

AFF

We affirm Resolved: the United States should accede to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea without reservations.

Contention One is The South China Sea

China has militarized the South China Sea. **Hathaway** 17 at the Guardian explains that China has intimidated its neighbours into passivity while it transforms submerged reefs in the South China Sea into modern military installations over which it claims sovereign control.

In 2016, an international court created by UNCLOS ruled that China's claims are against international law. However, China has ignored the ruling, pushing on in the region like nothing happened.

Keck at the National Interest explains in June that "China's continued militarization of disputed features in the South China Sea only serve to raise tensions and destabilize the region.

US accession would stop China's aggression in the SCS due to multilateralism. **Mirasola** at Harvard writes in 2015 that UNCLOS is one of the few multilateral mechanisms that can directly address territorial disputes in the seas. UNCLOS, gives us a tool to effectively resolve conflict at every level.

Corr at Forbes explains in 2016 that the U.S. and our allies are the only countries with the power to enforce the PCA ruling. Through UNCLOS, the U.S. could obtain commitments from allies to assist in a coalition to enforce the treaty in the South China Sea.

This coalition would pressure China into making some concessions. **Fravel** at The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies explains in 2011 that China should be most likely to compromise when improved ties with claimant states become a counterbalancing coalition, especially one led by the United States. In this scenario, China would offer some concessions in the dispute to improve ties with these states.

More parties involved leads to a higher chance of success. French 14 writes in the Atlantic magazine that the more China sees a coordinated response to its military buildup and naval forays, the more likely it might be to turn toward diplomacy, and to stop seeking overwhelming superiority in the region.

The time is now. Tham of the Diplomat reports this May that on the current course, as Beijing accrues naval dominance in the SCS, the rules meant to regulate its behavior are likely to matter less and less – underscoring the geopolitical truism that ‘might is right.’ there would be nothing stopping China from ‘teaching its neighbours a lesson.’

This would have enormous consequences. Stout of Times Magazine quantifies in 2014 that when China taught Vietnam a similar lesson in 1979, it turned out to be a costly affair. Analysts estimate that as many as 50,000 soldiers died during the confrontation.

Contention Two is Rare Earth Metals

According to the Rare Earth Technology Alliance, rare earth metals are chemical elements found in the Earth’s crust that are vital to clean energy.

However, reserves of these metals are declining. Moss 18 explains that currently, around 90% of the world’s production of rare earth minerals takes place in China, but China’s stocks are depleting quickly. The country’s reserves are likely to last only another 20 years based on current patterns of consumption.

Luckily, Houck 17 at Defense One explains that the U.S.’s extended continental shelf holds about one trillion dollars worth of rare earth metals.

However, companies cannot mine the deep seabed without accession. Coles at Mayer Brown writes in 2014 that exploration and exploitation may only be carried out under a contract with the ISA, which may be awarded to state agencies and private mining enterprises sponsored by a State Party to the UNCLOS.

An increase in REMs is crucial for a transition to renewable energy. Cho 12 at Columbia explains that to provide most of our power through renewables would take hundreds of times the amount of rare earth metals that we are mining today.

A transition to renewable energy is already occurring. Hoium 17 writes that over the past decade, energy from wind and solar has become so cheap that it's making new fossil fuel plants nearly obsolete. The conditions for the demise of fossil fuels are already in place and a massive disruption of the fossil fuel industry is on the horizon.

However, this cannot occur without REMs. Than 18 at Stanford Earth explains that rare earth elements are vital for renewable energy technologies, such as electric cars and solar panels.

The development of green tech saves millions of lives. Leber 15 at The New Republic reports that twenty governments commissioned an independent report in 2012 from the group DARA International to study the human and economic costs of climate change. The report found that burning fossil fuels kills almost 5 million people per year. Thus, we strongly urge an aff ballot.