

### Title: Magallona et al. vs. Executive Secretary et al.

### Facts:

This case originated from a petition filed by Prof. Merlin M. Magallona, et al., challenging the constitutionality of Republic Act No. 9522 (RA 9522), which adjusted the country's archipelagic baselines and classified the baseline regime of nearby territories. The petitioners, comprised of law professors, law students, and a legislator, argued that RA 9522 reduced Philippine maritime territory in violation of the constitutional delineation of the national territory. They also contended that the law allowed foreign vessels and aircrafts unrestricted maritime passage, compromising Philippine sovereignty, national security, and the ecological health of its maritime domain.

The case ascended to the Supreme Court following direct invocation of the Court's jurisdiction. The petitioners filed for writs of certiorari and prohibition, asserting that RA 9522 contradicted the Philippine Constitution's definition of national territory, effectively surrendering sovereignty over parts of the Philippines' maritime territories without the requisite amendment to the Constitution.

Respondents, various executive officers of the Philippine government, contested the petition primarily on procedural grounds, arguing lack of locus standi by the petitioners and the impropriety of the writs sought. On substantive grounds, they defended RA 9522 as necessary for compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III), preserving Philippine territory over outlying areas such as the Kalayaan Island Group (KIG) and the Scarborough Shoal, and not undermining the country's sovereignty or territorial claims.

### Issues:

1. Whether petitioners possess the requisite locus standi.
2. Whether the writs of certiorari and prohibition are proper remedies.
3. Whether RA 9522 is unconstitutional for purportedly reducing Philippine maritime territory and undermining Philippine sovereignty.

### Court's Decision:

The Supreme Court held that:

1. The petitioners possess locus standi as citizens, given the significance and potential

impact of RA 9522 on national territory.

2. The writs of certiorari and prohibition are proper remedies to test the constitutionality of statutes.

3. RA 9522 is not unconstitutional. It is a statutory tool for demarcating the country's maritime zones and continental shelf in accordance with UNCLOS III and does not delineate Philippine territory. The Court found that RA 9522 did not reduce the Philippines' sovereignty or maritime territory. Instead, it is consistent with the archipelagic doctrine and optimizes the location of basepoints without prejudicing any sovereign territorial claims.

### ### Doctrine:

The Court reiterated the doctrine that baselines laws, such as RA 9522, are mechanisms for states parties to UNCLOS III to delimit their maritime zones and continental shelves with precision. These laws do not determine sovereignty or territory which is governed by general international law. Furthermore, the classification of certain areas as "regimes of islands" does not diminish sovereignty over them.

### ### Class Notes:

- Locus Standi: Citizens have standing to challenge laws of significant national interest.
- Writs of Certiorari and Prohibition: Can be employed to address constitutional issues concerning legislative actions.
- RA 9522 and UNCLOS III: Compliance with international maritime laws does not equate to surrender of territory or sovereignty. Archipelagic baselines and the regime of islands under UNCLOS III are tools for maritime delineation, not territorial diminution.

### ### Historical Background:

Republic Act No. 9522 was enacted to amend the archipelagic baselines of the Philippines to ensure compliance with UNCLOS III, which the Philippines ratified in 1984. This was part of the Philippines' obligation as a signatory to UNCLOS III to define its maritime zones, including the territorial sea, exclusive economic zone, and continental shelf, based on archipelagic baselines. This legislative action was rooted in the international commitment to establish a legal order for the seas and oceans, facilitating peaceful and orderly marine resource utilization and navigation.