**Contention One is Arctic Drilling**

**Gardner ‘12 of the ASP** explains that U.S. oil companies are currently prohibited from drilling outside of our exclusive economic zone, or 200 nautical miles off the coast, thanks to inadequate legal protection from international law. This protection can ONLY be awarded by the International Seabed Authority to a country that is a member of UNCLOS. Without this legal protection, companies are barred from Arctic drilling, as **Gardner** furthers that companies NEED the maximum level of international legal certainty provided by UNCLOS before they invest in Arctic drilling. Unfortunately, giving companies this assurance would open the floodgates for Arctic drilling, as **Jeff ‘16 of Business Insider** explains that the Arctic holds 90 billion barrels of oil, three times more than all U.S oil reserves today. The impact is methane release. **Walsh ‘12** reports that the Arctic holds 1.7 trillion cubic feet of methane gas in the ocean floor that can be released as a byproduct of drilling. **Chestney ‘12** of the Scientific American explains that drilling and subsequent methane release would substantially melt the Arctic and accelerate climate change - costing $60 trillion directly in damage.

**Contention Two is Big Ship Energy**

We are reaching a stalemate in the South China Sea. **Bo of the National Interest** observes that the situation in the South China Sea is cooling down due to America’s powerful forces in and around the South China Sea. Because of this, **Bo** concludes that both sides will pursue a diplomatic end to the dispute.

Containment has historically worked. **Brands of The Naval War College** writes that our Containment strategy has historically worked, as The United States has shown episodically that when it draws redlines and credibly threatens to enforce them, it has deterred Chinese expansion, specifically in the cases of 2014 and 2016. Fortunately, **Panda of the Diplomat** finds that Trump is significantly increasing our hard power operations.

Our current strategy is bringing an end to the conflict, but acceding to UNCLOS would reverse this trend towards peace because of China’s Winning interpretation

**Jacobson** finds that US ratification would restrict and regulate American maritime rights, and the US would become just one voice with one vote among 163 countries. **Groves of the Heritage Foundation** finds that under UNCLOS, the US would be forced to submit itself to legally binding dispute resolution whenever another member state brings a lawsuit against it. Our current strategy violates UNCLOS, as **Article 301** demands that “States Parties shall refrain from any threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State”. Furthermore, **Article 279** states that “Parties shall settle any dispute…concerning…this Convention by peaceful means…”

This is why **Middendorf** concludes that the mandatory dispute resolution mechanism in UNCLOS can be used by China to curtail military operations because it is unclear in the treaty what is defined as peaceful military operations.

Losing our hard power is problematic, as **Pham of the Diplomat** in 2018 writes that backing down in the South China Sea would only embolden China to accelerate its expansion in the area, and reinforce the perception that Beijing is a rising dominating power, while the US is a declining one that can be intimidated out of the region, creating long term appeasement, escalating tensions.

**The First Impact is Regional Balance**

**Khalizad** notes that without an American Security blanket, regional powers will rearm in an attempt to balance against emerging threats. In fact, **Caffrey** explains by writing that “A key trend in the Asia pacific region would be the shift from a traditional focus on territorial defense towards power projection. **Khalizad** concludes that under this scenario without the United States, East Asian states would be emboldened to make aggressive moves in their region and there would be a heightened possibility of miscalculation spiraling into all-out conflict.

**The Second Impact is Trade**

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.

This is crucial as **Crabtree ‘16 of CNBC** writes that “$5 trillion of trade annually passes through the region, supplying 1.5 billion people with food and jobs,” thus, any type of disruption would be jeopardizing vital trade for millions.

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

Overall, **Stachwick** of the East West Institute concludes that a fundamentally peaceful status quo in the South China Sea will be preserved with military presence