

# *Former Philippine Ambassador Lauro L. Baja . . . Baselines Bill Does Not Promote Philippine Interests*

*By: Ambassador Lauro L. Baja*

**MANILA, Feb. 5 (PinoyGlobal)** - The Philippine Baselines Bill which excludes Kalayaan and Scarborough Shoal from our baselines does not protect nor promote our national interests. Kalayaan is already ours by virtue of our laws, and we have military and civilian units there.

The Consideration of bilateral relations, used to justify the exclusion, must yield to concerns on national interest. Every nation understands and acts in pursuance of this cardinal rule.

Moreover, the issue is not acquisition of territory, (it is ours already), but rather the possible loss of our territory by excluding Kalayaan from our baselines. At the very least, exclusion diminishes our claim and sends wrong signals to other claimants.

The provision in the bill “that Kalayaan and Scarborough Shoal remain subject to the sovereignty and territorial claim of the Philippines” does not cure the negative implications of the exclusion.

The concept of “regime of islands” is one of the more debatable and controversial concepts in UNCLOS. That is why only one article is devoted to it in the Convention. By opting for this concept, we embrace all



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the reservations about the regime.

We should have included Kalayaan and Scarborough Shoal in drawing the baselines of our territory and left it to a more aggressive and effective Philippine diplomacy to defend and advance our position. That our institutions, e.g. DFA and the House of Representatives, flip-flopped on this issue speaks volumes of our character as a nation and as a people. #

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