

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

Contention One is lawsuits.

Trump is rolling back regulations on the coal industry. The [Hill in 2018](#) writes this past August that Trump has decided to gut Obama's clean power plan, loosening many regulations on coal power plants. This is crucial as the Hill finds that because of Obama's plan, many coal plants were forced to shut down, but after Trump's overhaul of regulations many plants will be able to continue operations.

Fortunately, by acceding to UNCLOS you provide an outlet for environmentalist groups to fight back and stop this change, as by joining UNCLOS, the US would be liable to environmental lawsuits. [Murray '13](#) writes, courts within UNCLOS allow environmentalists and citizens to sue the government for not following the environmental obligations of UNCLOS.

Indeed, [Groves of the Heritage Foundation '12](#) finds that "some environmental activists have shown that they will support Climate Change lawsuits against US targets".

Lawsuit results would be beneficial for the environment. As [Murray '13](#) notes that rulings taking the treaty at its word would require the closure of most if not all American coal power plants.

This is important, as [Climate Central in 2017](#) finds, American coal plants release 1.87 billion tons of CO2 every year, and [The CATE](#) concludes, in the US, 13 thousand people die from coal pollution each year, with an economic impact of 100 billion US dollars.

Contention Two is calming the waters.

Choudary of the [Economic Times in 2018](#) writes that due to China's rejection of a rules based order, militarization of artificial islands, and dominance over smaller and weaker states, the South China Sea is now a flashpoint. Indeed, [Almond of the Diplomat in 2018](#) finds that China has militarized over 3,200 acres of the South China Sea since 2013. Thus, the [OO in 2017](#) concludes that if mediation doesn't occur, China will continue to snowball the region and tensions will boil over.

Fortunately, Accession to UNCLOS would foster a multilateral approach to fight back Chinese expansion in the South China Sea **by sending a signal to our allies.**

The [US Naval Institute finds in 2011](#) that due to us not being in UNCLOS, South China Sea countries perceive that the United States has different interests than themselves, weakening the effectiveness of multilateralism diplomacy.

Thus, [Moore from the University of Virginia](#) concludes that "If our country is viewed as unwilling to

participate [in international agreements] we will not [be able to get] needed [diplomatic] assistance from others.”

Fortunately, UNCLOS provides a better path forward. **Ashfaw of the Journal of Transnational Law and Policy in 2010** writes that joining UNCLOS would increase the US’s soft power capabilities by showing others we are committed to the international community, concluding that ratification of the treaty would allow other countries to put their faith in our actions in the Seas.

Thus, Once you affirm, we can now engage in multilateralism.

Kyouk of the Wall Street Journal in 2016 writes that by joining UNCLOS, we gain the needed legitimacy to form a multilateral coalition of regional allies to put diplomatic pressure on China.

This is crucial, as multilateral pressure on China is the best way to stop Chinese expansion in the South China Sea. **Townshend of the Guardian in 2015** writes that this multilateral coalition would present a sovereign threat to China’s influence in the region, by politically isolating China and depriving them of what they care most about, their political leverage over regional countries.

Overall, **The Atlantic in 2014** writes that the more China sees a coordinated response to its military buildup, the more likely it is to turn towards diplomacy, and stop their overexpansion in the region.

The impact to stopping dangerous Chinese Expansion is preserving trade.

Status Quo tensions are causing trade to go down. This is because when tensions and the perception of conflict are high, the **Wall Street Journal in 2016** writes that shipping companies have to take longer routes to avoid the South China Sea, and also face higher insurance rates.

Indeed **Wang of EPC in 2015** finds that tensions between China and the Philippines over the South China Sea disputes had significantly reduced bilateral trade, directly proportional to the increase in tensions.

This is crucial as **Crabtree ‘16 of CNBC** writes that “over 5 trillion dollars worth of trade annually passes through the region, supplying a whopping 1.5 billion people with food and jobs,”

Even short term disruptions in trade can spike prices of basic food and push millions into poverty. **PBS** finds the last time food prices spiked it pushed 44 million into poverty.

Thus, we affirm.

In the status quo, countries hold the perception that the United States is looking to break away from international institutions and reject any notion of multilateral dialogue. Specifically, our non-party status to UNCLOS gives the perception that the US is not committed to a rules-based international order in global maritime issues.

Moore from the University of Virginia writes that our allies are disappointed by our unilateral disengagement from ocean affairs caused by our absence from UNCLOS.

Specifically in the South China Sea, the **US Naval Institute finds in 2011** that due to us not being in UNCLOS, regional actors perceive that the United States has different interests than themselves, thus weakening the effectiveness of multilateralism.

Thus, **Moore** concludes that “If our country is viewed as unwilling to participate [in international agreements] we will not [be able to get] needed assistance from others.”

Fortunately acceding solves this problem, as Ashfaq of the Journal of Transnational Law and Policy in 2010 writes that joining UNCLOS would increase the US’s soft power capabilities by showing others we are committed to the international community, concluding that ratification of the treaty would allow other countries to put their faith in our actions in the Seas.

Thus, this would result in a Coordinated Regional Response to Chinese aggression.

Kyouck of the Wall Street Journal in 2018 furthers that as result of increasing its legitimacy by acceding to UNCLOS, the US would now be capable of creating a coordinated regional response to Chinese Aggression in the Sea. This coordinated approach is the best way to check back against China, as **Townshend of the Guardian in 2015** concludes that a coordinated response to China would harm China’s international image and paint them as rule breaker in the international community, this image would harm China’s strategic geopolitical weight in the region.

Thus, as China sees that it’s strategy of ignoring International Law is counterproductive to its goal of securing regional dominance, it will be forced to take a less expansionist approach.

The impact to stopping dangerous Chinese Expansion is preserving trade.

Even if Conflict does not happen, high tensions are enough to hurt trade, as when tensions and the perception of conflict are high, the **Wall Street Journal in 2016** writes that traders are incentivized to take longer routes avoiding the South China Sea altogether and increase insurance rates.

Indeed [Wang of EPC in 2015](#) finds that episodes of tension between China and the Philippines, had significantly reduced bilateral trade, and that the reduction had been directly proportional to the level of tension.

This is crucial as [Crabtree '16 of CNBC](#) writes that “over \$5 trillion of trade annually passes through the region, supplying a whopping 1.5 billion people with food and jobs,”

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