late Spring of 1946, when newly trained Republic of China naval crews departed from Miami with the two destroyers, four minesweepers, and two patrol craft transferred to China from the United States—ships which would shortly play a role in the Republic of China's operations.¹⁴ The French and Philippine actions caused the Republic of China, with its newly restored capacity for projecting naval power, to begin formulating a policy.

After preliminary communications between the Executive Yuan and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Interior in August, the Executive Yuan

¹⁰ Samuels 1982, p. 75.

¹¹ Granados 2006, p. 157.

¹² National Archives Administration, National Development Council, Ministry of National Defense, File series 0035/944/5090.2/1 (1946), "Dong-, nan-, xi-sha qundao jianshe an 東、南、西沙群島建設案 [Construction in the Pratas, Parcel, and Spratly Archipelagos]," file 001/002/0001.

¹³ Granados 2006, p. 158.

¹⁴ Hayton 2015, citing the U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence, "The Chinese navy, past and present," *Office of Naval Intelligence Review* (January 1947).

issued order no. 10858 on September 19, 1946. Noting that the Philippine Foreign Minister had announced the annexation and placement of Tizard Bank in the Spratly Islands “within its national defense area (*guofang fanwei yinei* 國防範圍以內),” the cabinet ministries were ordered to “handle this issue and work with the Guangdong Provincial Government to take over (*jieshou* 接收; this term is discussed in detail below) the islands in the South China Sea.”¹⁵

Minutes of the Cabinet-Level Meeting

The meeting was held six days later, on September 25, 1946. It was convened by the Ministry of the Interior, and attended by representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of National Defense, and Navy General Headquarters. According to the minutes of the meeting (see Attachment 1),¹⁶ the first of the nine items of discussion pointed to the map:

Item 1. In taking over the islands in the South China Sea, how should [we] delimit the scope of the takeover? Resolved: Use the limits shown in the “Location Sketch Map of the Republic of China’s Islands in the South China Sea” which has been drawn up by the Ministry of the Interior.

Given the significance of this text, which crucially links the minutes from the September 25, 1946 cabinet meeting to the sketch map, it is worth examining the original Chinese text of each phrase of the passage (terms in bold are discussed below):

¹⁵ National Archives Administration, National Development Council, Ministry of the Interior, File series 0035/E41502/1/1 (1946), “Jinzhu xi-nansha qundao 進駐西南沙群島 [Entering and garrisoning the Paracel and Spratly Archipelagos],” files 0001/0001-0002, dated September 10, 1946. Tizard Bank was referred to in this memorandum as “Tuansha qundao 團沙群島” and, parenthetically, “Shinnan Guntō 新南群島,” the name of the Japanese wartime administration for these islands.

¹⁶ National Archives Administration, National Development Council, Ministry of National Defense, “Jinzhu xi-nansha qundao an 進駐西南沙群島案 [Entering and garrisoning the Paracel and Spratly Archipelagos],” File series 0035/061.8/3030, file 001/001/0003 through 0004, dated September 26, 1946.

Jieshou nanhai ge dao 接收南海各島, *ying ruhe huading jieshou fanwei* 應如何劃定接收範圍. *Jueyi* 決議: *Yizhao neizhengbu nizhi zhi* “*nanhai zhudao weizhi lüetu*” *suo shi fanwei* 依照內政部擬製之「南海諸島位置略圖」所示範圍.

The key terms in this segment, highlighted in bold, are defined as follows by the *Oxford Chinese Dictionary* and University of Hawai'i Press's *ABC Chinese Dictionary*, with additional remarks by the author:

- *jieshou* 接收: receive, take over, expropriate. This term was used to refer to the Chinese government's takeover of territory vacated materiel left behind by Japanese forces following the war. In this context, “take over” is the appropriate translation for the South China Sea islands. Scholars sometime translate this term using the “re-” prefixed forms—*reclaim*, *retake*, or *recapture*— which would imply the *return* or *restoration* of lost or stolen goods or territory, but, strictly speaking, the term does not indicate a return. Contrast with the term *guangfu* 光復 (glorious restoration), used by the Republic of China to describe Japan's “*retrocession*” of Taiwan to China in 1945. This term should not be confused with the homonymous term, *jieshou* 接受, meaning *accept*.
- *huading* 劃定: delimit, demarcate. This term is often used in the context of planning and maps.
- *fanwei* 範圍: scope, limit, range, extent, bound. This term is often used to describe geographic limits.

Item 1 continued:

The Administrative Yuan will appraise and decide, and order the Guangdong Provincial Government to comply [and carry out the takeover].

The other key decisions from the meeting were as follows:

Item 2. Decide if the Ministry of the Interior should release the table of translated names of the islands? Resolved: After checking [the names], ask the Administrative Yuan to appraise and decide.

Item 3. How should materials about the islands in the South China Sea be collected? Resolved: The Navy General Headquarters will collect and send to the Ministry of the Interior for use.

Item 4. How should the discussions and actions about this case be documented? Resolved: The Ministry of the Interior will document.

Item 5. What markers should be left on the islands when we have taken them over? Resolved: Guangdong Province will have stone markers produced before leaving, to be laid at places such as Itu Aba, North Danger Island, and Spratly Island, and other appropriate islands. The tablet will state, “Territory of China” (*woguo lingtu* 我國領土). The locations, ceremonies, and texts of each tablet will be prepared by the Ministry of the Interior.

Item 6. After the takeover should we change the names of the various shoals, banks, etc.? Resolved: Use the table prepared by the Ministry of the Interior; the Administrative Yuan will appraise and decide; then, the Ministry of the Interior will create and make a public announcement.

Item 7. Should the takeover temporarily be made secret or not? Resolved: Before completely and formally taken over, do not make a public announcement.

Item 8. [Handwritten] How should the takeover ships be sent out? Resolved: The Ministry of National Defense will send them.

As Item 2 indicates, the location sketch map was accompanied by a “Table of Names for the Islands in the South China Sea” (*Nanhai zhudao mingcheng yi lanbiao* 南海諸島名稱一覽表). The four-page table contained three columns: The new official name for each island in Chinese, the old name (if different), and the conventional Western name.

On October 12, 1946, the Administrative Yuan approved the use of this map as delimiting the scope of the mission to take over the South China Sea islands.

Evidence of Chiang Kai-shek's Interest in the Mission

The present study does not detail the naval expedition to take over the South China Sea islands or the diplomatic rows that ensued, but records from the Chiang Kai-shek Archives show that this mission rose to the attention of the Generalissimo and Chairman of the Nationalist Government himself.

On October 5, 1946, Chiang ordered the Ministry of National Defense to send the Republic of China Navy to take over the Paracels and Spratlys within one month. Chiang wrote on the order in red wax pen, reiterating: “No matter what... send troops to take over [the islands] within one month, and make no mistakes (*wulun ruhe... xian yige yue nei zhu wu cuo* 無論如何... 限一個月內駐勿錯).”¹⁷

Again, on December 8, 1946 Chiang wrote on a memorandum reporting the status of the mission to the Paracels and Spratlys, he wrote in red: “Have troops entered and been garrisoned (*youfou paibing jinzhu* 有否派兵進駐)?” Here, in using the term *jinzhu*, Chiang employed another term (beside *jieshou*, discussed above) frequently associated with the takeover mission in the South China Sea. This term is defined as “(of troops) enter and garrison (a town a city, etc.); be stationed.”¹⁸

On December 17, 1946 Chiang received an update on the status of the mission which explicitly addressed his question. The document stated that the Navy had landed 35 troops on Pratas Island on May 23, a second group of 64 arrived on August 12, and a third group of 10 on August 15; a contingent of 67 landed on Woody Island on November 28; and the same number, 67, were sent on the Spratlys mission, but having been delayed by

¹⁷ Academia Historica, Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek, Papers on the Revolution: Diplomacy with France and Indochina, memorandum from Chen Cheng to Chiang Kai-shek, dated October 5, 1946, file number 002-020400-00050-045.

¹⁸ Academia Historica, Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek, Papers on the Revolution: Diplomacy with France and Indochina, memorandum from Chen Cheng to Chiang Kai-shek, dated December 8, 1946 file number 002-020400-00050-046.

poor weather they only departed from the port of Yulin, Hainan on December 9 and landed on Taiping Island on December 12.¹⁹

From these documents, it is clear that interest in the South China Sea islands rose to the highest levels of the Republic of China Government, and that Chiang Kai-shek's express priority for this mission was the landing and garrisoning of troops on the islands.

From Draft to Publication of the Dashed-Line Map

As the minutes from the September 1946 minutes made clear, a public announcement about the mission was to be deferred until a future date. In the meantime, while the mission to take over the islands in the South China Sea was underway, the Republic of China Government continued work on a final set of maps and a revised table of names for the islands. In December 1946 the Ministry of the Interior Office of Territory completed a set of six maps of the South China Sea, including the "Location Map of the Islands in the South China Sea," whose lack of the term "sketch" indicated the map's move from draft to final form. The six maps were entitled: (1) "Location Map of Islands in the South China Sea," (2) "Paracel Archipelago," (3) "Macclesfield Bank," (4) "Spratly Archipelago," (5) "Taiping Island, Spratly Archipelago," and (6) "Yongxing Island and Shi Island, Paracel Archipelago."

By December 25, 1946 the report on the Paracels takeover mission was completed, followed by the report on the Spratlys takeover mission on February 4, 1947.²⁰ On February 25, 1947, Rear Admiral Lin Zun, who led the Navy's takeover mission of the Spratlys, submitted a report proposing the public announcement of the mission and the extent of the Government's claims. This report, with an attached map corresponding to the final section of the proposal (See Attachment 5: February 1947 Report and Map by Lin

¹⁹ Academia Historica, Archives of President Chiang Kai-shek, Papers on the Revolution: Diplomacy with France and Indochina, memorandum from Chen Cheng to Chiang Kai-shek, dated December 17, 1946, file number 002-020400-00050-047.

²⁰ For additional analysis of these two reports, see Chung 2015, pp. 6-7.

Zun), gives a sense of which aspects the Government's claims were still in flux.²¹

Subject: Suggestions regarding the question of whether or not to publicly announce the entering, garrisoning, and taking over of the Paracel and Spratly Archipelagos

1. The method and time of the public announcement

We should publicly announce that our country's government took over the Paracel and Spratly Archipelagos's ~~main islands~~ [striketrough in the original] between last November and December, that the Navy entered and garrisoned Woody Island in the Paracels and Taiping Island in the Spratlys, and that sovereignty [inserted: "over all islands (*ge dao* 各島)"] is all ours.

Reasons: (1.) The islands in the Paracels and Spratly Archipelagos are numerous, so we landed on each place, in order to prove our sovereignty and prevent other countries from coveting them and incidents from occurring over them.

(2.) The scope of this nation's territory (*benguo guojing fanwei* 本國國境範圍) urgently must be established. At this time, the masses of the entire country are interested in the Paracels and Spratlys. We should publicize and stir up the masses' consciousness of the South Sea and establish the scope [inserted: "of the nation's territory"].

2. Collection of Archives on Paracel and Spratly Archipelagos

Guangdong Provincial Government has a complete archive of materials related to the Paracel Archipelago and our country's long struggles with Japan and France over them. These should all be

²¹ National Archives Administration, National Development Council, Ministry of National Defense, "Jinzhu xi-nansha qundao an 進駐西南沙群島案 [Entering and garrisoning the Paracel and Spratly Archipelagos]," File series 0035/061.8/3030, file 003/003/0008 through 0010, dated February 25, 1947.

ordered to be sent to the capital. Regarding the Spratly Islands, other than various countries' published navigational maps of the South China Sea, which show Chinese fishermen's and the Navy's frequent travels to the Spratlys, the Taiwan Executive Administrative Office has a complete archive, and an order should be sent by cable to send these to the capital.

3. The scope of the Paracel and Spratly Archipelagos

(1.) The Paracel Archipelago is one 100-200 nautical miles from our port of Yulin, Hainan. Our warships and fishing boats frequently go there. Sovereignty over the whole should be ours (*qi quanbu zhuquan ying shu wo you* 其全部主權應屬我). This is perfectly justified. We should announce that the entirety belongs to us.

(2.) The breadth of the Spratly Archipelago is extremely large. Its most important island, Taiping, is over 500 nautical miles from Yulin harbor, but it is only over 200 nautical miles from the Philippines. Therefore, it seems we must further research the scope of our public announcement (*gu qi gongbu fanwei si ying jiayi yanjiu* 故其公佈範圍似應加以研究). I have drawn up the three following proposals:

(a.) Treat Japan's Shinnan Archipelago [c. 1939-45] as the scope. This extends from 7-12° North and 111-117° East. All islands, shoals, and rocks belong to us. This scope of this proposal may be too close to (*kong guojin yu* 恐過近於) the Philippine island of Palawan.

(b.) Treat 7-12° North to 111-115° East as the scope.

(c.) Treat 10-12° North to 114-115° East as the scope.

If the above description is acceptable, please transmit it to relevant agencies for consideration.

(Attachment 5 contains a map which was attached to this memo and which illustrates the areas corresponding to (2a), (2b), and (2c).)

While the specific proposals about the scope of the Republic of China's claims in the South China Sea are not directly reflected in the shape of the published dashed-line map, a number of aspects of the report are noteworthy. First, in planning the public announcement, Lin emphasized that the Republic of China was establishing sovereignty over "all islands." Second, in delimiting the "scope" of the Republic of China's territory, Lin treated the Paracels and Spratlys as distinct archipelagos, and did not consider or draw the seas between them. Third, whereas he felt the Republic of China's claim to the Paracels was obvious, he was more circumspect about the claim to the Spratlys. He provided three distinct proposals, starting first with the largest claim, corresponding to the area that Japan had annexed from 1939-45. He specified that it was "all islands, shoals, and rocks" within the area that would belong to the Republic of China. Lin showed concern that the claim's proximity to the Philippines would cause problems. Thus, he provided two additional and gradually narrower proposals, both including Taiping Island (Itu Aba). It is clear from Lin's report that the scope of the Republic of China's claims was still in flux as of late February 1947; that none of his proposals entertained claiming the entire body of the South China Sea within the dashed line of the 1946 map; and that in fact his proposal was limited to islands, shoals, and rocks.

In the months that followed, the Republic of China Government created a series of proposals for the development and defense of the islands in the South China Sea. The Ministry of the Interior submitted the final set of the maps of the islands of the South China Sea, printed by the Ministry of National Defense Bureau of Surveys, to the Administrative Yuan for approval, along with a table of revised names for the islands. On August 8, 1947, the Government approved the maps and table and ordered their release.²² (The maps are included in attachment 2.) The path of the dashed line in the released maps did not change, despite internal deliberations represented by Lin Zun's February 25, 1947 report; its arc continued to occupy an expansive area in the South China Sea. The purpose of the public announcements about the Government's takeover of the islands comported with Lin's suggestions: to establish the scope of nation's territory, raise

²² For additional analysis of the mid-1947 meetings, see Chung 2015, p. 7.

public consciousness of China's islands in the South China Sea, and to notify other countries of the islands in the South China Sea that the Republic of China Government staked claim to.

Variant forms of the maps were published. The Office of Territory in the Ministry of the Interior published a slightly different edition of the “sketch” map, without the “Republic of China” attribution, in the November 1947 book, *A Sketch Account of the Geography of the Islands in the South China Sea*. (The cover of the book and the map are included in attachment 3.) In February 1948, the same office published *The Administrative Division Map of the Republic of China*, which includes the islands on both the map of China and the regional map, entitled “Location Map of the Islands in the South China Sea.” These maps were all marked by the dashed line.

Interpreting the Dashed Line

The dashed line used in the Republic of China's maps of the South China Sea islands from this era, which was first used in the 1946 map to delimit the scope of the naval takeover of the islands and which persisted in official Chinese maps thereafter, is unique. This study surveyed official maps of China's other land and maritime borders—including along the Sino-Burmese border and the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea—from the period 1945-50 and found no evidence of a dashed line being used on other borders. Other official maps, both internal and published, were found to employ similar line *forms*—the “line-dot” and “bone-dot” forms—as national boundary lines. However, no other maps from the era located in the course of this research use the *dashed* variant of this line form. For this reason, this study argues that the dashed line remains a line without a legend.

Furthermore, all draft maps and the earliest published maps reviewed for this research uniformly lack legends defining the nature of the dashed line. The first map from this period that provides a legend of border line forms is a set of maps of the South China Sea, printed by the Republic of China Ministry of National Defense Bureau of Surveys in May 1948. (See Attachment 6: May 1948 Spratly Archipelago Map.) This map contains a legend defining the form used for land borders between countries and on the dashed line as “national border” (*guojie* 國界), but, crucially, the legend fails to distinguish between the *dashed* variant of the line used in the South China Sea and the *solid* variant of the line used on all land borders between countries. Thus,

while the symbology used for the dashed line clearly bears some relation to the “national border,” the dashed nature of the line is not explained by the legend.

Unfortunately, this study located no archival evidence explaining the use of the dashed line as opposed to a solid line. From its first appearance in 1946, the dashed line lived on uniquely in Government maps of the South China Sea. The number of dashes, their form, and precise locations may have changed, but the use of a dashed line did not.

Nonetheless, given the Republic of China Government’s consistent use of the dashed line in maps of the South China Sea, in a manner distinct from that used on other land or maritime borders, it is reasonable to conclude that the dashed line indicates a special case, one different from other Chinese border claims.

In the absence of explicit evidence about the meaning of the dashed line, all possible interpretations must be judged against the abundant textual evidence in the Republic of China archives from this period. The textual evidence on the Republic of China’s South China Sea policy in 1945-50 indicates that the Government was pursuing a claim in the South China Sea to the islands themselves and not the sea as a whole, within the dashed line. The titles of the maps indicate that their subject was the “Islands in the South China Sea.” Records describing the formation and execution of the Republic of China’s South China Sea policy indicate that the highest levels of the Republic of China Government (including Chiang Kai-shek himself) was focused on establishing sovereignty over the islands, by stationing and garrisoning troops, erecting stone markers, surveying and developing the islands, and publishing a table of revised names of the claimed islands along with maps identifying their location. Reports such as those by Rear Admiral Lin Zun focused on land features of the archipelagos rather than the seas in between them. Records discuss the islands’ military value (in denying their use to foreign powers who might again threaten China), as well as their economic value (their use by Chinese fishermen, their guano mines for commercial exploitation, and their location along commercial shipping

lanes). But, as argued by historian Christopher Chung²³ and verified in this study, there is no textual evidence of maritime claims by the Government beyond, presumably, contemporary practice of a three nautical mile territorial sea.

Given this evidence, there is a strong basis for arguing that the dashed line in Republic of China's dashed line maps from the 1946-48 period represented an islands attribution claim: at first, an instruction to the Navy as to which islands should be taken over, and once the mission was completed, a public announcement to the domestic and international audiences that the Republic of China had claimed the land features within the dashed line and, presumably, the contemporary three nautical mile territorial sea surrounding each land feature.

²³ Chung 2015, p. 8.

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Attachments

1. Minutes of the September 25, 1946 cabinet meeting and “Location Sketch Map of the Republic of China’s Islands in the South China Sea.” Source: National Archives Administration, National Development Council, Ministry of National Defense, File 061.8 3030 (1946), “Jinzhu xi-nansha qundao an 進駐西南沙群島案 [Entering and garrisoning the Paracel and Spratly Archipelagos],” File series 0035/061.8/3030, file 001/001/0003-0004 (minutes) and -0009 (map).
2. Maps of the Islands in the South China Sea approved by the Republic of China National Government on August 8, 1947 for release. Source: Academia Historica, Archives of the Republic of China National Government, File series 0036/0561.12, file 3438/01/01, “Bohaiwan haixia ji nanhai zhudaowan mingcheng 渤海灣海峽及南海諸島灣名稱 [Names of Islands and Harbors in Bohai Bay and the South China Sea],” digital filenames: 001056112001095m through ~100m.
3. “Sketch Map of the Islands in the South China Sea,” published November 1947. Source: Zheng Ziyue 鄭資約, 1947, *Nanhai zhudao dili lüezhi* 南海諸島地理略誌 [A Sketch Account of the Geography of the Islands in the South China Sea], Ministry of the Interior Series on Territory, Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館 [Commercial Press].

4. April 1935 Land and Water Maps Inspection Committee Map. Source: *Journal of the Land and Water Maps Inspection Committee*, vol. 2 (April 1935), pp. 68 opp.
5. February 1947 Report and Map by Lin Zun. Source: National Archives Administration, National Development Council, Ministry of National Defense, “Jinzhu xi-nansha qundao an 進駐西南沙群島案 [Entering and garrisoning the Paracel and Spratly Archipelagos],” File series 0035/061.8/3030, file 003/003/0008 through 0010 (memo) and 0014, dated February 25, 1947.
6. “Spratly Archipelago,” published May 1948. Source: “Nansha qundao 南沙群島 [Spratly Archipelago],” printed by Republic of China Ministry of National Defense Bureau of Surveys, dated May 5, 1948, item identifier “map_imh_389” (part of a series, “map_imh_385” through “map_imh_393”), from the Institute of Modern History Map Collection, Digital Map Collection Combined Search System, Research Center for Humanities and Social Sciences, Academia Sinica, <http://map.rchss.sinica.edu.tw/> (accessed April 13, 2016). Annotations added pointing to instances of the “national border” and “special border” line forms.