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

UNCLOS is an international document that governs the use of international waters and how countries interact within them.

Contention 1: Climate Change

Accession to UNCLOS accelerates climate change in two ways.

Subpoint A: The Arctic

Gardner of the American Security Project explains in 2012 that the US continental shelf is estimated to hold billions of barrels of oil and natural gas, but companies want legal reassurance of being in UNCLOS before engaging in risky Arctic exploration as UNCLOS is the legal authority for claims beyond 200 miles of national coastlines.

American gas and oil drilling in the Arctic leads to climate change in two ways.

1. More oil and gas. Adler notes for the Washington Post in 2017 that offshore drilling lowers the price of oil and gas, causing them to be preferred over greener alternatives. This is crucial, because the EPA found that in 2016 that fossil fuels accounting for 28% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, the biggest contributor.
2. Methane. Gardner explains for Reuters in 2018 that oil and gas wells built to facilitate offshore mining leak as much methane as 2.3 percent of the country's overall natural gas output. Furthermore, the Environmental Defense Fund notes in 2012 that the production, use, and delivery of natural gas also leads to methane release, which is 100 times more potent at trapping energy than CO2.

Overall, GreenPeace finds in 2015 that the scenarios promoted by United States companies for Arctic exploitation will result in at least five degrees Celsius of global warming.

Subpoint B: The Corporate Claw Machine

The USGS reports in June that commercial deep sea ocean mining will be possible within five years, as evidenced by countries like Japan managing to extract ore from hydrothermal vents. Doherty of The Guardian in 2018 specifically identifies that silver, gold, copper, manganese, cobalt, and zinc would be the materials mined as they are far superior in profits to land ore.

Fortunately, not being a party to UNCLOS keeps United States corporations out of the water. According to Martin of MineralLaw in 2017, because the US is not a member of UNCLOS, U.S. companies cannot pursue international contracts to mine and Timmons explains in 2012 that US

mining companies want a clear title to their holdings before they go and mine. Before UNCLOS existed, Pincus of the Washington Post in 1980 reported that U.S. corporations like Kennecott, U.S. Steel, and Sedco were setting the stage for deep sea prospecting 800 miles south of Hawaii. Today, none of these companies are mining.

The impact is preventing the acceleration of climate change. Shukman of the BBC reports in 2013 that hydrothermal vent mining is extremely invasive, because it "involves breaking up [and removing] the uppermost metre of the sea floor." Steiner of Huffington Post in 2015 furthers that mining creates plumes of sediment that will settle over thousands of square miles of seafloor and smother the organisms living there. Oregon State explains in 2016 that this is dangerous because the life forms in the hydrothermal vents that would be destroyed by mining prevent 90 percent of released deep sea methane from entering the atmosphere, thus preventing a "doomsday climate event."

This leads Grant of PRI in 2013 to conclude that deep sea mining, when it occurs, "will probably have the largest footprint of any single human activity on the planet" and Davis of the Guardian in 2017 to find that ocean temperatures could rise by 4 celcius, due in part to the prospect of deep sea mining.

The overall impact of this contention is slowing climate change.
Pearce of Yale in September explains that we need to avoid a 1.5 degree increase in temperatures because it is the tipping point where climate change becomes unstoppable. Luckily, Pearce explains that there is no evidence that we are at that tipping point yet. Avoiding reaching this point for as long as possible is crucial as Gilding of TheAge explains in 2018 that we need time to let acceptance of the reality of climate change sink in so that we can solve it. Averting climate change is key as Mercy Corps writes in 2018 that more than 1.3 billion people rely on agricultural resources to survive that would be destroyed, making climate change a matter of "life or death". This is why at the four degrees rise that drilling and mining are predicted to cause, the World Bank concludes in 2014 that there is no certainty that the human race would ever be able to adapt.

Unfortunately, Losada of RAMU Mine in 2018 explains that "mining-induced" loss of life in the "deep sea is likely to last forever on human timescales, given the very slow natural rates of recovery in affected ecosystems."