

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

Our sole contention is the South China Sea.

[Huang](#) in 2018 that China is "adopting a more muscular approach to territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Thus, [Streiff](#) concludes in 2018 that "tensions in the South China Sea are at an all-time high."

Accession solves these tensions in two ways.

First is lawfare.

China is pursuing a new territorial claim in the South China Sea called "The Four Shas" which [Mirasola](#) writes in 2017 "clearly violates UNCLOS." However, [Keely](#) finds in 2017 that "Vietnam has [already acquiesced] ...after mounting Chinese pressure and doubts about Washington's commitments." [Kuok](#) in 2018 explains that "coastal states must be supported [against] any incursions into their exclusive economic zones, including through legal action..., so the United States should accede to UNCLOS." Additionally, [Chang](#) explains in 2016 that China has flouted international law because "countries shied away from holding China accountable" Crucially, [Harris](#) explains in 2012 that "the U.S. would have the legal authority to enforce the treaty."

Second is multilateralism

[Cardin](#) explains in 2016 that "Our failure to ratify [UNCLOS] undermines our ability to fully work with our allies and partners in the South China Sea. If we are not party to UNCLOS, it is difficult to rely on the treaty to determine [who gets what]." Additionally, [Mearsheimer](#) writes in 2004 that "Most of China's neighbours...will join with the United States to contain China's power." Critically, [French](#) explains in 2014 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." American participation is uniquely important as [Gates](#) writes in 2015 that "[America is] the only actor...with the power, resources, and relationships necessary to...bring about an enduring solution." Crucially, [Pelc](#) finds in 2017 that "the U.S. was 34 percent less likely to secure concessions [when it acted unilaterally]."

Reducing tensions has four impacts..

First is trade.

[Crabtree](#) explains in 2016 that "Over \$5 trillion of annual shipping trade passes through the [South China Sea]." Unfortunately, [Tang](#) explains in 2015 that "increasing tensions by 1% reduces trade by

.05%.” The [OECD](#) that “Of 14 studies undertaken since 2000 reviewed...all 14 have concluded that trade plays an independent and positive role in raising incomes.”

Second is oil.

[Wald](#) in 2017 writes that the world’s next oil price spike will be caused by South China Sea tensions. High oil prices are problematic as [Exarheas](#) finds in 2018 that “[a] rise in oil prices drives up drilling activity”. Frighteningly, [Plagakis](#) explains in 2013 that “Oil and Gas Production [are] a Major Source of Greenhouse Gas Emissions.”

Third is fish.

[Bale](#) finds in 2016 that "about 10 percent of the shallow reefs in the Spratly Islands and 8 percent in the Paracels have been damaged by...island building." Thus, [Ives](#) avers in 2016 that island building "will heighten the risks of a fisheries collapse in the region [as] the Spratlys...is a key spawning ground for one of the world’s most productive fisheries." Unfortunately, [Xu](#) finds in 2014 that "1.5 billion people rely heavily on the South China Sea fisheries for food and jobs."

Fourth is war.

[Cheney](#) explains in 2011 that "tension between China, Vietnam and the Philippines in the South China Sea could lead to a miscalculation and further escalation" and the [IMOA](#) furthers in 2015 that "China is pushing the region to the 'brink of miscalculations'" [Nagai](#) finds in 2018 that a collision or clash could cause miscalculation in the south china sea.

Problematically, [Winn](#) explains in 2017 that in the case of a regional war, "vital [trade] traffic would slow to a trickle" which the [CSIS](#) finds "would carry a considerable monthly cost of \$2.8 billion."

Thus, we affirm.