***We affirm.***

**Contention One is China.**

*Right now, the US is strapped to the sidelines while China is steering the ship.*

Denmark14 of the National Interest writes that China’s escalatory tactics in the South China Sea make conflict inevitable if no action is taken. *War is uniquely likely now*, as Mullany18 of the New York Times finds that the US is sending its aircraft carriers to Vietnam for the first time in over 50 years, signaling that tensions are higher than ever before.

*Fortunately, accession to UNCLOS will stop the egregious trend of the status quo in two ways:*

**Subpoint A is Securing the Team.**

*Because Asian countries are dependent on China, China can leverage them without repercussions.*

Peters18 of the Truman Center explains that China currently uses its economic muscle to prevent Asian nations from collectively bringing claims under the Treaty, instead taking them on individually.

*Absent accession, the US will quickly see their friends turn into enemies for two reasons.*

**First is marring multilateralism.**

*If the US is no longer seen as a valuable ally, which is increasingly likely without accession to UNCLOS, multilateralism crumbles.* Already, Glaser18 of Foreign Affairs reports that Asian states see little value in a U.S. presence that cannot preserve international law, which will in turn make them less supportive of Washington’s efforts and more likely to reinforce those of Beijing.

**Second is securing the story.**

*With the US in the back seat, China drives the narrative.*

Tolve12 of the Naval Law Review confirms that US abstention from UNCLOS allows China to gain international support and paint the US as imperialistic by highlighting that the US “is seeking to extract the benefits of UNCLOS but avoiding membership due to its mistrust of the international community.”

***For these two reasons:***

Vanecko11 of the Naval War College reports that our allies in the region failed to support American actions against China’s violation of international law, because of our failure to demonstrate commitment to UNCLOS.

***Multilateralism is critical:***

As French14 of the Atlantic finds that the more China sees a coordinated response to its military buildup, the more likely it is to turn to diplomacy, rather than war.

*Multilateralism would reduce Chinese aggression, preventing an arms race.*

Pham17 of Forbes Magazine finds that, in response to China’s buildup, its neighbors are ramping up defense spending because they feel insecure, sparking an arms race in the region.

**Subpoint B is Calling the Fouls.**

*America’s absence from UNCLOS lets China determine the rules of the game.*

Manning17 of the Foreign Policy Institute explains that other countries are unwilling to challenge China’s abusive UNCLOS interpretation because they are powerless in the face of China’s daunting economy and military. This is problematic, as Dutton12 of the Center for American Security explains that tacit support of China’s claims in the South China Sea will shift international norms in their favor. Smith17 of the University of Rhode Island confirms that, because of America’s absence, China’s actions in the South China Sea have destabilized UNCLOS’ international legitimacy, as Manning finds that China can further its faulty interpretations of the treaty with no pushback.

*Fortunately, it’s not too late.*

Tong17 of UC Davis finds that the US would become the leader of the treaty because of its economic and military clout, *giving it the power to challenge China’s interpretations and prevent China from abusing international norms.*

*Changing the norm checks back for Chinese aggression*, as Medeiros09 of RAND explains that China will follow international norms because it cares about its international reputation and does not like being isolated.

**The overall impact is war:**

Bali18 of The Daily Hunt Magazine finds that Chinese retaliation and militarization of the South China Sea could cause a dangerous cycle of aggression with the US, increasing the likelihood of armed conflict through miscalculation. As a result, Kuok18 of the Brookings Institute confirms that China’s abusive interpretation of UNCLOS increases the risk of a “major [military] confrontation.” Moreover, Bentley12 of Ohio State University writes that accession to the treaty would reduce tensions and clarify uncertainty over international maritime norms, reducing the chance of miscalculation in the region. Wittner11 of NYU writes that a war with China would kill 10 million Americans and destroy the global economy.

***Because the US needs to get off the bench, vote pro.***